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Polly gaffes

EDUCATION: Campus outrage awards focus on wacky campus liberalism | *by Mark Bergin*

Scott McConnell disputes the postmodern fads of elementary pedagogy, calling multiculturalism and lax discipline educational stumbling blocks. The former graduate student at Le Moyne College in Syracuse advocates a more traditional classroom—complete with cultural value judgments and corporal punishment. Such ideas, according to Le Moyne officials, merit expulsion.

Mr. McConnell's story tops the Collegiate Network's 2005 Campus Outrage Awards, an annual listing of ridiculous happenings in academia. The Pollys—so dubbed in mockery of political correctness run amok—are meant to incite more than just chuckles among conservatives. "We want to focus national attention on the absurdity of political correctness on college campuses," said Sarah Longwell, the Collegiate Network's director of public affairs.

Mr. McConnell's case certainly qualifies. The soft-spoken advocate for traditional values enrolled at Le Moyne on a conditional basis last fall, needing to complete undergraduate coursework and earn no lower than a B+ in his first four classes to fully matriculate. Having satisfied both requirements, he was shocked to receive a letter four days before the spring quarter began, explaining that he would "not be allowed to register for any additional courses" because of "grave concerns regarding

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the mismatch between your personal beliefs regarding teaching and learning and the Le Moyne College program goals."

Mr. McConnell had expressed his politically incorrect vision of the ideal classroom in a paper last fall—for which he received an A-. "I was very upset, because the reason they used to expel me is not outlined in the student handbook," he said. "I was under the mistaken impression that all colleges, public or private, support academic freedom."

As the Polly awards have aptly demonstrated for the last eight years, most colleges grant unchecked rein to liberal ideas—no matter how offensive. Conservative speech, on the other hand, engenders outrage and disciplinary action.

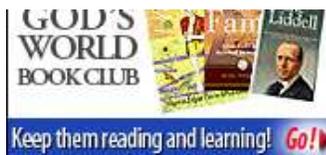
UNLV economics professor Hans Hoppe, whose story earned the second-prize Polly award, commented during a lecture last year that homosexuals are less likely to engage in long-term financial planning because they typically do not have children. A student complaint prompted a grievance committee, which recommended Mr. Hoppe receive a reprimand and forfeit merit pay for the current academic year.

Mr. Hoppe eventually escaped disciplinary action but has received no apology for a university-backed yearlong assault on his character. He considers the negative press of the Polly award well deserved: "I hope it has an embarrassing effect. Let them chew on it for a while."

Mr. Hoppe calls the hostile reaction one of many increasingly "desperate attempts to silence the few conservatives at universities. If you're on the left, you can say anything you like."

The third-prize Polly award co-recipients confirm that double standard. Carnegie Mellon University sanctioned a campus visit from New Black Panther Party Chief Malik Zulu Shabazz, who publicly advocates killing Zionists. Duke University hosted the annual Palestine Solidarity Movement conference, during which speakers informed students about how to illegally enter Israel and admitted cooperation with terrorist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Occidental College earned fourth prize for its reaction to



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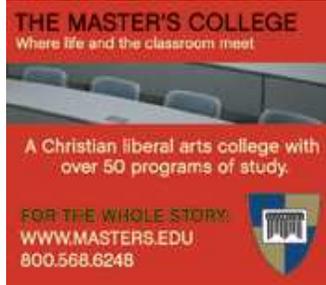
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student radio host Jason Antebi's sophomoric satire of his campus political opponents—the "bearded feminist" and "Vander-douche." The school declared Mr. Antebi guilty of sexually harassing his entire audience and disbanded the student government after it came to his defense.

Harvard University received the fifth and final Polly for delivering a faculty vote of no confidence to president Lawrence Summers after he suggested inherent differences between the sexes might account for a higher male success rate in the sciences.

The Collegiate Network is not alone in standing up to academia. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) takes on numerous cases of unfair treatment each year and is currently assisting both Mr. McConnell and Mr. Antebi in their respective battles with Le Moyne and Occidental. Ms. Longwell called the winners of this year's Polls especially vitriolic, noting a trend that has spiked sharply of late: Liberal campuses are setting aside the once apolitical value of academic freedom in favor of academic fascism. Ms. Longwell's Collegiate Network is fighting back: "We hope to hold universities accountable to provide true liberal arts education and not just indoctrinate students." •

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April 16, 2005, Vol. 20, No. 15

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