

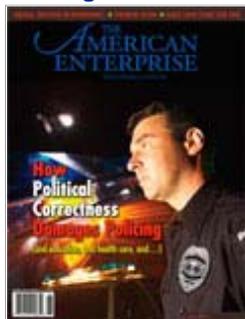


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## Conformity on Campus

By Anne Neal, David French, and Fred Siegel

We hear a lot these days about the importance of diversity in ensuring that ideas are heard fairly. But the individuals who are most insistent about this are interested only in racial and sex diversity. Intellectual and ideological diversity is not what the enforcers of political correctness on campuses and other sectors have in mind.

This magazine has helped pioneer evidence of how politically unbalanced most college campuses have become. Most recently (see our January/February 2005 issue) we presented the findings of University of California economist Daniel Klein, who found that the ratio of Democrats to Republicans in social sciences and humanities faculty nationwide is at least 8:1. At universities like Stanford and Berkeley it is 16:1 in favor of Democrats.

Twenty-five years ago, the ratio was less skewed, at 4:1. In the future it is going to be even more skewed. Among the young junior faculty at Stanford and Berkeley, there are now 183 Democrats, and just six Republicans--a 30:1 tilt. As today's older professors retire, political lopsidedness will grow even more extreme.

After years of denying the ideological uniformity of colleges, this accumulated evidence has now caused many academics to shift to claiming that the lack of political diversity on campus doesn't matter. It doesn't affect what gets taught, they say.

But in a recent panel discussion at the American Enterprise Institute, two experts warned that academic one-sidedness matters very much indeed, and is clearly having harmful results. We present their statements below, along with an extract from one professor's recent pointed analysis of this subject.

### Anne Neal

*President of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni*

There are now countless stories (and large volumes of hard data) about political pressure in college classrooms, and faculty hostility to non-liberal viewpoints. When confronted with this evidence, what did the higher education establishment do? Did it conduct its own surveys to see if the claims were valid? Did it try to determine whether the education of students was being impaired? Did it affirm its commitment to the robust exchange of ideas? No. It offered the



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classic institutional dodge: Deny the facts and attack the accuser.

Roger Bowen, president of the American Association of University Professors, stated that political affiliations are of little consequence in the classroom. Professor of political science David Kimball asserted that "any concerns about indoctrination are overblown." John Millsaps, a spokesman for the University of Georgia, insisted "we have no evidence to suggest that students are being intimidated by professors as regards students' freedom to express their opinions and beliefs."

My organization, which represents college trustees and alumni, wanted to move beyond anecdotes and test the claim that politics was not affecting the classroom. So we commissioned the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut to undertake a scientific survey of undergraduates in the top 50 colleges and universities, as ranked by U.S. News & World Report. We went right to the student population who are directly affected, who have no reason to misrepresent what is happening there, and asked them about their experiences.

What did we find? Forty-nine percent of students stated that professors frequently inject political comments into their courses even if they have nothing to do with the subject. When we asked students if they felt free to question their professors' assumptions, almost one third said they felt they had to agree with their professor's political view to get a good grade.

We also explored whether students were being exposed to competing arguments on today's issues. Forty-eight percent of all students reported that presentations on political issues seemed completely one-sided, and 46 percent said professors used the classroom to present their personal political views. Forty-two percent said reading assignments represented only one side of a controversial issue.

The students voicing concerns are not a small minority--nearly half reported abuses of one kind or another. And they are not just conservatives: a majority of the respondents consider themselves liberals or radicals. Moreover, the majority of the students we surveyed are studying subjects like biology, engineering, and psychology--where there is no reason for politics to enter the classroom in the first place. It does anyway: Fully 68 percent of all students heard their professors make negative classroom comments about George Bush, versus 17 percent who were exposed to criticisms of John Kerry.

One simply cannot deny, after these findings, that faculty are importing politics into their teaching in a way that affects a student's ability to learn. This should trouble us all. Responsible academic freedom involves not only the professors' prerogatives, but also the freedom of students to learn free of political indoctrination.

**David French**

*President of the Foundation for Individual Rights*

*in Education*

Faced with clear evidence that colleges lack ideological diversity, many campus apologists say "So what?" At FIRE, which represents students in academic freedom battles, we face the question "so what?" every day. And I can assure you the problem of ideological uniformity on campus goes far beyond the fact that many red-state suburban kids now get their views attacked in the classroom. Ideological uniformity in higher education has led to daily, systematic deprivation of the civil liberties of students and professors.

First, ideological uniformity has led to the suppression of dissenting speech. I'm not talking about extreme expressions of dissent; I'm talking about things such as an "affirmative action" bake sale sponsored by that notorious radical organization, the College Republicans. I'm talking about students who question whether an academic department should show Fahrenheit 9/11 in all classes before the election to persuade students to vote for Kerry.

These aren't isolated cases. In 2004, FIRE received more than 500 credible complaints of deprivation of civil liberties on campus. We surveyed the speech policies of the 200 leading universities and found freedom-squelching speech codes at 70 percent of those schools. In the last four years, as many as 50 universities have made attempts to eject evangelical student organizations, or to restrict them so thoroughly as to effectively rob them of their distinct religious voices. At many campuses, students are subjected from the moment they arrive to mandatory "orientations" and diversity training designed to shock many of them out of the views they bring from home.

At FIRE, we have people from across the ideological spectrum on our staff and on our board. And even the most dyed-in-the-wool liberal on our staff will acknowledge that 80-85 percent of our cases involve suppression of speech by the Left.

We're reaching a tipping point. The higher education establishment will either open itself back up to the full marketplace of ideas, or it will see its ivy-covered walls battered down by force--whether class action litigation or extreme legislation. We have reached the point where the self-regulation of higher education is no longer credible.

Universities say it's people like me, red staters who grew up in middle-class suburbs, who need their views challenged. In my experience, the exact reverse is true. I went to a Christian undergraduate school and then went to law school at Harvard, and I can tell you that the professors at my Christian college were more open to challenges to campus orthodoxy than my professors at Harvard Law School.

When I applied to teach at Cornell Law School, an interviewer noticed my evangelical background and asked, "How is it possible for you to effectively teach gay students?" If I had not given what I consider to

be, in all modesty, an absolutely brilliant answer to the question, I don't think I would have gotten the job. I sat in admissions committee meetings at Cornell in which African-American students who expressed conservative points of view were disfavored because "they had not taken ownership of their racial identity." An evangelical student was almost rejected before I pointed out that the reviewer's statement that "they did not want Bible-thumping or God-squading on campus" was illegal and immoral.

Academics who say "so what?" need to realize that ideological uniformity leads to restrictive speech codes and the suppression of Constitutionally protected speech on campus. It leads to the exclusion of people of faith from campuses. It twists hiring and admissions and classroom discussion.

No campus official should define what is orthodox in politics, religion, or law. Yet that happens every day to thousands of students. It is a deprivation of their civil liberties, and it will stop sooner or later, one way or another. The real question is: Will the academy wake up and begin to put its own house in order, or will it act like Dan Rather--delaying reform until an entire culture has revolted, then shuffling off into oblivion muttering about a right-wing conspiracy?

### **Fred Siegel**

*Professor of history at New York City's Cooper Union*

Academia, taken as a whole, has become dominated by freeze-dried 1960s radicals and their intellectual progeny, who have turned much of the humanities and social sciences into a backwater. In 1989, when Eastern Europeans were reclaiming the ideals of human rights and political freedom, students and faculty on the Stanford campus were marching with 1988 Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson shouting "Hey hey, ho ho, Western Culture's got to go." Up the road, Berkeley--dominated by its university--announced it was adopting Jena in communist East Germany as a sister city, this just a few months before the wall fell.

Academics have been getting it wrong over and over again. Criminologists were convinced that crime couldn't be cut; sociologists were sure that welfare reform couldn't work because it didn't go to the root causes of poverty; and Sovietologists were certain that the USSR of the 1980s had matured into a successful, even pluralistic society. As for radical Islam, the consensus view of the Middle Eastern Studies Association was that the danger to America came from a "terror industry" conjuring up imagined threats in order to justify American aggression.

But even as academia's batting average has declined, its claim to superior knowledge has expanded. The old ideal of disinterested scholarship, or at least the importance of attempting to be objective, has been displaced. In 2003 the University of California's Academic Assembly did away with the distinction between "interested" and "disinterested" scholarship by a 45-3 vote. As Berkeley law professor Robert Post explained, "the old statement of principles was so

outlandishly disconnected to what university teaching is now that it made no sense to think about it that way."

The reality, as Post recognized, is that many professors now literally profess. Far from teaching the mechanics of knowledge, they are in fact preachers of sorts, spreading a gospel akin to that of Howard Dean. For professors part of grievance studies departments, like "Indian" poseur Ward Churchill, there was never any expectation of objectivity. They were knowingly hired as activists and are now puzzled as to why this has become a problem for some of their students and the larger public. After all, what they preach is built into the very orientation students are given when they arrive on campus. New students at many schools are quite literally given a new faith.

In the absence of intellectual competition (other than the disputes between left and lefter), academia will continue to get it wrong. This might be of limited concern if not for the fact that the sheltered students who emerge from this one-party state are left bereft of any means of negotiating with reality once they engage in politics as adults. Instead of being given the background knowledge of American institutions they need to make judgments as citizens, they are fed attitudes. Credulous undergraduates fall prey to priestly performers who claim to be initiating them into the subterranean mysteries. Those who buy into this worldview are left both insufferably pretentious and substantively silly.

*This is condensed from an essay Siegel wrote for the New York Observer.*



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