

OREGON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS



Trail Notes, Spring 2018

Dear Colleagues,

In April, we issued a statement calling on university trustees and state legislators to enact measures to protect pluralism and freedom of conscience on our campuses. The statement reflected growing concerns expressed by members of the public about the increasingly open attempts by faculty and administrators to impose one-size-fits-all politics on our students and academic programs. This is of course a national problem, as NAS member and former trustee of The Ohio State University Kevin Nestor wrote in his *Academic Questions* essay of 2011 entitled "A Great Trust Betrayed". In Oregon, we cited several examples such as Portland State's official organization of a "counter-panel" the day before the fired Google engineer James Damore was due to speak at a student-organized event; and the University of Oregon faculty senate's disgraceful endorsement of the student mobs who shut down the university president's annual address in October 2017. No less alarming was our first look at the contents of the mandatory "social justice" training for all Oregon State University students which offers a crash-course in radical left-wing political thought – again, this is "mandatory training" not an optional course. Since faculty, the traditional guardians of freedom on campus, are now its enemies, we appealed to university trustees and state legislators to take action. The best example

to follow is the North Carolina legislature's 2017 Campus Free Speech Act which, among other things, instates a policy of institutional neutrality, which means that a university cannot take an official policy position on political issues. As the bill reads: "The constituent institution may not take action, as an institution, on the public policy controversies of the day in such a way as to require students, faculty, or administrators to publicly express a given view of social policy." As we have shown in several reports and statements, Oregon's public universities have strayed far from that ideal. Since most faculty no longer believe in the basic principle of free inquiry in higher education, it is up to university trustees and our elected representatives to be the voices of conscience. On May 23, two of our members met with Senator Dennis Linthicum in Salem to discuss a way forward. We have previously praised the senator from Klamath Falls (Oregon's flyover country, deplorables, where wives ask their husbands how to vote, etc.) for his robust advocacy on behalf of freedoms in higher education. We will keep you updated with our progress on this front.



We frequently update the list of faculty at Oregon colleges and universities who have

become members of the Heterodox Academy, the national association seeking to protect viewpoint diversity in higher education. Among the 17 members from Oregon as of May 2017 are Lyell Asher, an English professor at Lewis & Clark, and Candis Best, Doctoral Faculty Chair of the College of Education at Concordia University. I mention this because Dr. Asher wrote a heartfelt essay on the deep politicization of graduate schools of education nationwide in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in April entitled “How Ed Schools Became a Menace” with the subtitle “They trained an army of bureaucrats who are pushing the academy toward ideological fundamentalism”. Concordia, a small Christian-based school, might emerge as a center of excellence and professionalism for education leadership in Oregon if it simply avoids the gross ideological weight imposed on other education schools in the state.



In March, the American Enterprise Institute’s resident scholar Christina Hoff Sommers came to Oregon, where she spoke at Portland State University and at Lewis & Clark College. Sommers had been to Portland State in January as well and both of her appearances there were largely civil and appreciated by everyone present. But at Lewis & Clark, self-proclaimed “anti-fascists” (who have clearly never spent any quality time reading about fascism) disrupted her talk. A white woman with a bomber jacket

emblazoned with “Stay Woke” on the back led the disruption, hollering Napoleon-the-Pig-like a list of slogans from her mobile device that the other animals were expected to repeat: “Microaggressions are real!”, “The gender wage gap is real!” etc. The travesty at Lewis & Clark, for which none of the students was punished, is a reminder that Oregon’s small liberal arts colleges have become the most illiberal places of higher education in the state. Evergreen College in Washington has experienced a steep decline in enrollments for fall 2018, likely because of aversion among parents and students to its toxic illiberal atmosphere. Are Reed College and Lewis & Clark College due for the same?



We often hear that higher education should reflect American society. It seems like a reasonable starting point, especially because it is American society that should define the specific demands placed on higher education, that should serve society in some sense. This phrase is most often deployed when referring to the social identities of those in higher education – students, faculty, and staff -- that they should roughly approximate the social identities of American society. It might also be used to refer to the political, philosophical, intellectual, and ideological diversity of American society, which one would suppose is no less important to be represented in higher education. Taken together, these things raise questions about how well higher education is doing in Oregon to reflect the

diverse identities, viewpoints, and economic demands of our society.

In fall 2017, for instance, the known race of U.S. citizens at the seven public universities in Oregon was 69% white, 12% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 3% Black, and on the gender dimension 53% women. These figures, with the exception of a slight over-representation of black and Asian students, are roughly in line with Oregon's population. When we look at faculty and staff numbers, a similar picture emerges, with the exception of a notable under-representation of Hispanic faculty and staff. So on that count, at least, Oregon higher education reflects Oregon society pretty well.

It is in the other two dimensions where questions arise. In the 2016 federal elections in Oregon, for example, roughly 39% of voters chose Republicans and 52% chose Democrats. So, in a 10-person department in Oregon, roughly 4 should be Republican-leaning faculty, 5 Democrat-leaning faculty, and one independent. When we examine data on voter identification among faculty in higher education, however, general findings suggest that there are today roughly 15 Democrats for every one Republican on campus. A recent study of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found a 12 to 1 ratio overall, including 33 to 1 in political science and 31 to 0 in history (Republicans did not even show up in most of the humanities departments. When the original study by *The College Fix* showed that there was one Republican hiding among the 43 Democrats in the English department, the department went into a tizzy until it was found to be a clerical error). We at OAS plan to gather data on faculty voter ID at the state level. We do not doubt that our

colleges and universities in the state have even higher Democrat to Republican ratios than at UNC-CH. If "diversity" does not include a diversity of ideas, as Heterodox Academy founder Jonathan Haidt will show in a forthcoming book, then it does nothing to improve the quality of education. Clearly, Oregon has a lot of work to do on this dimension.

On the third dimension, whether higher education in Oregon reflects the economic needs of Oregon society, there are serious questions. As we reported in Fall 2017, only 3 of Oregon's 7 public universities (OIT, Eastern Oregon, and Oregon State) produce graduates whose salaries are above median expectations for those students while the other 4 (Portland State, Western Oregon, Southern Oregon and University of Oregon) are at or below expectations. Oregon's community college system, on the other hand, educates over twice as many students (280,000 students per year compared to 131,000 in the public universities) and generates future earnings for them roughly on par with the universities. What can our universities do to get focused on their core missions of communicating truthful knowledge and preparing students for economic advance?

Every time I hear a college administrator mention that they were at an "equity training" recently, I wonder why they are not spending more time doing "freedom and excellence" training. It is sorely needed.

Thanks for being a voice of conscience for our beleaguered students.

Bruce Gilley, OAS President