

REPORT

to the Select Committee of the
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Dr. Stephen H. Balch
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My name is Stephen Balch and I'm President of the National Association of Scholars, a membership organization of professors, academic administrators, and graduate students committed to higher education reform. Founded in 1987, we have a dues-paying membership of about 3,500. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Select Committee.

I'd like to direct my comments to those aspects of the committee's mandate that involve the state of intellectual diversity on the campuses of Pennsylvania's state-owned and state-related colleges and universities. HR 177 recognizes that "academic freedom is likely to thrive in an environment of intellectual diversity that protects and fosters independence of thought and speech." In formulating the select committee's lines of inquiry, HR 177 raises the question of whether "students have an academic environment, quality of life on campus and reasonable access to course materials that create an environment conducive to learning, the development of critical thinking, and the exploration and expression of independent thought," and whether "academic freedom and the right to explore and express independent thought is available to and freely practiced by faculty and students." The issue of improper and unconstitutional restrictions on free speech embedded in university policy and practice have already been taken up at an earlier hearing, and I won't therefore try to cover that ground again. It is important to understand, however, that these policies reflect what, in my opinion, are deep misunderstandings of a university's educational and intellectual mission, manifest in many other aspects of state university policy. Furthermore, these misguided policies would probably not exist if the range of serious intellectual discourse on state campuses had not become as narrow, cramped, one-sided, and parochial as I will argue it now is.

My presentation is divided into the following parts:

- 1) An explanation of the difference between education, on the one hand, and advocacy and activism on the other, drawing upon major

- academic policy statements to show that the first is a core function of the university, while the second and third are alien to it.
- 2) A discussion of the currently skewed nature of professorial opinion, caused in part by academic advocacy and activism, and also operating to reinforce it.
 - 3) A survey of the extent to which programming in Pennsylvania's public universities is permeated by advocacy and activism.
 - 4) A discussion of the legislature's appropriate roles in helping to bring about reform, and the directions reforms should take.

Before proceeding any further, let me try to set a few definitional benchmarks for evaluating the intellectual climate of the state's universities. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the word "educate" as "to train or develop the knowledge, skill, mind or character...especially by formal schooling or study." By contrast the word "advocate" is defined as "to speak or write in support of, [to] be in favor of." Finally, the word "activism" is defined as "the doctrine or policy of taking positive, direct action, to achieve an end, especially a political or social end."

I've presented definitions of these three terms because each of them appears in various policy documents and statements of Pennsylvania state-owned and state-related universities. The term education is, of course, unproblematic. In its higher form, it is – together with research – the core mission of a college or university. But let me direct attention again back to nature of the definition – "to train or develop the knowledge, skill, mind or character." Its emphasis is on the opening of the intellect and the increase of its powers. It involves the transfer of knowledge to be sure, but also the technical and analytic capacities, and the self-discipline ("character"), necessary for intellectual independence. Liberal education, quite specifically, was originally conceived, and is still generally understood, to mean the kind of education preparatory for free citizenship, that is, the kind of education that equips young men and women to think and act for themselves.

But lest these be thought only my views, let me quote from the brief submitted by America's leading higher education organization, the American Council on Education (ACE), seconded by fifty-three other higher education groups including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), in the recent case (2003) of *Gratz v Bollinger*. "Educators believe that developing the powers of analysis in this way is not

merely one among many skills to be taught; it is the chief skill, because on it rests understanding and freedom. Socrates thought knowledge and freedom so essential, and so dependent on close reasoning, that the unexamined life is not worth living. The purpose of education, held the Stoics who carried his idea forward, is to confront the student's passivity, challenging the student's mind to take charge of its own thought. To strengthen the ability to reason is to enable the student to determine what to believe, what to say, and what to do, rather than merely to parrot thoughts, words, and actions of convention, friends or family."

This is echoed by Policy HR 64 of the Penn State Policy Manual which states in part that, "it is not the function of a faculty member in a democracy to indoctrinate his/her students with ready-made conclusions on controversial subjects. The faculty member is expected to train students to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think independently."

Very different, I think, is the sense of the word "advocate." Here the point is to persuade, convince, even, one might say, to cause "to parrot." The goal is not enlarging the powers of the mind, but bringing minds to certain prescribed conclusions on contested matters. In an academic context advocacy transforms education into indoctrination.

Different too is the word "activism," which goes even beyond advocacy into the realm of action, seeking to attain a social or political goal.

Most people would not think that advocacy and activism are natural functions of universities. At the very least, there is a clear tension between "education" and "advocacy" (to say nothing of "activism"). On the one hand, the purpose of education is to engage minds in an ongoing search for understanding, providing the tools that participation in such a process requires. On the other, the purpose of advocacy is to close debate through the victory of one of its sides and the conversion of disbelievers. And activism takes this objective of winning beyond words to deeds. Advocacy has its vital and recognized place in editorial pronouncements, in the work of private advocacy groups, in the doings of political parties, and in the operation of the democratic process as a whole. And so too does activism. But do they belong in an educational institution? They are certainly not integral to the educational process, and if universities engage in advocacy

and activism, their fiduciaries should, at an absolute minimum, ask their warrant for so doing.

At the risk of being too professorial, let me hazard a few additional qualifications. Scholars as both citizens and academic specialists have every right to express their own points of view. In the first capacity – as citizens – they have the full protections of the First Amendment when speaking in the same public forums to which other citizens can resort. As academics, they can freely express views about their specialized subject matter within the classroom. If, after many years of study of a particular subject, a professor had no opinions on the majority of questions at issue in his or her field, we should probably consider him or her less than competent.

Some teachers, of course, may choose to withhold from students their opinions on contested subjects as a matter of teaching strategy. Some may play devil's advocate, defending positions they don't accept so as to let students see that there may be unexpected sides to an issue. But most do freely communicate their views, in part because they naturally believe these views worth knowing and, in part, because they reasonably assume that their students want to know them. However, if they are responsible teachers they recognize, even as they let their opinions spill forth, that their purpose is to engage and open the minds of their students, not to provide them with a received doctrine.

To be sure this line is sometimes finely drawn. There are some fields where there are well-established facts and theories, which, if not quite beyond challenge, reflect an inclusive and firmly settled consensus of expert opinion. Mathematics has its demonstrable truths, the physical and biological sciences their extensively tested theories, and so on. We certainly expect practitioners in these realms to communicate these authoritatively in the classroom.

But in areas where the experts substantially diverge, where a range of serious and informed opinion contests outstanding issues, we should expect teachers to be non-dogmatic, receptive to discussion, and candid in their admission that there is a reasonable range of disagreement. They need not give divergent expert opinion as much attention as they give their own. Perhaps they need not give it any attention at all. But they should at least convey to students that such opinion exists and that it's altogether legitimate that the students examine it.

The best expression of what I would regard as good practice in these domains of divergent opinion is to be discovered in the words of the founding 1915 Declaration of Principles of the American Association of University Professors:

“The university teacher, in giving instruction upon controversial matters, while he is under no obligation to hide his own opinion under a mountain of equivocal verbiage, should, if he is fit for his position, be a person of a fair and judicial mind; he should, in dealing with such subjects, set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators; he should cause his students to become familiar with the best published expressions of the great historic types of doctrine upon the questions at issue; and he should, above all, remember that his business is not to provide his students with ready-made conclusions, but to train them to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently.”

A good deal more succinctly, but to the same point, the AAUP’s 1987 Statement on Professional Ethics says: “professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry.”

Note again the strong emphasis on the difference between the goals of education as laid out in these utterances, and those of advocacy and indoctrination.

The domains of divergent opinion to which these expressions of high ideals apply are, first and foremost, the fields that investigate things human, the humanities, the social sciences, and the applied social sciences – the last sometimes also referred to as “policy science”. Here, because phenomena are generally complicated, methods less than precise, and judgment colored by considerations of value as well as fact, there are broad ranges within which informed and reasoned disagreement is possible. To be sure, not everything in these domains will be disputable; some facts, and even some generalizations, can become well-established. But a great deal will inevitably be contested, and good teaching must recognize that fact. And to do this it must be always kept in mind that the purpose of the university is education, not advocacy, and not activism.

Unfortunately, advocacy and activism are well established in the American university, and in the state university systems of Pennsylvania. Much of it, certainly, takes place out of sight in the day-to-day happenings of the classroom. But some is quite up-front, indeed proudly proclaimed in the mission statements of departments, programs, and administrative bodies. Since advocacy and activism have not traditionally been considered normal activities of universities, the fact that they are sometimes openly proclaimed bespeaks a high level of confidence on the part of those engaging in them, a fact that, in its turn, further indicates that the larger academic culture of Pennsylvania's state universities has come to accept advocacy and activism as appropriate. Apparently, no university authority has ever asked these departments, programs, and administrative bodies to change their mission statements. I think that one can therefore be confident that these endorsements of advocacy and activism are but tips of an academic iceberg, of which by far the greater part remains hidden beneath the exposed surface.

Even where the word "advocacy" is not proudly proclaimed, it is also made manifest in what I would call the abuse of instructional mandates for advocacy purposes, and in programmatic tendentiousness. Let me explain.

Advocacy and activism reveal themselves when programs ostensibly designed for one use are transparently hijacked for an extraneous ideological purpose, which is to say, when instructional mandates are abused. There is strong evidence that such abuse of instructional mandates occurs on public campuses in Pennsylvania, for example, in a freshman reading program at Temple University which harps repetitively on favored ideological themes.

Programmatic tendentiousness consists of structuring curricula so that only a narrow range of reasonable views on controversial subjects gets presented. For an individual professor, to do this is not necessarily a problem. For an individual professor it may be a legitimate instructional strategy. He or she may believe it valuable to use the class as a place to make an extended argument in favor of a particular position, and if the students are already sufficiently knowledgeable, or have ready access to other opinions, the result can be beneficial. But if an entire program admits of but one opinion, or only a narrow range of views, then there is a systemic problem and, almost certainly, a hidden, tendentious agenda. In any event, the educational outcome will assuredly be sub-optimal.

I am not, I should say, objecting to a program having among its faculty a predominant opinion, or even thinking of itself self-consciously as an intellectual school of thought. One can make a case that a university could be organized along the lines of competing schools of thought open to dialogue with one another. The problem of intellectual tendentiousness arises when faculties seek to restrict the ideas to which their students are exposed within artificial bounds, or when they themselves grow so one-sided that they no longer recognize the possibility of competing points of view.

Programmatic tendentiousness holds the danger of producing still another problem. There is a strong tendency for groups in which only one viewpoint is heard to become increasingly extreme in outlook. In a recent article, *The Law of Group Polarization* (University of Chicago Law School, John M. Olin Working Paper, No. 91), the noted, and politically liberal, University of Chicago legal scholar, Cass Sunstein, has gathered together an impressive array of findings in social psychology to document this point. Groups, for example, strongly dominated by conservatives, will over time tend to become even more conservative. Likewise, groups dominated by liberals tend to become even more liberal. Although Sunstein's data do not directly draw upon the academic experience, there is reason to believe that the dynamic he describes is now vigorously operating within our colleges and universities. For instance, a study by Stanley Rothman and his associates indicates that the moderately liberal/left faculties of two decades ago have become much more liberal/left since. Another study, by Dan Klein and colleagues, shows more recently-hired junior faculty to be more liberal in their views than senior faculty. It would not be at all far-fetched to suppose that the widespread occurrence of advocacy and activism within the university context is greatly facilitated by the drift to extremes that Professor Sunstein's data would lead us to expect. There are certainly fewer and fewer intellectual dissidents present who might want to protest.

II

What then is the evidence for these problems – the displacement of education by advocacy and activism, the abuse of instructional mandates, programmatic tendentiousness, and a general one-sidedness of opinion – in the public universities of Pennsylvania? In reviewing this evidence, let me reverse the order I've followed thus far and start with the asymmetrical distribution of faculty opinion, and then move on to some of the problems and abuses that I believe, in large part, derive from it.

There is now a small file cabinet of studies that document the intellectual one-sidedness of the professoriate, some done by individual scholars, others sponsored by higher education organizations like the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. They all show pretty much the same results. Whether professors are asked to describe themselves ideologically; whether their attitudes on cultural, economic and political issues are surveyed and scaled; or whether that general surrogate for opinion, party loyalty, is assessed; professorial opinion, as a whole, is considerably skewed to the left side of the spectrum. This skewing is even more pronounced when one looks at the fields whose subject matter have the most political and cultural relevance, the social sciences and the humanities. The ideological asymmetry in these areas ranges from very sizeable to overwhelming.

This is clearly illustrated in the findings of the two most recent studies by Klein and Western, and by Stanley Rothman. The Klein and Western study, done in 2004, looks at the partisan affiliations of professors who were members of professional associations in six social science and humanities disciplines. Klein and Western found that in anthropology, Democrats outnumbered Republicans about 30/1, in sociology about 28/1, in political science about 7/1. The least lopsided ratio was in economics, where it was 3/1. The Rothman study, done in 1999, asked a large national sample of professors, among many other things, to self-designate themselves ideologically as one of the following: strongly left, moderately left, middle of the road, moderately right, and strongly right (see Appendix, Table 1). On this basis, Rothman and his colleagues found left/right ratios of 40/1 in political science, 29/1 in English, 16/1 in philosophy, 10.5/1 in psychology, 8.5/1 in sociology, 8/1 in history, 2/1 in education, 1.5/1 in business administration, and 1.4/1 in economics. In the sciences, the left also dominated but at generally lower ratios: 6.2/1 in physics, 4.4/1 in biology, 4/1 in mathematics, 2.8/1 in computer science, 2.6/1 in engineering, 2.2/1 in chemistry.

It is also interesting to note the very substantial number of faculty, especially in the humanities and social sciences, who designated themselves as strongly left, as opposed to the relatively negligible numbers who described themselves as strongly right. (It is, of course, hard to say exactly what “strongly left” or “right” means to those who use it, but one can be confident that it is among these very intense believers that one will find the most ideologically vocal faculty, that is, those who’ll have the greatest impact in

shaping academic climate and policy). In some fields, there is a huge asymmetry. Thirty-two percent of the English faculty described itself as strongly left, none (in the Rothman sample) as strongly right; so too did 30% of the social work faculty, also against none strongly right; so too did 25% of the political science faculty, against none strongly right; so too did 25% of the sociology faculty against 4% strongly right; so too did 22% of the education faculty against 6% who were strongly right. In economics, it was 9% versus 4%. Only in business administration did the strongly right at 15% outnumber the strongly left at 5% (although overall in business administration the total left outnumbers the total right). In the sciences, the strongly left are less predominant. The total strongly left/ strongly right ratios in the social sciences are 22/1, 10.5/1 in the humanities, and 5/1 in the natural sciences and mathematics.

Again, more than any other figures, it is these that have most to do with the nature of the academic climates on our campuses today.

There is no comparable study for faculty within the Pennsylvania public university systems. There is, however, little reason to believe that the pattern in Pennsylvania would be much different than that found nationally. To test that proposition, I did a survey of patterns of political giving among Pennsylvania public university faculty at its three largest institutions, as tabulated by the Federal Elections Commission in 2004. (The Federal Elections Commission records all contributions to federal candidates of \$200 or more, and, in addition, indicates the occupational affiliations of the donors). Although only a minority of party loyalists gives money to candidates for public office, the ratio of academic donors to each of the major parties can reasonably be taken to be a reflection of underlying faculty sympathies overall.

Here then are the FEC data. Of the Penn State faculty and staff, the overall FEC listed number of donors in 2004 was 149. Of these 117 supported Democratic candidates and 32 Republicans, a ratio of 3.7 to 1 (see Appendix, Table 2). If we just take the social science faculty at Penn State, (meaning those in the fields of anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology), 14 supported Democratic candidates and 2 Republicans, a ratio of 7 to 1. If we look at the humanities faculty at Penn State (meaning those in the fields of classics, history, literature, philosophy, and foreign language), 13 supported Democratic candidates and 0 supported Republicans.

At the University of Pittsburgh overall, 142 faculty and staff members made donations, 111 to Democratic candidates and 29 to Republicans (see Appendix, Table 3), a ratio of 3.7 to 1. (Two faculty members donated to the Libertarian Party.) Among social science faculty at Pitt, the numbers were 5 for the Democrats and 1 for the Republicans, a ratio of 5 to 1. Among humanities faculty at Pitt, the numbers were 15 for Democrats and 2 for the Republicans, a ratio of 7.5 to 1.

At Temple University, 98 faculty and staff members made donations, 79 to Democratic candidates and 16 to Republicans (see Appendix, Table 4), a ratio of 5.1 to 1. (Three faculty members donated to third-party candidates.) Among social science faculty at Temple, the numbers were 15 for the Democrats and 3 for the Republicans, a ratio of 5 to 1. Among humanities faculty at Temple, the numbers were 14 for Democrats and 0 for the Republicans.

Administrators were also predominantly Democratic in their giving, though the ratios were closer. For donors with administrative titles at Penn State, the ratio was 13 Democrats to 8 Republicans. At Pitt, it was 7 Democrats to 4 Republicans. At Temple, it was 14 Democrats versus 3 Republicans.

Needless to say, there is nothing wrong with faculty members or administrators supporting the parties of their choice. Nor am I supposing that there is some neat and infallible connection between loyalty to one of the major parties and positions on particular issues. But as legislators especially should know, there is a substantial correlation between party loyalty and philosophical opinion. In any event, what I'm trying to do with this simple analysis of donation patterns is underscore the point that there is little reason to believe that Pennsylvania faculty members have an ideological configuration significantly different from the lopsided patterns displayed in national surveys.

Is this lack of intellectual pluralism something to be concerned about? One would certainly think so, given the repeated endorsement of intellectual pluralism by American higher educators themselves. The 1915 AAUP Declaration of Principles, for instance, states that an educator "should cause his students to become familiar with the best published expressions of the great historic types of doctrine upon the questions at issue". Much more recently, the American Council on Higher Education, together with twenty-

two other higher education associations including the AAUP, declared “intellectual pluralism” to be “a central principle” of American higher education, along with “academic freedom”. The ACE statement has been subsequently endorsed by the Inter-University Council of Ohio, which represents the fifteen public higher education institutions of that state. Various statements have also from time to time been made by official bodies within Pennsylvania public universities about the value of intellectual pluralism or diversity. Thus, among Penn State’s “Guidelines for Recruiting a Diverse Workforce” is the injunction to search committees to “include among the selection criteria, the ability of the candidate to add intellectual diversity and cultural richness to the department”; “The Statement of Diversity” on Penn State’s College of Engineering observes that the college “emphasizes both demographic and intellectual diversity”. The Faculty Assembly of the University of Pittsburgh has for its part, at various times, endorsed the need for “intellectual diversity” within the faculty (from *University Times*, August 28, 1997). The problem is that little has actually been done as yet by university leadership to respond to a very undiverse intellectual situation among American, and Pennsylvanian, faculty today.

This lack of action stands in marked contrast to the stance university leadership assumes when it comes to other forms of diversity. Personally, I do not believe that skin color, ancestry, or gender, should be taken into account in academic decision making. Individuals should be treated as individuals whether in academic hiring, admissions, or financial support, and when special consideration is given to handicap and disadvantage, it should be given on the basis of individual experience, not group membership. But be that as it may, our country’s and Pennsylvania’s higher education leaders, having recognized an interest in ethnic and gender diversity, have gone all out to promote it. Preferential admission systems have been developed and stoutly defended. Faculty hiring plans have been put in place. Large administrative subdivisions have been erected to design these plans, oversee compliance, and provide a steady stream of justification.

If it were pointed out to a university president in this state, or in any other, that his student body or faculty were as underrepresented in women, or with respect to ethnic minorities, as his faculty is now underrepresented by those not on the left, he (or she) would express great anguish and mobilize the resources of his campus to solve the problem. Indeed, the drive for more ethnic and gender diversity, and ethnic and gender diversity awareness, is now as much a centerpiece of campus life in Pennsylvania as it is elsewhere.

It goes without saying that nothing similar is now happening with respect to the under-representation of philosophic minorities, a situation made all the more ironic by the fact that one of the chief justifications given for increasing ethnic and gender diversity is to increase the diversity of viewpoint. If so, why not try doing that directly?

One of the most interesting features of the Rothman study is its first-time provision of rigorously derived social science evidence, supporting an already large body of anecdotes, about the presence of active discrimination against conservative scholars in faculty hiring. Rothman compared the career success of conservative scholars and liberal scholars, holding many other possible explanatory factors constant, including record of scholarly publication. He found that conservative scholars were substantially less likely to be employed at highly ranked academic institutions than were their liberal peers.

Now I have no doubt that these findings – over which scholars will naturally argue – are, even in their strongest interpretation, not the only, or even the most important, explanation for the under-representation of conservatives in academe. As many have pointed out, self-selection undoubtedly plays a consequential role. For most of the twentieth century, intellectuals have largely gravitated to the left. Many individuals of conservative outlook are more attracted to careers in business and other active professions.

But self-selection is usually, at least in part, the result of feedback loops. One factor generally operating in career selection is how welcome or comfortable an individual believes he or she will feel in a particular field. It is very commonly argued that one of the reasons minorities and women have been under-represented in academe, or in specific fields thereof, is that there are aspects of the environment that make them feel unwelcome. No university president I'm aware of would ever say that we should not be worried about under-representation that results from self-selection. Certainly none would dare say it about female under-representation in the sciences and mathematics after the recent unpleasant experience of Larry Summers at Harvard. Yet I have rarely heard a university president talking about creating a more welcoming environment on campus for intellectual conservatives.

Alas, there is every reason for such intellectual dissidents to feel unwelcome on campus today – very much including the campuses of Pennsylvania's state universities. Not only will they be the odd men out among their

colleagues, but they will also have to work in an official setting in which no bones are made about institutional commitments with which they will strongly disagree, and which will have little valid connection to educational mission. All around them they will find not only individual faculty members, but whole programs openly proclaiming an interest in advocacy and activism for causes to which they're opposed, with no objection coming from those in higher authority. Indeed, the highest levels of administration will often be involved in similar advocacy. They will even find job notices that include political tests, dissuading them from even applying for a position.

III

Let's start by looking at some of these programmatic commitments.

Take, for instance, the mission statement of the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh which proclaims "the school is committed to promoting the values of social and economic justice," concepts that carry a weighty load of ideological freight. Continuing in this spirit, the mission statement goes on to say that the school "dedicates itself to advocating for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of individuals, families, and communities." Having stated its adherence to values of social and economic justice, the school gives as one of its goals to "educate professional social workers with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to engage in culturally competent practice with diverse populations and communities . . . and to advocate for those who confront barriers to maximizing the achievement of their fullest potential." Among the more specific goals spelled out in its student handbook is that of giving social workers an education about "the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion and mental or physical disability."

I don't think that most people assume that being a social worker requires having a particular political ideology. Most people would expect that training in social work would have to do with the transfer of technical and human skills needed for work with clients in conformance with the law. Most people would probably think that a well-trained person of intelligence and empathy should be able to be a social worker whether they were conservative or liberal, believed in a society based on individual or collective responsibility, strict property rights or property redistribution, etc.

But not so, apparently, the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, which believes the field mandates a commitment to the “values of social and economic justice.”

Both the baccalaureate and masters degree programs of the University of Pittsburgh Social Work Program are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), whose “Educational Policy and Accrediting Standards” go into even greater detail about the ideological and political nature of social work education. Among the purposes of the social work profession as given by these standards is the pursuit of “policies, services, and resources through advocacy and social or political actions that promote social and economic justice”. Programs accredited by the CSWE are also supposed to prepare social workers to “understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice”. Taken as a whole, social work education programs are also supposed to “integrate social and economic content grounded in an understanding of distributive justice, human and civil rights, and the global interconnections of oppression. Programs provide content related to implementing strategies to combat discrimination, oppression, and economic deprivation and promote social and economic justice. Programs prepare students to advocate for nondiscriminatory social and economic systems.” Again, these are the standards of the body that accredits Pitt’s School of Social Work.

Pitt, of course, is not unique in being accredited by the CSWE. Most other social work programs in Pennsylvania and elsewhere are similarly accredited, and possess a similar outlook on the nature of the social work profession and social work education, with advocacy, and even activism, at the fore. Thus, the mission statement of the social work program at Bloomsburg also states that “an emphasis is placed on an appreciation for human diversity and a strong commitment to social and economic justice. Students are prepared through courses to engage in the social change process through interface with the regional community.” The mission statement of the School of Social Administration at Temple states that it is “dedicated to societal transformations to eliminate social, political, economic injustices for poor and oppressed populations.” The description of the social work program at Edinboro University characterizes it as preparing “individuals to actualize the concept of social concern, to internalize and actualize belief in the innate value of humankind, to service those in need, and to act with conviction in advancing the principle of social justice and human rights.”

The website describing the baccalaureate program in social work at Lockhaven goes even further, specifically referencing the CSWE standards, “admission to the major”, it notes, “requires a 2.0 GPA plus agreement with the professional and academic standards defined by the Council on Social Work Education.” (There are, in my opinion, some very serious First Amendment questions raised by this requirement, creating legal exposure for the entire state university system.) Among the other state and state-related schools with programs accredited by the CSWE are California University of Pennsylvania, West Chester University, Kutztown University, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Millersville University of Pennsylvania, Shippensburg University, and Slippery Rock University.

Some schools of education have also built debatable political concepts into their programming. At Penn State, the College of Education lists as one of its goals “to enhance the continuing commitment of faculty, staff and students to diversity, social justice, and democratic leadership.” It might be noted here that the Penn State College of Education is accredited by the NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, which encourages the evaluation of aspiring teachers with respect to their “dispositions toward social justice,” and requires such assessment where the school has itself embraced a social justice standard. Whose notions of social justice (or diversity, or democratic leadership for that matter) will be used to evaluate the course work of aspiring teachers at Penn State? In Penn State’s Education program, social justice assessments are also built into faculty and administrative recruiting. For example, one of the specifications recently included in a job notice for the position of professor and associate director of the Penn State Capitol College’s School of Behavioral Sciences and Education was “a willingness to advocate for social justice” (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 6, 2005). Ideological tests of this kind turn up in other job notices as well. Thus, a notice advertising resident director positions for the residence-life and housing staff of West Chester University of Pennsylvania specified that candidates “should have experience in promoting appreciation of multiculturalism” (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 11, 2005).

(Let me briefly digress here to say that a remarkable book, *The Shadow University* by Alan C. Kors and Harvey A. Silverglate, published in 1998, describes extensively the use of dorm-based student life programs to undermine, sometimes quite coercively, traditional moral and cultural values

in the name of diversity and multiculturalism. Apropos of the West Chester job notice, it might be well for the committee to ask each state university to provide detailed descriptions of the types of student life programming it currently sponsors).

Social work and education aren't the only programs that view themselves as part and parcel of social and political movements. The Cultural Studies Program at Pitt, which on its website describes itself as the most extensive in the United States, defines cultural studies "as a critique of the ways culture has been studied within university departmental structure," observing that "it is not 'value neutral' but tends to be inclined toward left-inflected social change. Its job is to raise disturbing questions about how power constructs knowledge and about how the university resolves intellectual debates in its own internally contradictory interests." Note here not so much the explicit admission that the field tends toward the left (candid, to be sure, if an understatement), but the way cultural studies self-consciously sees itself as not just an area of inquiry, or even a particular theory of society, but as part of a movement with a prescribed direction, "social change," and possessing a strategic role ("its job") of raising "disturbing questions" about "power." Although political engagement isn't as grossly overt here as it is in social work, it is dubious enough, given what we should expect of an academic program. (Penn State also has a cultural studies program within its English Department).

When we come to women's studies, we enter a world in which self-conscious advocacy and activism, together with an enormous dose of programmatic tendentiousness, are simply core content. The Pitt Women's Studies Program website, for example, greets the visitor with a description of its activities under a threefold heading, the first of which is "Scholarship/Creative Activity," the second "Teaching and Learning," and the third, "Activism and Advocacy," under which it is stated "from its inception in the early 1970s women's studies has been committed to keeping teaching and scholarship in conversation with the larger community – locally, regionally, and globally. . . .Through internships, students have opportunities to connect their academic work with their commitments to change and to learn how to become positive change agents. We also serve as a clearing house by helping to connect activist groups with the university community through our publications and online."

This activist orientation isn't confined to the Pitt program. At East Stroudsburg University, the Office of Women's Studies, which sponsors an academic minor, describes its students as being "encouraged to connect personal experiences with the broader political picture. When they identify social ills or cultural and institutional practices that need improvement, they may develop strategies for change. The Women's Center puts these strategies into practice." Clicking on the link to its website, one finds the East Stroudsburg University Women's Center describing itself as, among other things, serving as a forum for political discussion and actions to benefit women, and, later, as providing a space where women can "share common knowledge and experience, and advocate for institutional, social and political change." It might also be worth noting that among the workshops the Women's Center indicates it has sponsored are those on "homophobia and heterosexism." "Heterosexism" is a term of relatively recent creation designed to lump the view that heterosexuality is to be preferred to homosexuality together with racism and sexism as forms of censurable bigotry. The Women's Center (an institutional subdivision of ESU) apparently has an official position – concurrence – on this censure.

One of the general features of women's studies (and note the use of the possessive in the field's title – women's studies is not so much a field that "studies women" as a field possessed by and serving women) is the constriction of its intellectual vision. In most women's studies programs the discussion of subject matter is kept almost entirely within a single intellectual paradigm, that of "feminist theory." Thus the website of the Penn State Women's Studies program declares that its major "focuses on feminist analyses of women's lives, of women's social, cultural, and scientific contributions: and on the structure of sex/gender systems," further indicating that "women's studies analyzes the unequal distribution of power and resources by gender" (one could also, conceivably, look at patterns of cooperation between the genders – but this is clearly not the emphasis here). Likewise the website of the Graduate Certificate Program for the Temple University Women's Studies program explains that "graduate students whose work is focused on gender will be able to explore central concepts of feminist theory and analysis through Women's Studies graduate courses." Each student is required to complete two basic courses, Women's Studies 400: Introduction to Feminist Studies, and Women's Studies 500: Seminar in Feminist Research."

What is feminist theory? It doesn't have a succinct definition and includes a range of thought, but, by and large, I think it would be fair to say that its governing hypotheses are that 1) women are an oppressed group, 2) traditional female roles are not reflections of an underlying female nature but are generally oppressive social constructs, 3) among these oppressive constructs is normative heterosexuality (or heteronormativity), 4) these constructions are the creation of "patriarchy" – a system of social and political dominance by which men have historically controlled women, and that 5) an ideal society would be one in which gender roles and the traditional division of labor between men and women, had disappeared. Feminist theory also tends to reject 1) the notion of neutral, objective knowledge, in favor of a view that what should count as knowledge depends on the identity and social situation of the knower, and 2) the notion that, in academic study, "knowledge production" should not be monopolized by experts, but that "folk knowledge," especially of women, as well as the knowledge of activists and artists, can also be authoritative.

Now this is not an uninteresting point of view. Many of the scholars who hold to some form of feminist theory are intelligent, learned, and interesting people. Even if one doesn't find feminist theory persuasive, it still has the virtue of being provocative, and viewed against the longer history of social theorizing, of being fresh as well. It certainly has a place within our universities. But should a whole field that is ostensibly devoted to studying the relations between the sexes, and the role of gender in society at large, confine itself to a single perspective, and do so virtually by definition? There are certainly other intellectually respectable ways of looking at gender that have masses of scholarship and scientific study behind them. The field of evolutionary psychology, for example, extensively addresses the origin and nature of sexual differences. Why should it not share the stage with feminist theory? Why shouldn't more traditional perspectives that see benefit in traditional sexual roles and traditional marriage also get an open-minded hearing? Why not study Christian, Jewish, and Islamic perspectives on gender for the insight they might afford? Why does this field seem to be based on an ideological monopoly?

A sense of the narrowness of the intellectual spectrum of women's studies can be gleaned from their speaker programs. The Temple Women's Studies posted newsletter lists seven speakers invited during the period stretching from the fall 2002 semester through the spring semester of 2004. I can't find detailed descriptions of what they said during their talks at Temple, but the

following quotes and citations should give you an idea of the consistently adversarial perspective that their cultural and political views represent.

September 16, 2002. Speaker: Annie Sprinkle, former prostitute (or “sex worker,” as the newsletter also describes her), porn star, and currently a performance artist, whose home webpage is emblazoned with the headline “40 Reasons Why Whores are my Heroes,” wherein she asserts “*Whores are rebelling against the absurd, patriarchal, sex-negative laws against their profession and are fighting for the right to receive legal compensation for their valuable work.*”

October 17, 2004. Speaker: Arlene Stein, Associate Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University. Her lecture title was “Homophobia in a Time of Sexual Pluralism”. She is the editor of a book entitled *Sisters, Sexperts, Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation*. Her articles include “Sisters and Queers: The Decentering of Lesbian Feminism”, “I Can’t Even Think Straight: Queer Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology”, and “Revenge of the Shamed: The Christian Right’s Emotional Cultural War.”

November 7, 2002. Speaker: Octavia E. Butler, a feminist science fiction writer quoted in 1999 on the Time Warner Bookmark website as saying apropos of school vouchers “*I heard congresspeople insist that the answer to poor public schools was to undermine those schools even more by issuing vouchers to send the kids whose parents could afford the fees not covered by the vouchers to private schools. And as for those kids left in the less well funded public schools...? Well, tough!*”

October 23, 2003. Speaker: Marina Walter, the most conventional of the speakers, serves as Manager for the United Nation’s Civil Service Leadership Development Project in Afghanistan. Her topic: “*Gender and Peace Keeping in Bosnia and Other War Torn Regions.*”

December 2, 2003. Speaker: Miriam Cooke, Professor of Modern Literature & Culture and Chair of the Department of African & Asian Languages and Literature at Duke University. Her topic: “Women’s Jihad Before and After 9/11.” Here’s a quote from her essay, “*War, Its Machines and the Women Who Fight Them*”: “*9–11 was a catastrophic example of the ways in which the threads in this fabric tighten and break. American citizens felt for the first time how the apparently innocent business of moneymaking in New*

York City and of policy making in Washington, DC are seen as criminal elsewhere. The daily deals struck in financial and military-political capitals of the U.S. have direct and mostly negative consequences for most of the rest of the world. These consequences are invisible to Joe-6-pack, they are searingly obvious elsewhere.”

March 18, 2004. Speaker: Gerda Lerner, feminist historian, Robinson-Edwards Professor of History Emerita at the University of Wisconsin, past president of the Organization of American Historians, and author of twelve books including *Creation of Patriarchy*, *Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, and *Fireweed, A Political Autobiography*, about which the Temple Women’s Studies newsletter reproduces the following description: “*a eminently readable and unapologetic memoir of leftist life in a rightist era.*”

March 29, 2004. Speaker: Cynthia Enloe, Professor of Government and Director of the Women’s Studies Program at Clark University. Her topic was “*Militarism and Empire: Some Feminist Clues*”. Apropos of that subject, here’s a quote from an interview she gave to *Spark Magazine*, as quoted on the website of the Boston Research Center: “*There is no evidence that U.S. military planners care about women’s rights, except as an added justification for bombing.*”

To repeat, it is not my contention that speakers like these shouldn’t be invited. My contention instead is that when they are as consistent in outlook as those described above, one is dealing with tendentious academic programming.

The culturally insurgent tone of the Temple speakers program is echoed in the description of the Penn State Women’s Studies Undergraduate Forum on the Women’s Studies Program webpage:

“You walk into HUB Alumni Hall and find some Barbie dolls, a student film on girls in gangs, a female Air Force Officer, and a 4-foot tampon. Radical? Perhaps. Subversive? It would seem so. What you are witnessing is the semi-annual Women’s Studies Undergraduate Student Forum, a collaborative effort of students and introductory women’s studies classes (WMNST 1001 and WMNST 003). Held during the final weeks of the fall and spring semesters, the Forum has evolved into an exhibition of student research and

activist projects that helps to incorporate women's studies and feminist scholarship through innovative pedagogy into our everyday lives."

But women's studies is not the only academic entity sponsoring a philosophically skewed speaker series. Take Penn State's Rock Ethics Institute founded back in 2001. The purpose: *"to promote ethical awareness and inquiry in the University and in the public and professional sectors by supporting curricular innovations designed to improve literacy across the University curriculum, building collaborative research projects around ethically based initiatives, and encouraging public dialogue on ethical issues."*

This is a high purpose that one hopes would be pursued in an intellectually ethical way. Part of that ethical responsibility, one might think, would be to expose the Institute's audiences to a full range of serious views on the topics it explores. But if so, what is one to make of the Institute's co-sponsored event, held on September 23, 2005, entitled "Conference on Ethical Commerce", and subtitled "Fair Trade: A Vision for the Future." "Fair Trade" is, of course, a loaded term meant to stand in opposition to free trade. There are ten speakers on the program, as well as a number of workshops, all of which – from the program description – are on the fair trade side of the debate. (It might be noted that this event was also co-sponsored by the Science, Technology, and Society Program of Penn State. The other sponsors were outside advocacy organizations: the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Herbalists Without Borders, Food Routes Network, Earth Rights Institute, Stone Soup, and the Amnesty International Penn State Chapter.)

I want to make it crystal clear again that I am not objecting to any of these speakers being invited to Penn State, nor to presentations being made in support of "fair trade." What I am raising is the question of why an ostensibly academic program is dealing with a very debatable issue in a tendentious and one-sided manner. Perhaps the situation would not be as grievous, or even a problem at all, if there were a bevy of other programs and institutes which wore countervailing views conspicuously on their sleeves – one would then have a campus with some real give and take. But such a bevy won't be found at Penn State, Temple, Pitt, or almost anywhere else in American higher education today.

If tendentious programming is bad, even worse is the abuse of instructional mandates – the subordination of valid programmatic purposes to the pursuit of ideological goals. Take, for example, Temple University’s summer reading project. According to the project’s website, the purposes of this program are to “*provide a common intellectual experience for entering students; bring students, faculty and members of the Temple community together for discussion and debate; and promote cross disciplinary thinking and dialogue in learning communities, freshman seminars, and other first-year courses where the text might be discussed.*” Each year a committee of Temple faculty, students, and staff selects a summer book, which freshman are then supposed to read. The authors of the chosen texts are invited to the campus to give a talk and mix with students.

All sorts of books might easily be selected and provide a rewarding common experience. What actually have been chosen?

In 2002, the chosen book was *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser. A quote from *Publishers Weekly Review* provides a sense of its drift. “*Schlosser’s incisive history of the development of American fast food indicts the industry for some shocking crimes against humanity, including systematically destroying the diet and landscape, and undermining our values and our economy. The first part of the book details the postwar ascendance of fast food from Southern California, assessing the impact on people in the West in general. The second half looks at the product itself: where it is manufactured (in a handful of factories), what goes into it (chemicals, feces), and who is responsible (monopolistic corporate executives).*”

In 2003, the chosen book was *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen. To quote the Temple University website, “*the book characterizes the leading U.S. history textbooks as peppered with deliberate misinformation, unchecked patriotism and utter lies – all in the name of tidying up the U.S.’s image and inspiring students to achieve the American dream. Loewen’s meticulous critique of 12 popular American history textbooks debunks their sterilizing accounts of history from a nationalist, WASP perspective, revealing the startling truth about Christopher Columbus the pillager, Woodrow Wilson the white supremacist, and Thanksgiving as a marketing ploy.*”

In 2004, the chosen book was a novel *Caucasia* by Danzy Senna. Of the novel’s plot, *The Women’s Review of Books* says, in part, the following:

“Opening in Boston in the 1970’s it has at its heart the Lee sisters: Birdie (the narrator) and Cole, the daughters of Sandy, their white mother, and Deck, their father who is black. They are youngsters who wake up each morning in their attic bedroom in a city staggering under its burden of history and prejudice. Their attic is their refuge at a time when the public school buses are regularly pelted with rocks and their occupants forced to return home, their hair shimmering with pieces of broken glass... Sandy’s straightforward politics, her conviction that people deserved four basic things: food, love, shelter, and a good education, seem to her so obvious and incontrovertible that she never understands how dangerous such a belief could be. Somehow, founding community clinics, setting up breakfast programs for children, holding meetings at her home, lead to harboring political fugitives and then letting herself be talked into storing weapons in her basement. Suddenly, she and Birdie are on a panicky run into a life of assumed names, improvised histories and paranoid shifts of identity.”

In 2005, the chosen book was *West of Kabul, East of New York* by Tamim Ansary. A non-polemical, well-written, and insightful book, *West of Kabul, East of New York* nonetheless stays on the favored contemporary academic theme of ethnic identity, recounting, according to the project’s website *“the story of ‘growing up bicultural’ as an Afghan-American. The memoir centers on the author’s daring trip through the Middle East at the peak of the Iranian revolution, the embodiment of Ansary’s lifelong pursuit to reconcile these dueling cultural identities.”*

Again I have no problem with the assignment of any of these books individually, provided the program showed greater variety in its choices. (Why not assign David McCullough’s *1776*, for instance?) *Caucasia* and *West of Kabul, East of New York* have received praise for their literary merits and intellectual interest. But when the assignments are viewed *seriatim*, can there be doubt that there is an agenda here?

What we have, therefore, is a systemic problem for which senior university administration bears ultimate responsibility. It is they who are responsible for clarifying standards, for approving new programs, for funding programs, for the final sign-off on faculty and staff personnel decisions, and for maintaining a reasonable degree of what the American Council on Higher Education, the American Association of University Professors, and about a score of major academic groups have recognized as a central principle of American higher education – intellectual pluralism.

But on one count, at least, it is not surprising that the state systems' presidents and provosts have done so little to deal with these problems. Their own senior commands, their very offices in some cases, have been sucked into the business of advocacy and activism.

Take, for example, the President's Commission on the Status of Women at California University of Pennsylvania, which is made up of faculty and staff and part of the Office of the President. Its three purposes include advocacy, providing a forum for the discussion of women's concerns, and recommending policy. The Commission's advocacy role turns out to be rather far reaching, having recently extended to the endorsement of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In so doing the President's Commission happily declared that through this action it had expanded its "advocacy networks beyond the main campus and...into the International Arena." It might be useful to note here that the United States has thus far declined to ratify CEDAW. This is because critics of the treaty – which has a United-Nations-run enforcement mechanism behind it – have argued that its vague language could be used to promote abortion, legalized prostitution, and censorship. (See *WSJ Opinion Journal* 9/1/02.) One can, of course, debate the merits of this, but should California State University have its own foreign policy? Should it institutionally be engaged in this kind of advocacy?

"Diversity" is, of course, the great mantra of contemporary American higher education. Indeed, it's probably the single most common term-of-art in American higher education today. When I googled the word "diversity" on Penn State's search engine, it came up with about 31,600 citations. This compares, by way of illustration, to only about 17,000 hits for the word "scholarship", 4,800 hits for the word "truth", 2,540 hits for "liberty", and 1550 for the word "civilization." The number of hits that diversity elicits on the Penn State website is even a large fraction of the most repetitively used of academic terms. It appears about 60% as frequently as the word "undergraduate," more than a third as often as "academic," a third as often as "science," almost a fifth as often as even the word "education." Indeed, "diversity" appears half as often as the word "American." For Penn State, as for virtually every other college and university, the concept of diversity has become a veritable totem.

“Diversity” can be an elusive term of many meanings. For some, the word signifies a policy of tolerance and live-and-let-live; for others, it refers to an inclusive cultural and moral relativism requiring that divergent traditions and life styles all be equally affirmed. The latter is, in general, the interpretation that gets official backing on America’s campuses. In effect, this amounts to a rejection of traditional moral standards (“judgmentalism”), and the belief that any one culture (say American or Western culture) might be superior in whole or part to others. A major emphasis in diversity policy is opposition to “heteronormativity,” the belief that heterosexuality is to be preferred to homosexuality.

This point of view was recently spelled out in an open letter to the Kutztown University community from the director of Kutztown University’s fourth annual “Diversity Festival.” The Diversity Festival, he explains, started out eight years before as a bi-annual “celebration of diversity in all of its manifestations – gender, ethnic, sexual orientation, philosophical and cultural differences – as well as their similarities.” The festival itself, sponsored by the University’s president’s office, provost’s office, college of education, college of business, library, and many other academic units, went on for three full days, with “celebration” very much the order of its three days. The only debate was on pornography, pitting a former porn star Ron Jeremy, in favor, against a feminist critic of pornography, Susan Cole.

Similar language can be found on other state university sites. Thus the website of the Office of Social Equity at Clarion University, whose mission includes ensuring that “the democratic principles of equity and social justice are promoted university wide...”, reports that the office “challenges each and every member of the University’s communities to both celebrate diversity and cherish commonalities.” According to its website, the Office of Multicultural Affairs at East Stroudsburg University exists (in a chillingly totalitarian turn of phrase) to “promote, plan, and monitor social justice in the University community” and to “advocate for the implementation of social, cultural and academic programs that enhance student awareness of diverse cultures and foster respect for cultural diversity.” And Penn State’s “1998–2003 Framework to Foster Diversity Statement” noted, “we seek to create an environment characterized by equal access and respected participation for all groups and individuals irrespective of cultural differences and, more importantly, where the multiplicity of characteristics possessed by persons are not simply tolerated but valued.”

Now these statements, when thoughtfully considered, are, in fact, rather strange ones for educational institutions, particularly public ones, to be making. Since when are institutions of higher learning committed to “celebrating” cultures, sexual lifestyles, or even philosophical differences? Indeed, since when are they committed to anything, except perhaps, the search for truth and the free life of the mind? What does it mean to celebrate cultural differences? What about cultures – which still very much exist today – that condone slavery? That practice infanticide? That force women to be veiled? But even apart from obvious abominations like these, do we wish to assume, as an institutional and educational posture, that all divergent cultural practices are equal? Is water-witching the equal of scientific hydrology and thus to be equally celebrated? Can an institution that not only stands for modern civilization, but is the central agent in propagating it, possibly accept such a notion?

Keep in mind too, that we are not talking about *tolerating* different points of view or life practices. Universities should be tolerant, judging faculty, students, and staff only on the basis of the quality of their work and conformity to appropriate institutional rules. What’s asked for here, however, is not tolerance of others, but affirmation, the approval of others. To quote that Penn State Framework statement again, “*we wish to create an environment...where a multiplicity of characteristics...are not simply tolerated but valued.*” An environment designed to make all characteristics valued will not be a tolerant one; it must perforce be repressive.

Only recently have modern universities thought it proper to celebrate diversity, or anything else for that matter. For most of the twentieth century, America’s leading universities and colleges thought their central role was to be “critical.” “Critical” did not necessarily mean “negative.” It meant inquiring, probing, being analytical, being willing to investigate wherever the search for truth might lead, without regard for institutional or intellectual sacred cows.

Educators used to pride themselves on being provocative and creating intellectually challenging, rather than affirming, environments for students. And, in fact, they still do – sometimes. One may remember, for instance, the Cultural Studies program at Pitt, whose self-described mission is “to raise disturbing questions about how power constructs knowledge.” “Disturbing questions,” indeed. Why shouldn’t we “affirm” the powers-that-be in their cultural practice of constructing knowledge? Do we really want to give these

people offense? But forgive me, I jest. In an academic context, raising questions is exactly what we should expect from scholars.

We hear something similar from the Women's Studies Program at West Chester, which describes women's studies "as a way of looking at the world that questions historical and current gender arrangements." Again, no affirmation of traditional cultural practices, but a questioning critical approach.

Or take the Sociology Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, which describes an education in sociology as encouraging students to "think critically about the social world."

These examples could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*. Temple University's Russell Conwell Center advises students to assert "their critical thinking skills in class." The Lartz library at Penn State Shenango possesses a "critical thinking clearing house," offering "critical thinking exercises." A philosophy course offered at Lincoln University "facilitates the development of critical thinking skills" on ethical issues. Pitt's "Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence" runs a summer institute program for faculty whose course-design component shows them how to "promote critical thinking" in their classrooms, etc., etc., etc.

So the question is: Why is there such an abrupt about face? Why, when looking at traditional cultural values and established institutional arrangements, is the attitude "critical," and, when looking at other cultures and lifestyles, is the attitude "celebratory"? Shouldn't it be critical – not necessarily in the sense of adversarial, but in the sense of analytical – all the way round? And does not this strange dichotomy, critical on the one hand, celebratory on the other, suggest a political project within the university devoted to social change of a particular character, a project, that as I think I've shown, is now deeply and institutionally engrained? And if there is such a political project, what does it have to do with liberal education as properly conceived? And by what warrant do the public universities of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pursue it? Needless to say, these are questions that should be of central concern to the public university's fiduciaries, very much including the state legislature.

Before getting to what might be done by the legislature, let me make clear that there is a great deal within Pennsylvania's public universities that is

being done right, not only in the natural sciences, where America's universities remain, proverbially, the envy of the world, but even in many of the programs that I have mentioned, which contain effective teachers and interesting scholarly minds. Nor do I want to slight the abilities of the leaders of the state's universities. They are, of course, the people who bear the ultimate responsibility for the serious systemic problems I've outlined, but I fully recognize that they are charged with many difficult and demanding tasks, and generally discharge them ably. I have no reason to think that they are anything but people of good will, who want to deliver outstanding education and foster world-class research. Unfortunately, they find themselves within environments of one-sided beliefs, very intensely held, where vested interests in advocacy and activism are deeply entrenched. Taking measures to remedy the situation is therefore a course that holds real professional peril, and is probably anything but appealing to these harried men and women. Nonetheless, it is something they must now attend to for the sake of the core integrity of the institutions over which they preside. That they attend to it is, in fact, long past overdue. And given the challenges and hazards of this task, the legislature must help them.

IV

What should the legislature do?

Opponents of HR 177 have argued that the legislature should keep its hands off universities. But the legislature has a fiduciary responsibility to see that the university adheres to its own doctrines. Penn State says in Policy 64 that “it is not the function of a faculty member in a democracy to indoctrinate his/her students with ready-made conclusions on controversial subjects. The faculty member is expected to train students to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think independently.” Yet the state’s public universities don’t enforce this policy.

Academic freedom is generally taken to involve the immunity of universities from intervention in academic decision-making by lay outsiders, including, in the case of public universities, state legislators. But, as we’ve seen in the language of the founding 1915 Declaration of the AAUP, academic freedom was to be accompanied by reciprocal obligations, obligations to work in a scientific spirit, characterized by rigor, open-mindedness, and reasonable dispassion. The extraordinary privileges of academic freedom and tenure are granted by the public and its representatives, precisely because they presume that academic life will be governed by these norms, and that the internal quality-control mechanisms of the university will be adequate to correct any departures from them that may from time to time occur. The extraordinary privilege of academic freedom is granted by the public and its representatives precisely because they believe these norms, when observed, have the power to advance knowledge in ways that will importantly redound to the greater public good.

This then, I believe, allows one to infer the rightful responsibility of the legislature – not to direct the intellectual life of the university, but to exercise due diligence in satisfying itself that the conditions under which autonomy has been granted are truly being observed. Establishing that basic fact is not at all beyond the capability of intelligent laymen, particularly when the problems are, as I think I’ve demonstrated, egregious and systemic.

And, if a pattern of default is in fact established, what then should follow? Obviously, the legislature should let the university’s leadership know that it expects remedies. The legislature should make clear that it expects the

executives and faculties of these institutions to put their heads together and, with imagination, intelligence, and courage, begin to develop solutions consistent with the highest values of academic life. Behind this expectation, of course, must be the message that continued default will not be without consequence for the universities' relationship with the people's representatives, as likely reflected in the legislative support and good will on which the universities count. That should be effective in concentrating the academic mind, without entangling the legislature in the making of specific judgments for which it has very limited expertise.

And what kind of remedies might they anticipate seeing?

1) They should expect to see the problem of intellectual pluralism addressed with the same vigor that the state's universities are already addressing what they take to be the problem of a lack of ethnic and gender diversity. As I've said, I'm opposed to according any preference to ethnicity or gender in academic hiring or admissions, as is my organization, the National Association of Scholars. Skin color and sex are, in my opinion, irrelevant to the determination of intellectual merit and promise, on which academic decisions should depend. But be that as it may, I believe that having a significant range of serious scholarly viewpoints represented within the university – as the American Council on Education, the AAUP, and many other leading higher education groups now recommend – should become a central principle of Pennsylvania higher education policy.

Fortunately, there is a large sphere of university life where there is no need to take action. In the natural sciences, physics, chemistry, biology, and allied fields, there does exist an effectively self-regulating system for keeping the pursuit of truth generally on track. These domains can be safely left to themselves, or better yet, can be enlisted to help improve the situation in other fields.

But in the humanities and social sciences, as well as in professional fields and policy sciences like social work and education, self-regulation hasn't been functioning as it should. This is probably the case because the questions with which these fields deal – those pertaining to the realm of human behavior – are simply too complex for the rigorous vetting techniques of the natural sciences to find ready application. These questions, connected as they are with the passion of controversies in the outside world, also inevitably come to partake of that passion themselves. In any event,

here is where the effort to reopen debate must be made. And, if our universities only devoted half the imagination and energy to promoting the diversity of ideas that they now do to promoting diversity of skin pigment and sex chromosomes, real progress would certainly occur.

I think there are many ways in which this could be done without any sacrifice to intellectual standards. As witnessed in debate outside the university – within the quality media and among think tanks – there is a substantial pool of high grade “diverse” intellectual talent that could be drawn into academic life. Much more would likely appear once it became clear that the university was committed to providing a more welcoming environment. There need be no quota-driven hiring, “goals and targets,” or proportional representation of ideas, even serious ideas. What is needed is not some artificially devised parity, but the existence of enough dissenting opinion to gain a hearing and require majority views to defend themselves through reasoned argument rather than monopolistic power. Once such a critical mass exists, it is likely to catalyze a process whereby the problems described by Sunstein, and abundantly present in Pennsylvania’s public universities, will begin to be resolved.

2) The universities need to face the problem of appropriate academic mission in a manner that persuades the legislature that they are serious about solving it. If they regard themselves as advocacy and activist institutions, they should at least be up front with the legislature about what they intend to advocate, and seek due authorization. If they are not advocacy and activist institutions, they should inform administrators and faculty alike that this type of behavior is to be done on their own time and without university sanction and subsidy. Likewise, an end should be made of “celebrations,” especially of contestable positions and dispositions for which no consensus exists outside the university’s walls. The university is neither a toastmaster nor an impresario of festivals.

This takes us back to the even larger question of intellectual standards. In justifying academic freedom back in 1915, John Dewey and the other founders of the AAUP put their names to a long string of caveats and qualifications. According to the AAUP Declaration of Principles:

Since there are no rights without corresponding duties, the considerations heretofore set down with respect to the freedom of the academic teacher entail certain correlative obligations. The claim to

freedom of teaching is made in the interest of the integrity and of the progress of scientific inquiry; it is, therefore, only those who carry on their work in the temper of the scientific inquirer who may justly assert this claim. The liberty of the scholar within the university to set forth his conclusions, be they what they may, is conditional by their being conclusions gained by a scholar's method and held in a scholar's spirit; that is to say, they must be the fruits of competent and patient and sincere inquiry, and they should be set forth with dignity, courtesy, and temperateness of language.

What was said in 1915 about the price of academic freedom remains true today. To justify its existence and autonomy, the university must be an institution dedicated to rigor; reasoned discourse grounded in clarity, evidence, logic; an openness to dissent; and as much objectivity as is possible in taking on difficult and complex inquiries. Pennsylvania's state universities must begin to devise better institutional means to strengthen the allegiance of its faculties and staffs to these core principles.

3) Universities now routinely ask prospective candidates for administrative positions, and even prospective faculty members, about their commitment to ethnic and gender diversity. They must now begin to ask about their commitments to intellectual standards and reasoned discourse. Presidents, provosts, and deans must begin to believe that progress in their careers will be as much measured by their firm adherence to these ideals as by anything else. In fact, more than by anything else. Only then will departmental chairpersons, faculty, and faculty search committees really come to believe that they can also dedicate themselves to these ideals with professional confidence. And only then will students come to understand them as the proper measures of their own study, as well as the basic principles of citizenship to which they should aspire in their subsequent lives.

4) The legislature must expect a full accounting on progress toward these goals each time the state's universities seek new statutory authority and renewed financial support. If a good-faith effort is being made to overcome these problems, it should leave the remedial specifics to the universities' own decision making. If a good-faith effort isn't made, it should urge governing boards to seek new leadership as a condition of full support. Failing even in that, it might, as a last resort, consider a full-scale organizational overhaul, to design governance systems and institutional

arrangements better able to meet the obligations that go with academic freedom.

To do all this well, legislators with responsibility for higher education will not have an easy task. They will have to recognize both their responsibilities and the limits of what they can attempt. This entails acquiring some knowledge in depth about the culture of academe, its history, its core principles, and its aspirations. Legislators will, in a sense, have to rekindle the fires of liberal education within themselves to do the job well. But that is an illuminating and inspiring flame that is well worth reigniting.

Pennsylvania now has the chance to lead the way.

To the Home Page of National Association of Scholars

To the Executive Summary of This Report

To the Press Release