

THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS UNNOTICED

An Interpretive Preface to *What Does Bowdoin Teach?*



April 2013



With a Foreword by William Bennett,
Former U.S. Secretary of Education and Washington Fellow, Claremont Institute

And a Letter to the Bowdoin Community from
Thomas Klingenstein, President, Cohen Klingenstein, LLC

PREFACE BY PETER W. WOOD
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

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FOREWORD

In the *Republic*, where Plato attempts to conjure the ideal of the just city, he wrestles with the questions: Who will teach the children? And what will they be taught? Although college students are not children, they are still impressionable young men and women shaped by their educational experience. They will not be college students forever. They will become husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, employees, bosses, and citizens. They will make adult decisions about how best to participate in and influence America. I say this because many have forgotten that what is being taught on America's campuses, and who is teaching it, will play a larger role in determining not only the moral and intellectual trajectory of the individuals in the classroom, but the course of America itself.

In this report, Peter Wood and Michael Toscano have painstakingly and truthfully used Bowdoin College as an example of how many liberal arts colleges are failing their students. Bowdoin illustrates the intellectual and moral deficit of the American academy. The curricular offerings and philosophical worldview that characterizes Bowdoin College—regarded as one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the country—are in many ways antithetical to the American experiment and the best traditions of learning. Moreover, this study shows how this intellectual climate does not befit the traditions of Bowdoin, a school that has shown itself to be excellent in many other respects.

This report is unique and important in several ways:

The report is perhaps the most deep and specific to date on how progressive ideology has altered the character of American higher education. By focusing on just one college in detail, the authors capture the full context of how advocacy and ideology have significantly displaced the pursuit of truth and the cultivation of character. Their hope is that faculty members, administrators, parents, and yes, students from other colleges, will recognize the less desirable features of Bowdoin College in their own institutions.

The authors have done a remarkable job in showing the inconsistency of Bowdoin in its commitment to ideas of "open-mindedness" and "critical thinking." These ideas are necessary preconditions for healthy intellectual discourse. But Bowdoin has supplanted the "classical liberal" principles of reasoned argument, the West, the universally true, and the potential for discovering the truth. Instead, its regnant orthodoxies are ideas such as "global citizenship," "social justice," and "sustainability." A free society rests on a commitment to reasoned argument. When illiberal dogma is substituted for reasoned argument, it compromises its own liberal arts principles and erodes the basis for a free society.

This report shows that Bowdoin's curriculum is frequently incoherent and trivial. One course that was ultimately cancelled because of lack of student interest was entitled "Queer Gardens," a survey of the horticultural achievements of "gay and lesbian gardeners" and a rereading of literary works on gardens from a "queer" perspective. Aside from being a course that, in all likelihood, neither cultivates the principles of critical thinking, nor possesses a canonical set of texts to explain the human experience, it sounds altogether trivial.

The authors show that Bowdoin's faculty members in the "studies" programs are often appointed more for their skin color, gender, and highly specialized research interests than their ability to teach. The advising system is dysfunctional, and students are generally left to piece together their own educations out of the jumble of courses and ideological themes on offer. History majors at Bowdoin, for instance, are not required to take a single course in American history. And some of these students are the next generation of high school teachers. Perhaps most serious, the academic demands on students outside of class are minimal: students are found to study, on average, a mere seventeen hours per week outside the classroom.

One cannot predict how much, if anything, a Bowdoin graduate will know about the philosophy of Aristotle, the plays of Shakespeare, or the Civil War. All Bowdoin students know something about Joshua Chamberlain, the Bowdoin alumnus and professor of modern languages who became the hero of Gettysburg. His statue adorns the campus; his name appears on several buildings; and he served in later life as president of the college and governor of Maine. But how well Bowdoin students understand the context of his life and his contributions is an open question.

But it is very likely that Bowdoin's more recent graduates are well-versed in racial grievance, anticapitalism, social justice, and multiculturalism. These perspectives are often the product of identity studies curricula that are so popular on college campuses. These programs undermine the idea of America. Bruce Bawer has written, "[W]ith every kid who emerges from college possessing a diploma—and an idea of America derived not from the values of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution but from the preaching of identity studies—the American miracle fades a bit more into the mists of history."

Lastly, a word about character education. Bowdoin long ago abdicated from a philosophy of *in loco parentis*, in which a school assumes some responsibility for the cultivation of the student's moral life. Although Bowdoin still shapes character, it does not actively or intentionally seek to shape *good* character. The college effectively promotes sexual promiscuity among students, fosters a sense of permanent grievance among students (including a disregard for America), and produces a supercilious knowingness among students that too often flatters rather than educates.

I have been thinking, writing, and speaking about education for forty-five years. This spring, I and my co-author David Wilezol will release *Is College Worth It?* a volume of our own that addresses these issues, as well as the soaring cost of higher education. It is imperative that America recognize the damaging influence that many universities are having on the future of the nation. As Abraham Lincoln said, "The philosophy of the school room in one generation is the philosophy of government in the next." The harmful real world consequences of substandard higher education are unacceptable. But thanks to Dr. Peter Wood and Mr. Michael Toscano, they are not inevitable.

William Bennett



A LETTER FROM THOMAS KLINGENSTEIN

April 3, 2013

Dear Bowdoin Alumni:

I am writing to all Bowdoin alumni, but in particular to those over the age of, say, fifty to fifty-five, a line that more or less demarcates old Bowdoin from new. Were you to return to Bowdoin you would find much to remind you of *your* Bowdoin, particularly the camaraderie and loyalty that makes Bowdoin as comforting and bracing as a Maine football Saturday. If you were able to look below the surface, however, you would not recognize much of today's curriculum and student life. Indeed, I think you would find at least some of what happens today at Bowdoin disturbing.

This report is meant to give you that look beneath the surface. Though the view is sometimes fuzzy and often limited, it is nonetheless revealing. To those of my readers who lean to the political left, you will not always agree with my perspective. I ask only that you consider whether it is a legitimate perspective and one to which Bowdoin students ought to be exposed. Whether you agree with my perspective or not, I do not expect anyone to swallow this report whole, but what I do hope is that you will take the diagnosis seriously enough to learn more.

I have been asked by what right I criticize Bowdoin or, for that matter, any college other than my own alma mater (Williams College). I think we all have a civic duty to pay attention to what's going on in our nation's best colleges. Bowdoin carries a public trust, not just because of its nonprofit status, but because of its role in helping to cultivate the leaders of the future. It is my duty, as it is of any citizen, to help ensure that the Republic that has been bequeathed to me be passed to the next generation in as good a condition as it was received.

But why, some have asked, pick on Bowdoin? After all, Bowdoin differs little from other elite colleges. The answer begins with a golf game on a beautiful Maine day—details below. Our real purpose is not to evaluate Bowdoin, but to evaluate higher education using Bowdoin as a representative example. We do not claim that Bowdoin is materially different than other wealthy elite schools.

Some will also ask whether this report is simply my vendetta against President Barry Mills because I took offense at remarks he made at his 2010 convocation address. This, by the way, is the storyline being promoted on the Bowdoin campus. President Mills's comments did indeed offend me. No one likes being portrayed, in so many words, as a racist. But I responded at the time and that was that. The project that resulted in this report came about because curiosity replaced anger. I embarked on it because President Mills characterized my views in a context of a much larger cause. President Mills's characterization of my views occurred in a context that allowed me to open up a discussion on issues of paramount interest: the defense of the West and the liberal arts.



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These are the central concerns of the National Association of Scholars (on whose board I sit) as well my own personal multi-decade interest. I chair the board of the Claremont Institute, which is committed to recovering the West through the political philosophy of the American Founding and the statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln. I am someone who enjoys his privacy, but the desire for privacy must at times give way to public concerns. Accordingly, I funded this study of Bowdoin. In this case, I was the only one who had the standing to respond to President Mills.

Respectfully,
Tom Klingenstein



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An Interpretive Preface to the National Association of Scholars' Report:

What Does Bowdoin Teach?

How a Contemporary Liberal Arts College Shapes Students

by **Peter Wood**

This report is something that, as far as we know, has never been tried before.¹ It is an in-depth study of one particular college based on documentary sources, an ethnography of an academic culture, its worldview, customs, and values. We have three aims. The first is to provide an accurate, vivid, and up-to-date account of what Bowdoin attempts to teach its students. The second is to analyze whether that teaching has been compromised by contemporary ideology. We conclude that it has. Our third purpose is to look at elite higher education in America using Bowdoin as a representative example.²

Of the 230 or so colleges that fit that description, why Bowdoin? The correct answer is happenstance—a chance game of golf in 2010 involving two men who had never met: philanthropist Tom Klingenstein and Bowdoin president Barry Mills. President Mills, in his annual convocation speech, offered a graphic description of his view of what had happened on the golf course that day. Klingenstein, not named in the speech, recognized himself, took exception, and wrote an essay published in the Winter 2010–Spring 2011 *Claremont Review of Books*. The heart of the dispute was whether Bowdoin (and higher education in general) should do more to include the ideas of thinkers, including American conservatives, who dissent from prevailing progressive political orthodoxies.

To capture these orthodoxies, we cast a wide net to include presidential speeches, pronouncements from deans, formal statements of principles, reports with the imprimatur of the faculty acting as a body, the practical rules embodied in college policies, and the decisions (including punishments) based on those policies. When employing such evidence we refer to “official” Bowdoin. Of course, at Bowdoin, like at any institution, practice often veers from official prescription. Throughout the study, we keep as close a watch as possible on the gaps between the official side of things and the actual goings-on, though our emphasis on the former introduces certain limitations.

1 The body of the full report is co-authored by Peter Wood and Michael Toscano. Dr. Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, is a social anthropologist. He was a tenured member of the anthropology department at Boston University, where he also served as associate provost and the president's chief of staff. He also served as provost of The King's College, New York City. He is the author of *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003) and *A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006). Mr. Toscano is a 2008 graduate of The King's College, where he received a bachelor's degree in politics, philosophy, and economics.

2 More than nineteen million students currently pursue higher education in the United States at close to four thousand colleges and universities. About five hundred thousand students attend the 228 colleges that until recently were called “selective liberal arts colleges.” The number “228” is taken from the 2000 edition of *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*, and represents the total number of colleges then classified as “Liberal Arts I.” Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, foreword by Lee S. Shulman, *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (Menlo Park, CA: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2001), 20, http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/downloads/2000_edition_data_printable.pdf.



We assess Bowdoin from the perspective of a traditional understanding of the liberal arts in America, with its emphasis on reasoned argument, the West, and a belief in the possibility of discovering the truth. Our focus is on the ideology that permeates Bowdoin and has drastically altered its conception of a liberal arts education. This is hardly an exhaustive look at Bowdoin. Bowdoin remains an excellent college in many respects, but it is different in important respects from what it was two generations ago and many of those changes, perhaps most, have not been for the better.

This preface differs from the report. The reader will find in the report a systematic exposition of the facts. This preface, by contrast, offers our interpretation of those facts. In the report, we reserve judgment. In this preface, we synthesize—and we judge.

In the body of the report, President Mills is one figure among many, but in this preface he features prominently. This is only because his speeches and behavior illustrate many of those problems that we chose to emphasize in the preface. We stress that Mills did not cause these problems; he simply reflects them. Like most college presidents, Mills has little influence on the curriculum and student life, which is primarily shaped by faculty, students, and contemporary American culture. It is true that presidential speeches tend to be platitudinous (and not much listened to) but it is precisely the platitudes of a given culture that reveal abiding concerns and prevailing norms.

I. CRITICAL THINKING AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Official Bowdoin projects two broad purposes: it aims to teach students to think critically and it aims to help them to develop into good citizens. Our claim that critical thinking is a Bowdoin goal is not likely to be contested by either the Bowdoin community or outside observers. Bowdoin is explicit and emphatic in its promotion of this goal. The first requirement for critical thinking is a genuinely open mind. “Openness” and “critical thinking” aren’t quite the same thing, of course. The first is really a precondition of the second. But for the moment we will treat them as near synonyms and bring in other requirements of critical thinking only as needed.

Our second claim—that Bowdoin seeks to develop its students into “good citizens”—isn’t quite as self-evident as is the goal of critical thinking. Often this purpose is promoted indirectly, when Bowdoin supports multicultural student clubs, for example, or when President Mills interprets 9/11 primarily as an opportunity to understand other cultures. The goal of citizenship is, however, often expressed more directly, as President Mills did in his 2010 convocation address:

A Bowdoin education is at the heart of this nation’s democratic traditions and central to our democratic future. We should reject with confidence any assertion to the contrary. One of Bowdoin’s goals is to help develop good American citizens.³

³ Barry Mills, “Convocation 2010 Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, September 2, 2010, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2010/convocation-2010.shtml>.

What exactly did President Mills mean when he spoke of “this nation’s democratic traditions?” He didn’t explain in his own words but quoted approvingly, exclusively, and at length from University of Chicago law professor Martha Nussbaum, who is a leading advocate of the ideal of “global citizenship.” This understanding of “citizenship” emphasizes identity politics, group rights, environmental justice, and commitment to transnational institutions and perspectives.

Global citizenship sounds attractive to many because it suggests a kind of open-mindedness toward other cultures and a refusal to be limited by one’s own. But this appearance of open-mindedness is illusory. Global citizenship as a doctrine (as opposed to familiarity with non-Western cultures) assumes a great deal that gets in the way of intellectual openness.

The two Bowdoin goals—global citizenship and openness—actually push against each other. Openness requires skepticism and a sincere willingness to look for hidden assumptions, but Bowdoin’s understanding of global citizenship requires that some very large questions be settled in advance. A commitment to global citizenship requires a commitment to diversity (in its current understanding, the notion that each of us is defined in the most meaningful ways by the group to which we belong) and to the racial preferences that follow from diversity; to multiculturalism (all cultures are equal); to the idea that gender and social norms are all simply social constructs (an assumption that justifies virtually unlimited government intervention necessary to achieve the global citizen’s understanding of sexual justice); and to “sustainability” (which assumes that free market economic systems, and the materialistic, bourgeois values that drive them, are destroying the planet). These are notions that are not meaningfully “open to debate” at Bowdoin; indeed, a *commitment* to global citizenship *requires* that they not be open to debate. Students are encouraged to “think critically” about anything that threatens the college’s dogmas on diversity, multiculturalism, gender, and sustainability, etc., but, for the most part, not to think critically about those dogmas themselves.

II. VARIETIES OF CLOSED-MINDEDNESS

1. The Boorish Conservative

Bowdoin believes that it exemplifies open-mindedness, but it is in fact a community that shuts out many legitimate ideas. The closed-mindedness of Bowdoin was inadvertently illustrated by a student who emailed Klingenstein. The email began, “It took balls for someone of your conservative views to speak at Bowdoin.” As the body of the email showed, the student, though skeptical of Klingenstein’s views, intended this as a compliment. But what the student missed was that his compliment inadvertently confirmed our contention that Bowdoin is, in important respects, closed-minded. Why should it take “balls” for someone of Klingenstein’s views to speak at Bowdoin?

The diversity doctrine is one example of a subject where open-mindedness is discouraged, as President Mills’s 2010 convocation address illustrates. In this speech, he first called for exposure to conservative points of view. He then told his story about the wealthy conservative who, he said, interrupted his back swing by yelling out: “I would never support Bowdoin—you are a ridiculous liberal school that brings all



the wrong students to campus for all the wrong reasons.”⁴ “Wrong students” almost certainly has to be understood as a thinly-veiled way of saying “black students and other minorities.” “Wrong reasons” may refer to quotas. According to this version of events, the conservative was a man of poor sportsmanship—interrupting a golf swing is a serious offense—uncouth behavior, and probably racist views. The unnamed boor may be taken as exemplifying the category of political conservatives who have no legitimate place at Bowdoin. The speech, with its use of ridicule, was an exercise in drawing a boundary between ideas that are to be considered commendable at Bowdoin and those that are off-limits. The banishment was rather brazen, coming in the midst of a speech ostensibly welcoming conservatives to the campus mix. But no one noticed the contradiction.

That is the problem: such contradictions go unnoticed. And they go unnoticed because at Bowdoin, and places like it, there are precious few people who can point them out.

2. Gender Is Under Construction

Not noticing is more serious than the Bowdoin community realizes. Bowdoin ought to teach students the discipline of reasoned argument and the habit of mind that reflexively looks for reasoned argument. Regrettably, Bowdoin too often fails to cultivate that. For example, the 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* explains:

Courses in Gender and Women’s Studies investigate the experience of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historic periods. Gender construction is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance.⁵

Here Bowdoin flatly announces that gender is a social construct, the sole purpose of which is to subjugate women. Is gender, according to this view, *entirely* a social construct? “In light of the social construction of gender” seems to say so, and at the very least it forecloses any interest in other possibilities, such as biology. Individual courses on gender at Bowdoin are built on these assumptions, as is almost all public discussion of the matter.

By answering elemental questions in advance, the gender and women’s studies statement forecloses alternatives. And in summarily settling these elemental questions, important political issues such as women in combat, abortion, employment law, and gay marriage are settled as well. The assumption that gender is a social construct licenses—and perhaps requires—government to attempt to reconstruct gender relations along whatever lines it deems most suitable.

For the quoted description of gender and women’s studies to make it into Bowdoin’s *Catalogue* for many years running, and for it to appear on the Bowdoin website as well, means that it passed through many layers of review and approval. Apparently the tendentious claims that the program presents triggered no

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 173.

sense among Bowdoin's responsible authorities that anything was amiss in laying forth declarations that run profoundly against the principles of open-mindedness and critical thinking.

Again, one might find this declaration—so evidentially closed-minded—rather brazen, but like Mills's dismissal of conservatives just after welcoming them to Bowdoin, no one notices.

3. The Triumph of Identity

What happened with women's studies began decades before. The transformation of the liberal arts at Bowdoin into a platform for political advocacy started with Afro-American studies (since renamed Africana studies) in 1969. It emerged from a combination of impulses to change the world rather than solely study it. The 2012–2013 *Bowdoin College Catalogue* indicates that the program "grew out of the African American freedom movement of the 1960s."⁶ According to the March 17, 1969, minutes of Bowdoin's Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Afro-American studies was conceived to create slots for black faculty members who could assist black students: "The Director of the program ought [to] be black and black faculty ought [to] be recruited for it."⁷ The 1971 "Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program" expanded on the idea that the program could serve to promote social change while assisting black students. It extolled the program's potential to promote a "process of re-socialization and socialization of Americans" and fulfill "a psychological need on the part of Black students."⁸

What started in Afro-American studies set in motion the larger "studies" movement. In addition to the two already noted studies programs, Bowdoin now offers gay and lesbian studies, Asian studies, Latin American studies, and environmental studies. These six programs contrast to varying degrees with the rest of Bowdoin's curriculum. The studies programs, which we cover in detail in the body of the report, continue to advocate for the groups they examine. All of them (with the possible exception of environmental studies) are designed to advance the project of making the student body more diverse and to recruit faculty members on the basis of their "social identities," not just their scholarly accomplishments and ability to teach.

Courses listed in the studies programs now comprise approximately 18 percent of the curriculum, but that is the tip of the iceberg. Eighteen percent of the curriculum may seem a small figure, but not if the proper percent is zero. The ideology that characterizes these programs has seeped into many courses in other departments. The political views the studies programs explicitly advocate are seldom rebutted on campus. In other words, liberal political advocates have their say but conservatives, for the most part, do not. Moreover, student life is saturated with multicultural clubs such as the Africa Alliance, the African American Society, the Asian Students Association, Anokha (South Asian students association), the Bowdoin Haitian Alliance, the Circolo Italiano, the International Club, the Korean American Student Association, the Latino American Student Organization, and the Native American Students Association.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷ "Afro-American Studies at Bowdoin," minutes of the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee, Bowdoin College, April 2, 1969, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 5, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

⁸ "Proposed Revision of the Bowdoin Afro-American Studies Program," Task Force to Committee on Afro-American Studies, Bowdoin College, May 24, 1971, 4, catalog no. 3.1.1, box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.



By contrast, only four student clubs devoted to academic pursuits exist: the Bowdoin Society of Physics Students, the Peucinian Society (a debate club), Robocup (a robotics club), and German Club (a club for language practice not based on ethnicity).

Multiculturalism is also heavily programmed into the extracurricular schedule with events such as the spring 2012 “Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage,” inaugurated to spur a wider “dialogue on issues of identity and diversity, both in the classroom and in our wider community.”⁹ This event stretched over many days and enjoyed the cosponsorship of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of Multicultural Student Programs, Residential Life, Student Activities, and most notably the Office of the President as well as several academic departments and programs—Africana Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Department of Philosophy—and a number of student-led organizations, Bowdoin Student Government among others.

One way to get a sense of the nature and influence of the studies programs is to take a glance at one of Bowdoin’s few academic requirements, “First-Year Seminars.” These courses, according to administration pronouncements, are designed to teach writing and critical thinking skills, and to provide a gateway to the academic departments. Every student must take one of these courses. The First-Year Seminars offered in fall 2012 as listed in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue* were:

Affirmative Action and U.S. Society	Sexual Life of Colonialism
Fictions of Freedom	Modern Western Prostitutes
Racism	Women in the European Union
Music and Race in Latin America	Globalizing India
African American Children’s Literature	Public Health in Europe and U.S.
Art and the Environment: 1960 to the Present	The Pursuit of Peace
Material Life in Early America	The Korean War
Beyond Pocahontas: Native American Stereotypes	Global Media and Politics
Great Issues in Science	Power and Participation in Am. Politics
Ancient Democracy and Critics	Exercises in Political Theory
Understanding Theater and Dance	Political Leadership
Living Downstream	Human Being and Citizen
The Art of the Deal	Utopian Communities, 1630–1997
Queer Gardens	Consumerism in Early Modern Europe
Hawthorne	A Philosopher’s Dozen
Fan Fictions and Cult Classics	Intro to the Brain and Behavior
The Real Life of Literature	Fantasy and Satire: E. Central Eur.
Fact and Fiction	Love and Trouble: Black Women Writers

⁹ Beyond the Bowdoin Hello: Ask, Listen, Engage, site accessed January 24, 2012. The webpage that fully described this event is no longer available on the Internet. For an involved student’s description of the event, see “Nylea Bivins ’12 on Getting Beyond the Bowdoin Hello,” Bowdoin College, *Campus News*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/news/archives/1bowdoincampus/009143.shtml>.

Some of these courses are solid; yet some catch the eye as distinctly odd course offerings for college freshmen, or perhaps any undergraduate: “Sexual Life of Colonialism,” “Modern Western Prostitutes,” “Native American Stereotypes”?

One First-Year Seminar offered in fall 2012 but struck from the list because too few Bowdoin students signed up for it was “Queer Gardens,” which:

Explores how the garden in Western literature and art serves as a space for desire. Pays special attention to the link between gardens and transgression. Also considers how gardens become eccentric spaces and call into question distinctions between nature and culture. Examines the work of gay and lesbian gardeners and traces how marginal identities find expression in specific garden spaces.¹⁰

Courses like these illuminate an important pedagogical problem. Critical thinking has to be thinking about something in particular, whether it is Euclidian geometry, the characters in *Middlemarch*, the tactics of the Civil Rights movement, Native American stereotypes, the sexual life of colonialism, or modern Western prostitutes. As indicated by this list of required courses that are designed to teach critical thinking as well as by official statements, Bowdoin has adopted the position that any subject is as good as any other when it comes to learning how to think critically. But “Queer Gardens” does not teach critical thinking as well as Plato’s *Republic*. We can say this with confidence because “Queer Gardens” has at best a very limited community of discourse and no canon of works that embody exemplary achievement in the difficult dialogic task of critical thinking.

4. Immunity to Criticism

It is very difficult to maintain an environment of openness without frequent exposure to competing ideas. Progressive ideas are not likely to be subjected to serious challenge unless there are conservatives around. (The reverse would be just as true.) Without conservatives the not-noticing problem sets in. At Bowdoin the number of conservative faculty members is miniscule. We estimate that four or five out of approximately 182 full-time faculty members might be described as politically conservative.¹¹ Bowdoin doesn’t dispute that the imbalance is extreme; instead it argues that its liberal faculty faithfully represents many views, including conservative ones. President Mills and others say that the views of conservatives are represented on campus. For example, in his 2005 baccalaureate address President Mills unconditionally denied that Bowdoin suffered from liberal bias or intellectual homogeneity: “There is not a single point of view at Bowdoin. There are many.”¹² In each of Mills’s commencement addresses between 2009 and

¹⁰ *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 160, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/catalogue/courses/first-year-seminars/courses.shtml>.

¹¹ Prof. Jean Yarbrough estimates that six or fewer Bowdoin faculty members could be considered political conservatives in “Bowdoin Should Examine Its Lack of Diversity,” *Bowdoin Orient*, April 22, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6388>. Prof. Christian Potholm is quoted as estimating that there are “3 or 4” conservative faculty members at Bowdoin in Priya Sridhar, “Republican Professors Are Scant at Bowdoin,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 5, 2003, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2003-12-05/news02.htm>. The number “182 faculty members” comes from Bowdoin’s Common Data Set 2011–2012, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/ir/images/cds2011-12.pdf>.

¹² Barry Mills, “Baccalaureate ‘05,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 27, 2005, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2005/baccalaureate-05.shtml>.



2012 he said “there is a perception that there is a dominant culture or political persuasion on campus,”¹³ but it is just that, a “perception.” Mills continued: “You [graduates] all may be surprised to learn that Bowdoin is truly a place of real diversity in the broadest sense as compared to the communities you may now choose to live.”¹⁴ In a *Bowdoin Orient* article titled “100% of Faculty Donations Go to Obama,” dean of academic affairs Cristle Collins Judd wrote, “We expect that individual political opinions do not stifle the education in the classroom and that all viewpoints are welcome and respected.”¹⁵

Prof. Henry Laurence went even further in a January 30, 2004, *Bowdoin Orient* piece. He rejected the accusation that Bowdoin’s political homogeneity threatens the integrity of its curriculum: “criticism of the preponderance of Democrats among Bowdoin’s faculty is based on an assumption [that liberals cannot reflect conservative views] that is intellectually bankrupt, professionally insulting and, fortunately, wildly inaccurate.”¹⁶

Bankrupt, insulting, and wildly inaccurate? Those are strong words. Most of us can do a pretty good job of summarizing views other than our own, though giving a fair-minded account of views that we think are profoundly mistaken can be quite difficult. Would you want to have a Marxist as your sole source of information on the stock market? A passionate atheist your sole source of information on religion? Even if such a person made an earnest effort to avoid bias, you might reasonably suspect that the account falls short in some important ways.

We need not, however, speculate about Prof. Laurence’s claim that Bowdoin liberals do a perfectly adequate job in covering conservative views. The evidence shows plainly that they don’t. Large portions of the curriculum advocate for liberal political causes. None advocates for conservative political causes—nor would we want any to do so. Our preferred solution is a curriculum that shuns advocacy in favor of education.

But perhaps the most telling evidence about the ability of Bowdoin faculty as a whole to represent fairly and accurately the views of conservatives is what some individual faculty members have to say. In 2004, when Bowdoin was in the midst of an earlier controversy over the scarcity of conservatives on its faculty, Marc Hetherington, then assistant professor of government, explained, “The reason is supply; conservatives are much less likely to pursue a Ph.D. than people of other political stripes.” Hetherington attributed this shortage to conservatives failing to “place the same emphasis on the accumulation of knowledge [as] liberals do.”¹⁷

13 Barry Mills, “Commencement 2012 Address: President Barry Mills ’72,” *Bowdoin Daily Sun*, May 26, 2012, <http://www.bowdoindailysun.com/commencement-2012-address-president-barry-mills-72/>.

14 Ibid.

15 Emma Peters, “100% of Faculty Donations Go to Obama,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7816>.

16 Henry Laurence, “The Non-Issue of Political Diversity on College Campuses,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion02.htm>.

17 Marc J. Hetherington, “Conservatives in Short Supply in Academia—for a Reason,” *Bowdoin Orient*, January 30, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-01-30/opinion01.htm>.

Both historically and today, conservatives are at least as committed to scholarship as individuals who espouse other political outlooks. Dismissing conservatives as less interested than liberals in the accumulation of knowledge hardly sounds like an introduction to a fair-minded representation of conservatives' views. Likewise, in the context of a debate on liberal bias, Prof. Patrick Rael of the history department referred to conservative Bowdoin students who had advocated for an "Academic Bill of Rights" as "McCarthyite... anti-democratic...and Far Right."¹⁸ Prof. Laurence, quoted above, went on to declare that having a political imbalance among faculty was no more significant than having an imbalance "between Red Sox and Yankees fans."¹⁹

Prof. Laurence trivializes a profoundly important matter. The differences between conservatives and liberals bear on key choices about life, shape views on social and economic issues, and influence voting. Preference for baseball franchises? Not so much. Such airy dismissals, however, seemed to satisfy many Bowdoin students. For instance, thirteen students signing a statement in the *Bowdoin Orient* as "Bowdoin College Democrats" declared:

We believe the vast majority of professors are responsible enough to insure that their own political biases do not adversely affect the way they teach.²⁰

They also declared that the student body prefers the intellectual modes of liberal professors to conservative professors:

Modern conservatives often have very simplified world views and see things in black and white....Modern liberalism advocates a much more balanced view of the world, and we believe most students prefer this more complex perspective.²¹

5. Voting Instructions

Another example of a lack of openness occurred two weeks before the November 2012 election in which the state of Maine had a ballot measure on same-sex marriage. On October 25, 2012, President Mills published a letter in the *Bowdoin Orient* urging students to vote in favor of gay marriage.²² He asserted that "our democracy must protect the rights of all citizens" and that he had been "stirred by the deep hurt, disillusionment, and alienation that grips those who are denied a legal right of commitment to those they love."²³ But Mills offered no argument as to what constitutes a right. His reflections on the "deep hurt" of gay couples amounted to an emotional appeal, not a defense of a proposition. His argument was simply an assertion, an act of will.

18 Patrick Rael, "Political Control Hurts Academia," *Bowdoin Orient*, December 2, 2005, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/1386>.

19 Laurence, "Non-Issue of Political Diversity."

20 Bowdoin College Democrats, "Linhart Off Base," letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, February 6, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/legacy/2004-02-06/ltr01.htm>.

21 Ibid.

22 Barry Mills, "Now's the Time to Stand Up for Civil Rights and Freedoms in Maine: Vote 'Yes' on Question 1," letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, October 25, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7583>.

23 Ibid.



President Mills in this instance used the authority of his office to advance a political cause on a matter about which he had strong feelings. His letter acknowledged in a way that he was improperly crossing a boundary. He declared, “I set forth my views as a private citizen and resident of Brunswick, Maine,” rather than as president of Bowdoin. But he then proceeded to appeal to students’ loyalty to Bowdoin as a reason to join him in voting in favor of same-sex marriage:

I am honored to lead an institution that is nearly as old as our nation itself—a college devoted unambiguously to providing opportunity to those willing to work hard whatever their means, background, or personal beliefs. This access to opportunity and equal protection guides our college because it also defines America.²⁴

Mills’s partisan letter was a misuse of his office and a conspicuous failure to model critical thinking. But this discrepancy between Bowdoin principle and Bowdoin practice appears to have gone mostly unnoticed at Bowdoin itself, or at least it provoked little comment. The discrepancy was obscured by ideological conformity: 92 percent of Bowdoin students favored same-sex marriage.²⁵ Given this near unanimity, one wonders at the purpose of Mills’s impassioned plea.

Homosexuality provides grist for another example of the lack of openness. In fall 2011 the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship sponsored, and Bowdoin funded, an event where a local pastor explained his interpretation of the Biblical view on same-sex marriage. Within minutes of the beginning of the sermon, two students stormed out. They then filed a protest with the associate dean of multicultural student programs, who immediately and retroactively revoked funding for the event. The dean’s office then insisted that the college was committed to a free exchange of ideas:

I want to be absolutely clear that I absolutely support BCF [the Bowdoin Christian Fellowship] to give whatever message they feel is the right one for their faith; that said, there is a difference between your right to say anything and the College’s need to fund it.²⁶

The story has a few twists and turns (see the relevant sections in the full report), but this does not alter our conclusion that openness was compromised. The student protest should have been dismissed out of hand and the students informed that tolerance is a two-way street requiring thick skin, that they were free to protest in any civil way they wished, but that the dean’s office couldn’t comment or interfere without chilling free speech.

At some point closed-mindedness becomes a habit. Take global warming. Mills signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, wedding Bowdoin to the belief that a crisis in

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Garrett Casey, “76 Percent of Students to Vote Obama, Poll Finds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, November 2, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7668>.

²⁶ Melissa Wiley, “BCF Chapel Service Sparks Controversy, Leads to Withdrawal of Funds,” *Bowdoin Orient*, September 23, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6592>.

anthropogenic (man-made) global warming is an established fact—not just probable but certain. But what if it turns out not to be a fact? How easy will it be for a Bowdoin scientist or student to put forth views that oppose the official Bowdoin position? Closed-mindedness knows no stopping point. Bowdoin has similarly staked out fixed positions on other issues, including the legitimacy of racial preferences in college admissions (Mills helped to draft an amicus brief in the 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* case). Again, when Bowdoin takes an official position on a political matter, opposing views are discouraged.

6. Disabling the West

Openness (and more inclusively “critical thinking”) requires a commitment to the West. The term “critical thinking” refers to a human capacity, but it is a capacity that developed into a disciplined approach to ideas in a specific historical context and one that remains characteristic of the West. A commitment to critical thinking is a commitment to a Western mode of rational inquiry, regardless of whether this commitment is acknowledged. Moreover, the assumptions and values of Bowdoin students have been formed by the Western tradition. Freeing students from the shackles of their own thought requires study of the West, as well, of course, as the non-West.

But official Bowdoin on the whole shows little interest in the West. In part, this is because focusing on the West risks elevating the West over other cultures. That, in turn, works against the all-cultures-are-equal belief that is part of the quest for the cosmopolitan outlook of global citizenship.

Today, Bowdoin places little emphasis on the nation’s claims to distinction: its founding focus on human equality and freedom; its history of economic opportunity, invention, and free enterprise; and its willingness to sacrifice to secure the freedom of others. Around campus “American exceptionalism” is a term of derision; a student who expresses such views in a tone other than mockery is reflexively attacked.²⁷ So there is no confusion, we say plainly that it is not only appropriate but necessary that the ideas embodied in the term “American exceptionalism” be challenged through reasoned argument, but reasoned argument also requires the opportunity to defend these ideas.

To say that the nation’s claims to distinction are little emphasized at Bowdoin is not to say they are never emphasized. Some members of the economics department defend free market principles in the spirit of the liberal arts. Mills’s speeches often reflect an appreciation of the benefits of capitalism. Bowdoin faculty members can, and many do, go their own way. Still, in its overall tenor Bowdoin is cool to the idea that free market capitalism is better than the alternatives in promoting prosperity and social justice.

In place of the traditional focus on the West at Bowdoin, the emphasis today tends to be on diversity and multiculturalism, which are embedded in a narrative in which the United States conspicuously

27 “He ridiculed me, on the very first day of classes, for proclaiming that I was taking his class because ‘I love America.’” So Bowdoin student Steven Robinson commented in the *Bowdoin Orient* in reply to a letter to the editor from the professor in question. Patrick Rael, “Yarbrough Inaccurately Depicts College Diversity,” letter to the editor, *Bowdoin Orient*, April 29, 2011, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/6428>. When the topic of American exceptionalism comes up, a more typical response is that of *Bowdoin Orient* columnist Caitlin Hurwit, who stated: “American exceptionalism, then, is a rather meaningless turn of phrase. Patriotism is one thing, but an insistence on America’s continued superiority is another entirely.” “Patriotism without Exceptionalism,” *Bowdoin Orient*, February 26, 2010, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/5094>.

and perennially falls short of its ideals. Students too often learn to concentrate their critical doubts on what they come to see as America's false promises, and at the same time join their enthusiasm to an alternative vision in which "citizenship" is reconstructed as loyalty to the norms of racial justice, gender equity, multiculturalism, etc.

Bowdoin turns aside from most of the historic content of American citizenship and has no curricular requirements that center on the American founding or the history of the nation. Bowdoin does, however, require all students to gain a "critical understanding of the world outside of the United States" via its "International Perspectives" distribution requirement. As for the United States itself, the nation is dissolved into its constituent ethnic and other social groups in the "Exploring Social Differences" requirement.

While the government department offers ample opportunity to study American political thought, in the history department there are no courses devoted to American political, military, diplomatic, or intellectual history except those that deal with some group aspect of America. For example, there is "The History of African Americans, 1619 to 1865" and "The History of African Americans from 1865 to the Present." There is no comparable sequence on America, although the department does offer "Colonial America and the Atlantic World, 1607–1763" and "American Society in the New Nation, 1763–1840." Both are "Exploring Social Differences" courses that emphasize social history. "Colonial America and the Atlantic World," for example, deals with "European, Native American, and African cultures, and their separate, combined, and often contested contributions to a new 'provincial,' increasingly stratified (both socially and economically), and regionally disparate culture."²⁸

History majors at Bowdoin are not required to take a single course in American history; yet they are required to take several courses in non-Western history.

The government department is a significant enough exception, not just in its commitment to the West, to warrant comment. While this department has not escaped the Bowdoin zeitgeist, there is ample exposure to classical liberal ideas, ones that today we misguidedly call "conservative." More Bowdoin students enroll in government than in any other department and that, we suspect, is no accident. Government is popular likely because, more than elsewhere, students find the intellectual nourishment that satisfies the human longing for knowledge and understanding. A First-Year Seminar course description from the government department presents a broad philosophical horizon:

An introduction to the fundamental issues of political philosophy: human nature, the relationship between individual and political community, the nature of justice, the place of virtue, the idea of freedom, and the role of history.²⁹

By contrast, here is the course description of a First-Year Seminar taught by a member of the German department and cross-listed with both gay and lesbian studies and gender and women's studies:

²⁸ *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 205.

²⁹ "GOV 28, 'Human Being and Citizen,'" *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 164.

Explores the myriad ways that prostitutes have been represented in modern Western culture from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present...and examines prostitution as a complex urban phenomenon and a vehicle through which artists and writers grapple with issues of labor, morality, sexuality, and gender roles.³⁰

7. Exceptionalisms

The lack of attention to America and the West not only impairs critical thinking, it weakens sentimental and reasoned attachment to country. Over its long history Bowdoin emphasized citizenship in one form or another. Only recently has it disdained nationalism and American exceptionalism.

At Bowdoin, America is not exceptional, but Bowdoin itself is. A common theme of President Mills's major speeches over the past eleven years is that Bowdoin is uniquely good at upholding the liberal arts tradition:

Few institutions are able to claim and articulate their guiding principles as clearly and genuinely as Bowdoin. This is one reason for the palpable sense of pride at Bowdoin today—a pride in what we are, what we stand for, and how we are different. It is one important aspect of our exceptionalism—an exceptionalism built from a strong, clear, and enduring sense of purpose and mission, and an understanding that our commitment to the liberal arts model and to the common good sets us apart. But the exceptionalism of Bowdoin extends well beyond our founding concepts. It is also defined by what we are today.³¹

Compare Mills's praise of Bowdoin to his impromptu response to the terrorists on 9/11:

Thank you for being here this afternoon on this very tragic day. Ours is a world that is not always just or fair. Tragedy is all too familiar around the world. We, in our recent past, in America have been fortunate for the most part to be spared much of that tragedy on our own land, except of course for the tragedy of the first World Trade Center bombing and Oklahoma City. Terrorism in our own backyards has always haunted us—now it is very much a reality and will likely change our lives forever. As I walked across campus today I thought of Ambassador Pickering's talk on American diplomacy, so rational, thoughtful and balanced. Then as I ventured back to my office to see the flag at half-staff and the Bowdoin war memorial I remembered that the world is not so rational or balanced. We remember that we at Bowdoin above all stand for what is just and right. Now is a time for us to stand together and talk—support each other. This is not a time to be alone—mutual support is essential. Our prayers and thoughts are with all of you.³²

30 "GER 27, 'From Flowers of Evil to Pretty Women: Prostitutes in Modern Western Culture,'" *Bowdoin College Catalogue 2012–2013*, 163.

31 Barry Mills, "Baccalaureate '08," Bowdoin College, Office of the President, May 23, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2008/baccalaureate-08.shtml>.

32 Barry Mills, "September 11 Campus Meeting," Bowdoin College, September 11, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/sept-11-all-campus.shtml>.

Mills was clearly grieved by what had happened and it is understandable that his first thoughts were for the Bowdoin community. Yet from this distance the speech seems remarkably silent about the attack on his country. The American flag at half-mast reminds him only that the world is irrational. He considers that “*we at Bowdoin* above all stand for what is just and right” (emphasis added). There is no word about what America stands for; indeed, no word about America at all. His reflex on that day was to reaffirm the justice of Bowdoin and summon the Bowdoin community to moral unity, with no word about the larger situation.

For contrast, consider how an earlier president of Bowdoin, William DeWitt Hyde (1885–1917), responded to the entry of America into World War I:

Rather than live ourselves, or leave our brothers of the European democracies to live, in such a world as a victorious enemy would make, we throw into the fateful scales of war the whole weight of our resources; the full strength of our sons.³³

In his inaugural address on October 27, 2001—six weeks after 9/11—President Mills returned to the multicultural theme. He began by recalling “a young Iranian student, sitting up there in the balcony” on 9/11, who “reminded us quite rightly about differences, understanding, and respect.” Mills connected 9/11 with times of “transition in [Bowdoin’s] college leadership,” such as the inauguration of Samuel Harris in 1867, “as the nation struggled to recover from the Civil War.”³⁴ This seems a pretty small circle of reference for a national tragedy. His speech ended as it had begun, with appeals to multiculturalism.

Initially the tragedy confirmed for President Mills the central tenets of a Bowdoin education: the need for diversity and global citizenship. Mills’s remarks on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, however, suggest a change of tone and emphasis. He said, “[W]e are a resilient country and a resourceful people” who “adhered to our principles and values” through the ordeal. He also praised those “who heeded the call for action by enlisting in the military.”³⁵

8. Shadow Boxing

The difficulty of striking a better balance of liberals and conservatives on the Bowdoin faculty remains an issue over which official Bowdoin occasionally frets but never takes seriously. An oft-repeated theme is that it would be a terrible thing to permit or encourage search committees to inquire about the political orientations of candidates, because doing so would “politicize” faculty recruitment. No one, as far as we know, has argued that Bowdoin should inquire into candidates’ politics or that recruitment should be politicized, so these declarations appear to be aimed at warding off imaginary dangers. But they do leave the discussion stuck on the theme that nothing practical can be done.

33 Quoted in Herbert Ross Brown, *Sills of Bowdoin: The Life of Kenneth Charles Morton Sills, 1879–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 337.

34 Barry Mills, “Inauguration Address,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, October 27, 2001, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2001/inauguration-address.shtml>.

35 Barry Mills, “September 11 Anniversary Observance Remarks,” Bowdoin College, Office of the President, September 11, 2011, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/president/speeches/2011/september-11-anniversary-observance-remarks.shtml>.

Former dean for academic affairs Craig McEwen said, “We do not ask job candidates about their political affiliations or views, so they play no role in our selection of candidates.”³⁶ This is disingenuous. Bowdoin in other circumstances would not equate the absence of an explicit question to mean an absence of discrimination. In Bowdoin’s “Faculty Recruitment Procedures,” for instance, the Office of the Dean for Academic Affairs explicitly reminds search committees to be aware of “unexamined bias” toward minority candidates.³⁷ The procedures note, and quite correctly, that some of the faculty may simply be unaware of their own bias, which is why Bowdoin takes extraordinary steps to ensure that inadvertent discrimination does not fence out minority and women candidates. Other steps Bowdoin takes to overcome bias include requiring a member of the Faculty Diversity Committee to sit in on every faculty search and tenure decision.³⁸

This attentiveness to the possibility of racial or gender discrimination has no analog when it comes to discrimination on the basis of political views. Are the political views of candidates for faculty appointment really invisible to Bowdoin search committee members? It seems unlikely. Inferences can be drawn from a lot of sources: the specialized topics that candidates have pursued in their research, their non-scholarly publications, their involvement in identity-group caucuses that are part of many academic associations, and their explicit statements favoring or disfavoring political candidates.

Solving the problem does not call for affirmative action for conservatives. It calls for stopping the silent discrimination against conservatives. Having said this, we acknowledge that finding conservatives is not easy, not because conservatives aren’t interested “in accumulating knowledge,” as Prof. Hetherington charged,³⁹ but because earlier in their lives conservatives are discouraged from becoming academics. Still, many qualified conservatives populate the think tanks and the broader NGO world, and a solid supply of classical liberals inhabits academia as well. Bowdoin can’t find conservatives in part because it doesn’t teach what conservatives tend to want to teach. If, for example, Bowdoin decided to offer a survey course in American political, military, and diplomatic history, it would likely find a qualified faculty member. Let the obvious be our final word on this topic: Bowdoin will find conservatives only if it truly wants to find them.

III. DIVERSITY

President Mills’s 2010 convocation speech was ambiguous in certain respects. He welcomed diversity of opinion in the abstract but dismissed criticisms of Bowdoin’s approach to racial diversity. This was one instance of how the diversity doctrine at Bowdoin stifles debate about diversity itself. “Diversity” is a disguised form of racism. However well-intentioned diversity’s advocates may be, they subscribe to the notion that, contrary to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s formulation, it *is* better to judge some

36 Sridhar, “Republican Professors.”

37 “Faculty Recruitment Procedures 2012–2013,” Bowdoin College, Dean for Academic Affairs, 5, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/departments-chairs/pdf/faculty-recruiting-memo.pdf>.

38 Ibid., 2.

39 Hetherington, “Conservatives in Short Supply.”



people by the color of their skin than by the content of their character.⁴⁰ Diversity is, in the liberal theorist Jim Sleeper's phrase, "liberal racism."⁴¹ It splits the nation into divisions perpetuated on the grounds of permanent grievance and difference that can be handed on from generation to generation, exacting permanent atonement even from those who had no historical connection to the original grievances.⁴²

Today, diversity ripples through every level of the college campus. For the most part the effects are unseen, ignored, or denied. Diversity creates courses that would not otherwise be taught, employs faculty who would not otherwise be hired, and leads to dissembling that would not otherwise be required. It foments ideology, politicization, and rules for student life. It influences faculty research interests and weakens academic standards. And it admits students who would not otherwise be accepted to college. Be this as it may, we are more concerned with how diversity influences what Bowdoin teaches than whom it teaches.

Diversity is a doctrine that assumes that communities of virtually all sorts benefit from having representatives from various demographic groups. This assumption justifies an admissions office in giving extra weight to the applicant who belongs to one of these preferred groups. The approach is built on stereotyping, as it assumes that people who belong to a particular identity group share particular ideas and that the members of the group are the best and most appropriate spokesmen for those ideas.

The emphasis on group status strikes a blow against *individual* rights, a foundational idea of the modern West. If Bowdoin students had more exposure to the West, perhaps they might be more likely to notice the conflict between the West and diversity.

1. Faculty Recruitment

Bowdoin's emphasis on diversity has tangled consequences. Several of these are visible in faculty recruitment. According to the 1992 "Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity," which the faculty endorsed:

If we are really interested in attracting a more diverse faculty, the place to start is the job description. Although it would be unfortunate and untrue to think that faculty candidates from diverse minority groups only teach and research "minority" issues, a significant number do.⁴³

Many of the courses that result from this kind of faculty recruitment are highly politicized, and promote and celebrate the groups they study. These programs encourage students to see America and the world

40 "I have a dream this afternoon that my four little children...will not come up in the same young days that I came up within, but they will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not the color of their skin." Martin Luther King Jr., "Speech at the Great March on Detroit," Detroit, Michigan, June 1963, text available at http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_speech_at_the_great_march_on_detroit/.

41 Jim Sleeper, *Liberal Racism: How Fixating on Race Subverts the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

42 See Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003) and Russell K. Nieli, *Wounds That Will Not Heal: Affirmative Action and Our Continuing Racial Divide* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

43 "Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity," Bowdoin College, November 9, 1992, catalog no. 1.7.3, box 10, folder 88, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

not as a collection of individuals but as a cluster of groups. Because these studies programs are seen as promoting a group perspective, they are used to recruit minority, female, and gay faculty members, and act as lodestones for students who identify with these programs demographically.

To glimpse a specific example of how these studies programs operate in this manner, consider the case of Kristen Ghodsee, John S. Osterweis Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at Bowdoin. On her faculty page on the Bowdoin website, Prof. Ghodsee gives as her current research interests "the ethnographic study of post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe and the contributions of state socialist women's organizations to the international women's movement between 1968 and 1990."⁴⁴ She explained in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* how Bowdoin wooed her with tenacity:

The department offered me a competitive salary and a teaching load of two courses a semester, comparable to what I would expect at a major research university, as well as a generous pot of start-up money and the promise of a one-year sabbatical after my third year on the tenure track.⁴⁵

She had expected Bowdoin to be "merely" a "teaching institution" and that her research aspirations would be "prematurely smothered under an avalanche of needy undergraduates." She braced for "academic death" but instead found the opposite.

Clearly Ghodsee is not much interested in teaching "needy undergraduates"—and Bowdoin apparently made a conscious decision to sacrifice teaching for research, a decision in keeping with a long-term trend. Of course, many Bowdoin faculty are devoted teachers and would be appalled by Ghodsee's disdainful comments, but many others would not.

The influence of studies faculty like Ghodsee does not stop at the classroom door. For example, in April 2005 Ghodsee recommended to the faculty that the wording of a question on the student course evaluations be changed because "women faculty were scoring consistently lower on #2 than on #5." Ghodsee explained that "We thought this might be because 'conduct' referred to a more authoritarian lecture style. So, given student gender biases, we suggested a broader, more inclusive language."⁴⁶ Here, Ghodsee's assumption of the gender biases of her students crept further into the Bowdoin culture.

Diversity also affects the nature and quality of the faculty. The 2000–2001 *Faculty Handbook* stated:

In order to improve the diversity of the faculty, and to redress *the under-representation of women and minorities* in the faculty, Bowdoin will consider among qualifications for

⁴⁴ "Kristen Ghodsee" faculty page, Bowdoin College, Women's and Gender Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/k/ghodsee/>.

⁴⁵ Kristen Ghodsee, "A Research Career at a Liberal Arts College," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 25, 2008, <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Research-Career-at-a/45760/>.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Faculty, Bowdoin College, electronic files, April 4, 2005, catalog no. 1.7.2, ArchCD box 1, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

appointment, a candidate's gender and ethnicity (*specifically, African American, Asian American, Latino American, Native American*).⁴⁷ (emphases added)

Note that Bowdoin does not claim that diversity is a “tiebreaker,” but rather that diversity, like scholarship, is a “qualification.” Not surprisingly, we do not learn how much weight diversity should be given, but in light of the truly Herculean steps Bowdoin takes to ensure faculty diversity, the weight is no doubt substantial. One such step includes the requirement to have members of the diversity committee (those most committed to diversity and generally the least knowledgeable about the subject matter under discussion) sit in on meetings addressing issues of hiring and tenure.

Though the drive to turn Bowdoin faculty toward research specialization instead of general education began long before the college embraced the studies programs and its commitment to diversity, there has turned out to be a strong affinity between research specialization and diversity. Prof. Ghodsee's focus on “post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe”—nostalgia for the communist regime in Romania in particular—is a case in point. Bowdoin has no general education focus on Eastern Europe or scholarly strength on related topics. Were Bowdoin more attentive to the coherence of its curriculum it probably would have chosen an East European scholar with a much broader reach. Ghodsee's specialization makes sense only if the program's primary concern is ideological uniformity. In this sense, the studies programs are a congenial place for specialists who have no natural connection to the larger curriculum.

2. Dissembling

Diversity also leads to dissembling. Bowdoin feels it necessary to deny that it is giving significant preference to blacks (and others). For example, in its 2006 *Self-Study*, Bowdoin declared that

By all objective measures, the academic quality of Bowdoin students has improved, even as the College has become more diverse, with increasing numbers of students from less-advantaged backgrounds—socio-economically and educationally.⁴⁸

That is strictly true but misleading. It would be more accurate to say that academic quality has improved, but not as much as it would have without the pursuit of diversity.

Dissembling begets more dissembling. When Bowdoin made SAT scores optional in 1969, President Roger Howell Jr. (1969–1978) declared that such standardized test scores inflexibly disallowed the recruitment of students who were not academically well-prepared.⁴⁹ Today, the *stated* reason, however, is that test scores are not predictive of academic success. But if Bowdoin believes this, it contradicts that belief when it purchases the names and addresses of high-scoring students in order to recruit them to the college.

⁴⁷ *Faculty Handbook 2000–2001*, Bowdoin College, 10, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/forms-policies/policies/pdf/f00handbook.pdf>.

⁴⁸ *The Bowdoin College Self-Study 2006* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2006), 61.

⁴⁹ Roger Howell Jr., “A New Humanism,” inaugural address, Bowdoin College, October 3, 1969, catalog no. 1.2.10.1, box 10, folder 31, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

In January 19, 2011, *Bloomberg News* reported that Bowdoin had been purchasing SAT scores in order to identify students who will be successful at Bowdoin. When Scott Meiklejohn, Bowdoin's dean of admissions, was pressed to explain the inconsistency, he said that "Buying names of students based on their test scores doesn't run contrary to Bowdoin's test-optional policy."⁵⁰ Meiklejohn added:

If there were a convenient way to search for and reach out to 11th graders based on who is going to submit a wonderful essay, or who exhibits exceptional curiosity and motivation in the classroom, or who earns outstanding teacher recommendations, or who has shown a serious commitment to interesting activities outside the classroom...I would use it.⁵¹

Obviously, the college believes that SAT scores have predictive value. Why else would Bowdoin purchase them?

IV. CHARACTER

1. Knowingness

All colleges shape the character of students, though "character" now has an old-fashioned ring. In the 1960s, American higher education collectively decided that it would withdraw from its old role of *in loco parentis*. Instead of acting in the place of parents as a steward of the good behavior and moral character of students, colleges and universities would henceforth treat students as adults capable of managing their own lives. Bowdoin very much participated in this shift, but the de-emphasis on explicit efforts to shape the character of students did not change the practical reality that a college *does* shape their character: by the rules it sets, the habits it cultivates, the incentives it provides, the punishments it metes out, and above all by the values it fosters. Bowdoin encourages a particular vision of good character.

"Knowingness"—the antithesis of humility—is one aspect of character. It is the enemy of education. It is a formula for intellectual complacency.

On May 16, 2011, when Tom Klingenstein and Peter Wood came to Bowdoin in response to an invitation to speak, a student challenged them to "Tell me one subject matter not covered in the Bowdoin curriculum." He was one of several students irritated by the suggestion that Bowdoin College had left some important things out of his education. Another student explained that he and his fellow students had no need for a survey course in American history because they had already covered that material in their high school AP courses. He challenged Wood and Klingenstein to ask him any—yes, any—question on American history. He promised to "ace" it.

This student ran up to Klingenstein after the meeting and pressed his views at some length. He had the raw ingredients of a good student: passion, brains, and a thirst for knowledge. What he lacked was

50 Janet Lorin, "Bowdoin Says No Need for SAT While Buying College Board Scores," *Bloomberg News*, July 19, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-19/bowdoin-says-no-need-for-sat-while-buying-college-board-scores.html>.

51 *Ibid.*

the humility needed to comprehend the limits of his knowledge. This student might have acquired that humility had he taken a college-level survey course on American political (or military, diplomatic, or intellectual) history. Such a course would have drawn attention to large gaps in his understanding. But unfortunately for him, Bowdoin does not offer such courses.

Why does Bowdoin put him in this situation? It is a direct consequence of the educational decision the college made several decades ago when it embraced the idea that students were best able to judge for themselves what they should learn. This conception of students as possessors—at age eighteen—of all the wisdom they need to make good decisions about what they should study is integral to the “global citizenship” doctrine. Bowdoin effectively communicates this message, “Our students are very knowledgeable, particularly about the West, and we need not concern ourselves with baseline information they acquired in high school.” Only, of course, very few college students have. Bowdoin has confused intellectual aptitude with developed skill and actual knowledge.

Bowdoin today has virtually no encompassing academic requirements. Students select all their own courses and, within a few loose parameters, build their own curricula. Departments can and do set requirements for majors, but if a student finds these irksome, he can devise his own major. Core requirements *could* provide some of the unity that Bowdoin so desperately desires. Requirements would also foster a richer intellectual life outside the classroom, leading to the development of better critical thinking skills. The fallacies on which giving students control over their education rested were neatly summed up by a Bowdoin English professor more than thirty years ago:

The plea for giving individual students fundamental initiative for their educational program is built on two subtle fallacies. One is the sentimental notion that students have viable knowledge of how they should be educated before they are educated, and that part of their education is acting on this knowledge before it is acquired. This is sheer bootstrappism. The second fallacy is even more illogical. It arises from a totally false analogy—the notion, conscious or unconscious, that students are consumers and curriculum is the merchandise.⁵²

2. Sexual License

The main qualities of character that Bowdoin emphasizes are matters of will: students are encouraged to do what they wish. Not so surprisingly, what they wish is not necessarily healthy. Just as they cannot educate themselves, they cannot entirely regulate themselves.

Bowdoin does very little to cultivate in students the habits of self-restraint and personal discipline. Bowdoin students today convince each other that they work hard, yet they spend only about 17.4 hours per week on average outside class studying—a fraction of the time Bowdoin students once devoted to their

⁵² L.S. Hall, “Notes on Curriculum Problems,” Committee on Curriculum and Educational Policy, Bowdoin College, 1981, catalog no. 1.7.4, vol. 4, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME.

academic work.⁵³ The college has a relaxed approach to underage drinking as long as students stick to beer and stay away from hard alcohol. And Bowdoin, in our view, positively promotes sexual promiscuity.

In 2009, for example, Bowdoin added a play written by students about the sexual practices of undergraduates at Bowdoin to “New Student Orientation.” *Speak About It* is required viewing for all new students. The play presents couples—gay and straight—thinking aloud about their carnal relations with one another. It includes a disclaimer that students should feel free to decline sex, but focuses entirely and with enthusiasm on those who don’t decline. In one scene, an undergraduate male and an undergraduate female voice their thoughts aloud while preparing to have sex:

Male: We’ve been making out for a while now.

Female: I wish he would just ask me to take off my shirt.

Male: Really? That won’t kill the mood?

Female: What mood? We’re in a bunk bed. Just ask.

Eventually, the male sneaks away as the female orgasms loudly alone.⁵⁴

The 2011 performance of *Speak About It* concluded:

Whatever you decide you want your relationship with sex to be about there are opportunities out there. Whether you want to have sex or you don’t, you’re looking for love or a one-night stand, you’re gay or straight or somewhere in between, it’s all possible. And whatever happens remember to be safe, get consent, and watch out for your friends.⁵⁵

The crude content leads to an emphatic message that the only requirement for “any healthy sexual encounter” is “consent.” To help things along, Bowdoin makes sure that a generous supply of condoms is conspicuously available on every floor of every dorm and in other public places as well. This is not just encouraging *safe* sex, it is encouraging sex.

Sexual behavior among late adolescents is nothing new, but it is fairly new for colleges to aggressively market sexual promiscuity to their students. For official Bowdoin, the *only* consideration that bears on decisions about sexual intimacy is whether the partners have given “consent.” By framing the matter in this way, Bowdoin drives other concerns underground: that sexual license might be damaging psychologically or morally, or that there is something socially amiss with the “hookup culture.”⁵⁶ And in these ways,

53 Jonathan Goldstein, “The Tradeoff Between Extra-Curricular Activities and the Academic Mission of Small Liberal Arts Colleges: Why Some Schools Are Poor Educational Investments,” unpublished paper, August 19, 2008; rev. February 11, 2009, 2-3.

54 This content is transcribed from the *Speak About It* video on Speak About It, <http://speakaboutitonline.com/>.

55 “Speak About It 2011,” Bowdoin College, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/sexual-assault/video/speakaboutit.mp4>.

56 See, Joan R. Kahn and Kathryn A. London, “Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, no. 4 (November 1991): 845–55; Tim B. Heaton, “Factors Contributing to the Increasing Marital Stability in the United States,” *Journal of Family Issues* 23, no. 3 (April 2002): 392–409; Jay Teachman, “Premarital Sex, Premarital Cohabitation, and the Risk of Subsequent Marital Dissolution among Women,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65, no. 2 (May 2003): 444–55; and Anthony Paik, “Adolescent Sexuality and the Risk of Marital Dissolution,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 73, no. 2 (April 2011): 472–85.

Bowdoin marginalizes students who might for religious reasons or simply on the basis of personal insight reject the college's undergraduate culture of sexual license. No effort is made to create space for such students.

"Hooking up" has become the campus norm, with repeated surveys indicating that about three-quarters of Bowdoin students participate in sexual relations with partners with whom they do not have emotional and relational commitments. Here are the findings of one such study:

Twenty-seven percent said they "hook up" only while sober, 21 percent are normally "a little tipsy," 28 percent are "heavily buzzed," 18 percent are "pretty trashed," and 6 percent are "totally wasted."⁵⁷

The terms of these results make the report sound more like satire than social science, but the report presented itself—and the *Bowdoin Orient* accepted it—as serious inquiry. Perhaps the key finding is that 73 percent of the respondents who said they hook up do so having used some measure of alcohol. Is there not something amiss when sex must be fueled by alcohol? Could it be that even students sense that there is something wrong with sex without emotion?

We report these findings in more detail in our section on student culture in the full report. Highlighting them in this preface invites the all-but-certain response that we advocate a return to Victorian hypocrisy. We don't. But sexual behavior is a major element in the formation of character, and a breakdown of restraint in this arena spills over elsewhere. And the psychological consequences of poor decisions in this realm can last well into adulthood. Bowdoin sees its role in promoting sexual freedom and experimentation among students as a positive contribution to their education, because it expands students' sense of "tolerance" as well as their moral autonomy.

V. SUSTAINABILITY

Character formation is woven into many other aspects of academic and social life at Bowdoin. It is connected, for example, with the college's emphasis on "sustainability," which deals to an extent with the current generation's obligation to future generations. Sustainability sounds to the uninitiated like just another word for environmentalism, but that is wide of the mark. Sustainability is *not* environmentalism, though it uses environmental themes as its springboard.

In spring 2013, about five hundred Bowdoin students signed a petition sponsored by Bowdoin Climate Action, a student group that is calling on the Bowdoin administration to divest its holdings in fossil fuel energy companies. Bowdoin has 1.4 percent of its endowment invested in such companies. One of a cluster of student groups on campus that pursue sustainability activism, Bowdoin Climate Action is a "subset" of the Green Bowdoin Alliance, the "go-to student environmental group" that works on "political activism, changing student behavior, and dining-related issues."⁵⁸ There is also Green Global Initiatives,

⁵⁷ Alison L. McConnell, "Class Releases 'Hookup' and Drug Use Stats," *Bowdoin Orient*. April 23, 2004, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/view/104>.

⁵⁸ "Student Involvement," Bowdoin College, Sustainability, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/student-involvement/index.shtml>.



which “recognizes that Climate Change is one of the most pressing issues that our generation faces.” It brings speakers to campus to “network with students on ‘green’ jobs.”⁵⁹ Another group, the Evergreens, sponsors “forums on environmental issues,” assists “in campus greening efforts,” and organizes Earth Week events.⁶⁰ Bowdoin’s official Sustainability Office also has a student “Eco-Rep” assigned to each residence hall.

Sustainability is unmistakably a major ideological presence at Bowdoin. But it is something that an outsider might nonetheless easily misinterpret because it wears its environmentalist colors so prominently.

“Sustainability” as understood by its promoters actually has three parts: environmentalism, anticapitalism, and progressive notions of “social justice,” e.g., anticolonialism, multiculturalism, and feminism. It is indeed a save-the-world doctrine, but the salvation is to be achieved by dismantling the fossil fuel world economy, limiting private property rights, dramatically increasing government regulation and discretionary authority, redefining what counts as “public resources,” redistributing wealth on a global basis, emphasizing racial differences, and empowering women. Sustainability, like most social movements, presents different faces to different audiences. To some it may mean recycling plastics and papers and buying a Prius for family transportation. But on campus the sustainability movement has harder edges.

At the moment, a nationwide movement led by activist Bill McKibben and his organization 350.org is trying to persuade colleges and universities to divest their holdings in fossil fuel-based energy companies. McKibben is a long-term advocate of radical reduction of the world’s population who has only recently taken up the cause of fighting global warming by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Joining a panel at Bowdoin via skype that included the executive director of Maine’s chapter of the Sierra Club and as a guest of Bowdoin Climate Action, McKibben promoted his divestment campaign on February 23, 2013. As of that date, 256 colleges and universities had formed student groups that called for such divestment.

The divestment campaign came to Bowdoin in late 2012, in the wake of a well-publicized referendum in November in which 72 percent of participating Harvard undergraduates voted to call on their administration to divest. Bowdoin students launched a similar signature campaign and President Mills replied in December that while he would “never say never,” he was not ready to divest Bowdoin’s holdings at that point.⁶¹ The Bowdoin student body understood Mills as saying that Bowdoin would not ever divest, and indeed Mills has on various occasions reminded the faculty of Bowdoin’s dependence on Wall Street. Of course, getting a college to divest its holdings in oil, coal, and natural gas companies would do nothing to halt or impede fossil fuel production. The campaign has far more to do with building ideological antipathy for fossil fuels among college students than it does with changing national environmental policy.⁶²

59 Ibid.

60 “The Evergreens,” Bowdoin College, Environmental Studies, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/environmental-studies/resources/the-evergreens.shtm>.

61 Marisa McGarry, “Mills Says College Will Not Divest from Fossil Fuels,” *Bowdoin Orient*, December 7, 2012, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/7814>.

62 See Stanley Kurtz, “Fossil-Fuel Divestment,” *National Review Online*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/341991/fossil-fuel-divestment-stanley-kurtz>.

The divestment campaign is one example of how “sustainability” reaches beyond environmentalism, but there are many more. In 2009, Bowdoin’s “Climate Days” program featured a talk by Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx.⁶³ Carter is a political activist who rose to prominence by leading opposition to the building of waste treatment plants in minority neighborhoods. She now advocates replacing a “pollution-based economy” with locally-raised foods and “green economic development,” and she wants people to be trained in “urban forestry management, horticultural infrastructure, building green roofs, [and] restoring some of our wetlands.” Carter likens her movement to the civil rights movement.

Colleges should be places where ideas like these can be debated, but because the sustainability movement has been officially endorsed by President Mills and Bowdoin has put forward definite goals and timetables for meeting them, there really is no debate at Bowdoin over the *principles* of the sustainability movement. What *is* open for debate are the details of implementation.

Bowdoin does very little to foster a sense of obligation or stewardship to the achievements of past generations. Bowdoin sometimes senses the importance of history, but is unwilling to show history any real respect. Mills again makes the point. The early presidents of Bowdoin were committed to what they called “the Common Good.” By this, they meant primarily the virtue and piety students were supposed to model to the larger society. Mills has kept the term, but replaced virtue and piety with ideas of social justice, transnationalism, and sustainability. In doing so he pays homage to the importance of history, but he abuses its obligations. Only once that we know of—a 2008 lecture by Eva Brann, a tutor in the great books program at St. John’s College, Annapolis—has anyone at Bowdoin raised a public challenge to the way Mills has appropriated the idea of the common good.⁶⁴ Brann, who argued that the common good lies in an open-minded seeking of human excellence rather than in pursuing utilitarian “public goods,” provoked a lively discussion but does not appear to have persuaded Mills or Bowdoin as a whole to amend its use of the term.⁶⁵

Mills’s understanding of the common good puts emphasis on empathy and, perhaps above all, tolerance. These are admirable qualities but they are not the highest virtues. On the other hand, the classical virtues as taught by Bowdoin’s founding president fostered the courage of great-souled men who not only fed the poor, but were willing to sacrifice their lives for a great cause. No one lays down his life for sustainability.

63 “Environmental Justice Leader Majora Carter Wraps Up Climate Days,” Bowdoin College, Sustainability, September 28, 2009, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/activity/2009/majora-carter.shtml>. Full audio of Majora Carter’s talk, “Green Jobs and the Green Economy,” is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/common-hour-audio/id429496124>.

64 “Eva Brann Lecture,” Bowdoin College, Calendar, April 18, 2008, <http://www.bowdoin.edu/calendar/event.jsp?bid=329686&rid=39727#.UUuMWhfktLc>.

65 Ross Jacobs, “Eva Brann Pushes Students Rethink [sic] the Common Good in Education,” *Bowdoin Orient*, May 2, 2008, <http://bowdoinorient.com/article/3556>.

VI. WHAT NEXT?

In his 2010 convocation speech, Mills said he didn't know how to address the lack of intellectual diversity on campus. He threw up his hands when, at the very least, he might have established a commission to study the problem. Would Bowdoin's nearly all-liberal faculty admit that there is a problem to be studied? We've quoted some faculty members who emphatically say there is no problem. On the other hand, there are many Bowdoin faculty members committed to the liberal arts. They might endorse a commission. Bowdoin usually takes its commissions seriously. At different times in Bowdoin's recent history, it established commissions to recommend ways the college could be more hospitable to minorities, women, and gays and lesbians. By and large, the recommendations were adopted. Perhaps a commission to study liberal bias might produce similarly fruitful results.

Americans take their ideals seriously. Bowdoin's liberal arts ideals call for openness and tolerance—tolerance even of conservative views. Hold up these ideals to actual practice, and one may be surprised to find a college willing to mobilize. Bowdoin only stands to gain if it rededicates itself to its own principles of honesty, openness, and decency—the principles of liberal education that are among our best traditions and are part of the foundation of Western civilization.

VII. THE FULL REPORT

This preface has been written to circulate independently of the full report, but it is by no means intended to stand alone. It is rather an interpretation of the report, which demands attention in its own right. We invite the reader to turn—open-mindedly—to *What Does Bowdoin Teach?*

This preface presents what I take to be some of the larger lessons of the report, but the report itself is a gold mine of material about Bowdoin and is certainly open to other readings. The report consists of five main sections: (1) Academic Instruction, (2) Key Concepts, (3) Student Culture, (4) Student Learning, and (5) Faculty. While as an author I entertain the hope that readers will want to proceed through the report page by page absorbing the slow accumulation of detail, I recognize that some sections will attract more interest than others. The three chapters on academic instruction focus on the nuts and bolts of the curriculum. They deal largely with the consequences of Bowdoin's fateful decision in 1969 to abolish its general education requirements. They also present an account of the rise of the studies programs.

The next chapter deals with Bowdoin's key concepts. By this we mean the ideas, such as "the Common Good," and "diversity," that dominate Bowdoin's conversations about itself. This chapter opens windows on the life of the college without demanding any technical knowledge of how higher education works.

The chapter on student culture begins with a rather lengthy examination of how Bowdoin frames issues of sex and sexuality among students. It also includes sections on drinking and partying, sports, hazing, and religion. Depending on the reader's familiarity with the contemporary college campus, this material will come across as standard fare or alarming. We don't mean to suggest that Bowdoin is outside the mainstream in these matters—but the mainstream definitely isn't what it used to be.



Student learning is a brief chapter that deals with Bowdoin's idea of "selectivity," popular majors, critical thinking, and intellectual life on campus.

The chapter on faculty collects several themes, perhaps most importantly the college's emphasis on faculty members as academic research specialists and the difficulties Bowdoin has had in bringing to life the role of faculty members as advisors to students.

The report ends with a reflection on "What Bowdoin Doesn't Teach" in which we offer an interpretive synthesis of the entire report.

Even at that we are not quite through with our tax on the reader's time. The report as originally written was much longer. We decided that some sections that we cut from the draft deserved a home of their own. They can be found on the NAS website as "Bowdoin Preliminaries." I would draw particular attention to our history of the college from its founding in 1794, and to the stand-alone essays on "The Common Good's Uncommon Usage" and "'Diversity' Comes to Bowdoin."

This report presents a new way to look at how liberal arts education proceeds in its primary tasks of shaping the minds and character of students. There is much more to be said, not just of Bowdoin, but of liberal arts colleges elsewhere. We look forward to what we know will be a thoughtful critique and development of the ideas presented here.