

# the weekly Standard

## The Left University

From the October 3, 2005 issue: How it was born; how it grew; how to overcome it.

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MORE THAN 16 MILLION STUDENTS are now enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States, the largest number ever. In two years, the figure will exceed 17 million, and it will continue to grow, as the high school graduating class of 2008 will be the largest in history. Today nearly 70 percent of the 18-to-24 age cohort attends college in one form or another, and more than 80 percent of high school graduates do so. College attendance has become a near universal rite of passage for youngsters in our society, and a requirement for entry into the world of middle-class employment.

When this year's freshmen enter the academic world, they will encounter a bizarre universe in which big-time athletics, business education, and rigorous science programs operate under the umbrella of institutions that define themselves in terms of left-wing ideology. This is especially true of the 100 or so elite public and private institutions that are able to select their students from among a multitude of applicants seeking entry, and true also of the humanities and social science departments that define the political and social meaning of the academic enterprise. These students will enter the world of what we may call the left university.

The ideology of the left university is both anti-American and anticapitalist. The left university, according to its self-understanding, is devoted to the exposure of the oppression of the various groups that have been the West's victims--women, blacks, Hispanics, gays, and others that have been officially designated as oppressed groups--and to those groups' representation. This is the so-called "diversity" ideology to which every academic dean, provost, and president must pledge obedience and devotion.

As it happens, the contemporary university is diverse only as a matter of definition and ideology, but not in practice or reality. A recent national survey of college faculty by Stanley Rothman, Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte showed that over 72 percent held liberal and left of center views, while some 15 percent held conservative views. The survey also found that, over time, and especially since 1980, academic opinion has moved steadily leftward as the

generation shaped by the 1960s has taken control of academe. In the humanities and social sciences, where political views are more closely related to academic subject matter, the distribution of opinion is even more skewed to the left. Unlike professors in the past, moreover, many contemporary teachers believe it is their duty to incorporate their political views into classroom instruction. Thus students at leading colleges report that they are subjected to a steady drumbeat of political propaganda in their courses in the humanities and social sciences.

The same researchers found that 50 percent of college faculty were Democrats, while just 11 percent were Republicans, which should surprise no one since the diversity ideology that drives the university is the same one that defines the Democratic party. Other researchers have reported even more lopsided distributions. Daniel Klein, an economist at Santa Clara University, found in a national survey of professors that Democrats outnumber Republicans in social science and humanities departments by a ratio of 7 to 1. Meanwhile, college administrators and faculty continue to promote campaigns for cosmetic diversity even as their institutions are becoming more monolithic in the one area academics should care about most--that is, in the area of ideas.

This, then, is the left university. The university, moreover, has formed an informal political alliance with the other liberal and left-wing institutions in our society: Hollywood, public sector labor unions, large charitable foundations, the news media, and, of course, the Democratic party. All are driven by the same doctrine of diversity. These institutions have provided political protection and encouragement for the academy as it has moved steadily leftward.

But there are signs that suggest the days of the left university are numbered, and that the leftist establishment will soon find itself resisting a new tide of change and reform. To understand why this may be so, it will be useful first to look at the American university over a somewhat longer span of development.

## II

FOR THE GREAT PART OF AMERICAN HISTORY, from the founding of Harvard College in 1636 down to around 1900, colleges and universities played a small role in the economic and political developments that shaped the nation. Through the colonial period and into the early 19th century, when state universities began to be formed, institutions of higher learning were built on a British model, and were founded or controlled by Protestant denominations, usually Congregational, Episcopal, or Presbyterian. The purpose of these institutions was to shape character and to transmit knowledge and right principles to the young in order to prepare them for vocations in teaching, the ministry, and, often, the law. Few thought of these institutions as places where new knowledge might be generated or where original research might be conducted. In England, as in America, research and discovery were

sponsored by nonacademic institutions like the Royal Society in London or the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the latter founded by Benjamin Franklin.

It is true that some of the prominent founders of the nation were greatly interested in the role academic institutions might play under the new government. Many of the leaders of the Revolution and authors of the Constitution had attended one or another of the nine colleges that then existed in the fledgling nation. Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, for example, had studied at Kings College (later Columbia) in New York City, Thomas Jefferson at William and Mary, and James Madison at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton). Franklin had earlier been a founder of the University of Pennsylvania. Jefferson and Madison, in particular, were first exposed during their college years to the ideals of liberty and limited government by studying the works of John Locke, Adam Smith, David Hume, and other leading figures of the British enlightenment. Here, during their college years, they absorbed the philosophy that they later used to shape the institutions of the new nation. But these men understood themselves not as academics or scholars, but rather as members of a "republic of letters," to use Jefferson's phrase. They were broadly learned in history and philosophy, and studied ancient languages and politics in order to apply the lessons of the past to the practical problems of the present.

Jefferson, however, perhaps because of his own academic experience, was much taken with the idea of a university that would prepare the young to enter such a "republic of letters," and to take their place as wise leaders of the real American republic. He understood, as did Madison, that the new republican order they had helped to establish required academic institutions that were more secular and philosophical and less religious and vocational than those existing at the time. During their presidencies, both Jefferson and Madison proposed the creation of a national university with precisely this aim, but such proposals went nowhere in Congress because many believed that the security of the republic was based more in the design of our institutions and the temper of the people than in the education of a class of leaders--a point that Madison himself had made during the debates over the Constitution. In his later years, therefore, Jefferson turned his energies to the creation of the University of Virginia, which he conceived as the prototype for a new "republican" university, one that would enroll the best students in his state and provide them with a secular education in the languages and history of Greece and Rome, the practical sciences, and the correct understanding of the Constitution. He lived to see his dream realized when he attended the inaugural banquet (along with Madison and Lafayette) in 1824, two years before he died.

But Jefferson's vision of a new university for a new republican polity was stillborn. The sharpening sectionalism of the nation from the 1830s onward, and its increasing preoccupation with slavery and expansion, undermined the Jeffersonian ideal of a "republic of letters" that transcended geography, personal backgrounds, and narrow interests. The emerging Jacksonian culture that celebrated equality and the common man, so well described by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, was likewise suspicious of an institution that appeared impractical

and aristocratic. Andrew Jackson and his followers ridiculed the idea of a national university as undemocratic and an affront to the common man. Pioneer democracy, as it was called, was notoriously suspicious of expert wisdom. Thus, as new colleges were established in this era, most were guided by vocational objectives rather than by Jeffersonian ideals.

During most of the 19th century, therefore, academic institutions operated at some distance from the swirling economic and political events that were transforming the nation. They had little to do, for example, with the Protestant revivals of the 1820s and 1830s, with Jacksonianism or the abolitionist movement, with the emergence of the Republican party, with secession in the South, with the rise of industry after the Civil War, or, even, with major intellectual movements such as Transcendentalism. The great entrepreneurs of the era, such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, or George Pullman, were self-made men with little or no academic experience. Two of the most important presidents of the century--Jackson and Lincoln--had little formal schooling at all. Colleges hosted no activities, such as athletic contests or celebrity speeches, that would have brought them to the attention of the wider public. Their exclusive focus on teaching meant that their influence could not reach beyond local circles, and also that there could not develop any center or hierarchy to the academic enterprise. At the close of the Civil War, therefore, academic institutions had but a marginal place in American life.

### III

LAURENCE VEYSEY, in *The Emergence of the American University*

describes how the modern academic enterprise took shape between the years 1870 and 1910. During this period of reform and invention, colleges and universities began to break their ties to religious bodies, embraced the secular principles of science, progress, and democracy, and adopted the practices of research and academic freedom that define higher education to the present day.

The modern structure of the university, with its division into departments and colleges supervised by a class of administrators, was laid out in these years. It was also during this period that two great innovations--the graduate school and the elective system--were incorporated into the academic enterprise. This was the first of two academic revolutions that created the universities we know today, and which propelled academic institutions into the prominent place they hold in contemporary life.

There occurred a rapid expansion in higher education in the last few decades of the 19th century, encouraged by the end of sectional hostilities, the closing of the frontier, the rise of science and industry, and the accumulation of great wealth in the hands of men prepared to direct some of it to new academic institutions. From the close of the Civil War to 1890, the number of colleges and universities in the United States doubled from about 500 to 1,000,

and the number of students tripled to more than 150,000. By 1910, student enrollment had grown to 350,000. Many of our most influential universities were created during this time, including the University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, Vanderbilt, and Clark--all underwritten financially by wealthy businessmen. The academic revolution of this era was directed and largely implemented by university presidents including Charles Eliot of Harvard, Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins, Andrew White of Cornell, William Rainey Harper of Chicago, David Starr Jordan of Stanford--and Woodrow Wilson of Princeton. It was a measure of the esteem in which college presidents were held that Wilson, while president of Princeton, was recruited in 1910 to run for governor of New Jersey and two years later for president of the United States.

The intellectual inspiration and institutional model for this revolution came not from Jefferson and the University of Virginia, or from any American source at all, but from German idealists who brought about an academic revolution in that country in the early 1800s. The institutional model was the University of Berlin, established in 1810 by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prussian minister of education, under the influence of the idealist philosophers Fichte, Kant, and Hegel, who asserted that the task of the scholar was to search for the truth in science, philosophy, and morals unimpeded by political or religious authorities. The University of Berlin, the original research university, was based on the idea that truth is not something known and passed on, but the subject of persistent inquiry and continuous revision. It incorporated the practice of faculty autonomy in the selection of subjects for research and coursework, and conceived of students as junior partners in the research enterprise, that is, as researchers or professors in training. This new institution thus recast the purpose of the university away from theology, tradition, and vocations and in the direction of science and secular studies. It discarded as well the practice of looking to ancient writers for moral lessons and political guidance. The new university thus placed the faculty rather than students, religious bodies, or public officials at the center of the enterprise, for it was the faculty that in the end would decide what was studied and taught.

The model of the German research university spread rapidly in the United States in the decades after the Civil War, inaugurated by the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876 as our first institution organized around graduate research studies. The late scholar Edward Shils referred to this as "the most decisive single event in the history of learning in the Western hemisphere." This innovation, as Shils pointed out, put pressure on other institutions to establish their own programs of research and graduate study. Harvard soon created its own Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in order to keep pace with Johns Hopkins. Stanford University was established in 1891 along similar lines, which induced the University of California to follow suit. The University of Chicago, underwritten by John D. Rockefeller, was established in 1892 with research as the basis for faculty appointment and promotion. Other institutions in the Midwest, especially Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois, were then in the process of embracing the research model. Here, then, in the wake of the Hopkins innovation, occurred the first important competition among universities for rank and reputation; and here, through this competition, the modern American university was born.

Shils was certainly correct to emphasize the far-reaching consequences that followed in the United States from the adoption of the German university model. In the United States, as in Germany, the research model transformed the status of the professor from a teacher to an independent scholar and researcher. Professors would no longer pass along established truths and traditional moral ideals, but would subject these truths and ideals to scrutiny in the search for new knowledge. The faculty, as the new priesthood of the research enterprise, would shortly claim authority to decide all matters dealing with curriculum, new faculty appointments, and promotions. The modern doctrine of academic freedom, which gives professors wide latitude to teach and conduct research as they wish, also followed in due course as a consequence of these premises. Much as Oliver Wendell Holmes said that the law is what the judges say it is, the reformed university would henceforth be whatever the faculty decides it is.

As the modern university took shape, faculties began to organize themselves into specialized departments, or disciplines, with their own formal rules for study, research, and publication. It was in this period that the various academic associations were formed, including the American Historical Association (1884), the American Economic Association (1885), the American Physical Society (1899), the American Political Science Association (1903), and the American Sociological Association (1905). These were national membership associations that held annual conventions and published their own journals containing research studies representing authoritative work in the respective disciplines. These associations were, in a way, national communities that reoriented the attention of professors away from students at their own college and toward colleagues working in the same discipline at other institutions across the country. The status of professors in their various disciplines was based on their published research, which established in turn a new basis upon which to rank departments and entire institutions.

The emergence of the modern university thus created a new class of professional intellectuals--that is, men (and a few women) who worked with ideas for a living. Until this time, intellectual life in America, such as it was, was dominated by ministers and patricians (the Founding Fathers), and then in the 19th century by independent writers who generated income by publishing books and articles. Now for the first time, university professors such as Charles Beard and John Dewey became famous for the books and articles they published. Perhaps it is true, as has been said, that classes of people with a common interest eventually begin to think more or less alike. Certainly this has been true of the professional intellectuals who have populated the American university.

## IV

HUMBOLDT, and Kant as well, were continental liberals in the old sense of that term, sympathetic to liberty and reason and to the Enlightenment critique of religion, theology, and tradition. It is in this sense that we can refer to their academic innovation as a "liberal"

university, as it was based on reason, science, free inquiry, and the pursuit of new knowledge.

The new university, devoted to creating new knowledge and questioning old truths, was bound to form a frictional relationship with an American polity that was also liberal but shaped by a different and somewhat conflicting intellectual tradition. The American Revolution and Constitution were grounded in the writings of Scottish and English thinkers of the 18th century, but the modern university was shaped more by continental ideas arising out of Germany and France. Harvard historian Morton White wrote in

*Social Thought in  
America: The Revolt  
Against Formalism*

that many of the intellectual leaders of the university revolution were sharp critics of the Scottish Enlightenment and the tradition of British empiricism. These figures--Dewey in philosophy, Thorstein Veblen in economics, Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson in history, Holmes in law--asserted that the philosophical ideas of the British Enlightenment were too abstract, were not grounded in experience, and could not address the concrete problems of modern life. Many, especially Dewey and Robinson, arrived at these judgments through exposure to the German school of historical thought originating with Hegel, which emphasized culture and historical evolution as the keys to understanding society and politics.

It was from this standpoint that Veblen and other economists rejected Adam Smith and classical political economy, that Dewey attacked David Hume, that Beard and Robinson criticized traditional narrative historians who failed to connect the past to the problems of the present, and that Holmes attacked legal theorists who thought that the words of the Constitution answered all questions about the law. These thinkers were not only academics, but products of the new university: Dewey and Veblen had studied together as graduate students (along with Woodrow Wilson) at Johns Hopkins, and Robinson earned a doctorate in history in Germany at the University of Freiburg. All save for Holmes, who was not an academic, concluded that the Constitution, and the philosophy behind it, was inadequate to the challenges of modern life. This led them to search for new intellectual foundations for politics, history, economics, law, and (in Dewey's case) education.

It was through these theories that the modern university laid the intellectual groundwork for political Progressivism and the reorientation of liberal doctrine in the direction of state regulation and reliance on nonpartisan experts. In many circumstances, universities provided more than just philosophical and theoretical ammunition. The first large-scale experiment with progressive policies occurred in the early 1890s, when the University of Wisconsin offered its research services to the governor and legislature of the state. The "Wisconsin idea," as it came to be called, and which served as a model for other institutions to emulate, envisioned a partnership under which the university would provide information, statistics, and technical expertise to the state so that effective and intelligent legislation might be enacted. More than this, as the historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued, the university

would train experts who might serve as judges and commissioners who could mediate in disinterested ways between contending economic interests--for example, between business and labor. Though the university was meant to serve a nonpartisan role, the underlying objective of the enterprise was to bring big business to heel through legislation and regulation, which was understood soon enough by business leaders in the state. This nonpartisan aspiration was genuine, however, since the Progressive agenda had not yet found a home in either political party, and would not do so until the 1930s, when progressives settled for good into Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic party.

The Wisconsin idea brought out into the open a new role for the university, which was to bring experts and expert knowledge into the political process. This was one of the clearest links between the emerging university and the progressive movement, since the university was the logical source for the experts needed to design and implement progressive policies. As time passed, more and more universities established research centers on the Wisconsin model, which eventually led to the creation of public policy schools and an entire profession of academic public policy experts. This development in turn led to a new disjunction in American political life. For the 80 or so years from the formation of the union to the close of the Civil War, the theorists who designed institutions and policies were one and the same with the political leaders who put them into place. This was true of Madison, Jefferson, and Hamilton, and also of subsequent figures, such as Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Abraham Lincoln. With the rise of the university, political theories and programs were increasingly devised by academics, like Dewey, Beard, or the Wisconsin professors, who operated outside the arena of electoral politics and whose experience was of a far different kind. The reliance on experts introduced into liberal ranks a permanent ambivalence regarding representative government and the common man--for while the experts purported to act in the name of the people, they also understood that it was a grave risk actually to seek their consent or approval.

It was not coincidental that the modern university emerged at precisely the same time that the modern liberal movement was in the process of defining itself. One might go further to say that for 140 years, from the close of the Civil War to the present day, the fortunes of liberalism in America have been intertwined with those of the university, and that important changes in the one have been accompanied by parallel and consistent changes in the other. Looking back over this period, therefore, it appears that liberalism as we knew it in the 20th century originated with the emergence of the modern university.

## V

DURING THE FOLLOWING FIFTY or so years, from 1910 into the 1960s, the American academic system continued to evolve according to patterns that were established during this formative generation. The research university, supported heavily by public funds, expanded exponentially. The gulf grew between research universities and the smaller liberal arts college. Faculty governance was institutionalized. The elective system was applied more or

less universally, leading to debates about the "core" curriculum and concerns that specialization and the emphasis on expert knowledge had gone too far. A college degree was viewed by students and parents alike as a key requirement for professional employment and upward mobility. By the 1960s, public officials and academic leaders were nearly unanimous in the view that a college education should be made available to all.

From the 1920s through the 1950s, many leading institutions, Columbia and Harvard prominent among them, made sustained efforts to leaven the new emphasis on specialization and expertise with broader curricula in the arts, humanities, and social sciences--as these fields came to be called when the universities turned in a secular direction. Jefferson's ideals regarding his "republic of letters" were thus not completely abandoned in the modern university. Columbia established its widely emulated courses in "contemporary civilization" in the 1920s in an effort to expose students to the great literature of Western civilization dating back to the ancient Greeks, and to give them (in the wake of the world war) a more general understanding of how modern institutions came into being. Following World War II, the Harvard faculty sought to combat specialization with its core curriculum in General Education, which included broad courses in science, history, literature, and American democracy. These thoughtful innovations provided a counterweight of sorts to the progressive emphases on expertise and political reform; moreover, they provided intellectual weight to the academic enterprise itself by linking it to the American past and to the civilization out of which the nation and the university evolved.

By 1965, the American university was probably at a high point in terms of public esteem. Academic scientists had played a leading role in the discoveries that had led to victory in World War II. Veterans returning from the war enrolled in colleges and universities in large numbers, contributing a sense of maturity and seriousness to the academic enterprise that it had lacked before (and has lacked since). Professors in all fields, including the arts and humanities, enjoyed wide prestige. College sports reached large audiences through national television broadcasts. The baby boom generation, the largest in the history of the nation, was about to enter university life, causing a more than doubling of enrollments (from 3.5 million to 8 million) between 1960 and 1970.

It is plain in retrospect that the American university changed as fundamentally in the decade or so after 1965 as it did in those formative years between 1870 and 1910. The political and cultural upheavals of the period, spurred by the civil rights movement and opposition to the war in Vietnam, combined with the demographic explosion, brought about a second revolution in higher education, and created an institution (speaking generally) that was more egalitarian, more ideological, and more politicized, but less academic and less rigorous, in its preoccupations than was the case in the preceding era. It was in this period, from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, that the left university emerged in place of the liberal university.

## VI

THE MAJOR CHANGES or reversals that took place in a short period of time were unprecedented in the history of American education: single-sex colleges all but disappeared; college regulation of student morals disappeared as well; government regulation of employment expanded, putting pressure on institutions to hire women and minorities for faculty positions; the line between teaching a subject matter and advocating political positions was blurred or even eliminated altogether as the new campus radicalism asserted that all teaching is political in nature; the liberal underpinnings of academic culture--the freedom to teach and conduct research--were attacked and eroded in the name of political correctness; the unifying character of the humanities was subverted and discredited when they were said to represent an oppressive tradition formed by white European males; new fields, usually with ideological preconceptions, were created outside the traditional departments and areas of study, thus expanding the positions available for radical faculty; serious academic requirements, including foreign language proficiency, were softened or eliminated. Faculty opinion, already skewed in a liberal direction in the 1950s and 1960s, moved decisively to the left. All of these changes were blasted into place in the tumultuous decade from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and were institutionalized in the decades that followed.

In many important ways, the left university reversed or modified the assumptions and practices of the liberal university. The architects of the liberal university were optimistic about the prospects for the nation, and looked ahead to the progressive advancement of democracy and liberty, but the leaders of the left university are dour and pessimistic and view our history as a tale of oppression. The liberal academics believed in progress through the application of reason and knowledge, but the academic left asserted that reason and knowledge were masks for corporate or conservative interests. Yet, while the old liberals carved out a role in politics for experts and expert knowledge, the left disdained expertise and embraced the doctrine of diversity, which is based on the naked assertion of group interests. The liberals believed in academic freedom for all, but the academic leftists support academic freedom only for themselves, not for conservative or moderate faculty, not for speakers who disagree with them, and not for students who wish to learn from a nonideological standpoint. The liberals of a century ago took over the university with an intellectual vision grounded in 19th-century philosophy, while the radicals of our time seized control through politics and political pressure by organizing demonstrations and protests and by shrewdly leveraging assistance from governmental regulatory bodies.

There was, in addition, a powerful countercultural element in the left university that was never a significant dimension of the liberal university. While liberals had pressed for practical reforms in American capitalism and the Constitution, the radicals of the 1960s went further to launch a wholesale attack on American culture and the middle-class way of life, which they condemned as repressive and, worse, boring. The cultural radicalism of the 1960s, derived from the Beats of the 1950s, was so appealing to the new campus left because it promised something beyond political reform--namely, a different way of life with a revised set of morals, new styles of dress, and an alternative to conventional careers. The cultural

radicalism of the Beats was thus imported more or less wholesale to the campus, which was in turn conceived as a sanctuary from the moral repression of middle class life, a place where any number of different lifestyles might be explored. In the past, Americans in search of bohemia, or a refuge from middle-class expectations, had fled to communes in the country, or to European outposts as Hemingway and other writers did in the 1920s, or to Greenwich Village or San Francisco, but now they found homes on the modern campus.

There were some obvious weaknesses in the liberal university that the radicals were able to exploit in executing their takeover. The leaders who built the liberal university a century ago erected a set of effective defenses against attacks coming from the outside world--from conservative businessmen, trustees, and donors who disagreed with the political views of professors or from legislators or politicians who sought to punish universities for the unconventional views of some faculty. As things turned out, the protections of academic freedom were much less effective in dealing with internal attacks from organized students and left-wing faculty who disrupted classes, picketed faculty homes and offices, took over administration buildings, issued threats to faculty and administrators, and generally used the tactics of street politics to take over the university.

The liberals never anticipated a revolt from within their own family, and did not know how to respond to it without betraying cherished beliefs about rational discourse and authority legitimized by achievement. The liberals, moreover, invited the contempt of the radicals by erecting a comprehensive critique of American capitalism and the Constitution, based on theories developed from the Progressive Era forward through the 1950s, but then by failing to accomplish anything significant in the way of real change--a failure that made them appear ineffective and weak. So liberalism was wide open to the assault from the left, and within a few years, liberalism--and the university--had been recast as a doctrine of identity politics, group rights, and diversity. It also happened that liberalism was quickly discredited in the eyes of most Americans when it associated itself with these ideas, and that the Democratic party declined into minority status once it had embraced them. Such consequences reveal something instructive about the doctrines that took over the American university.

## VII

SO THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY went through two major revolutions in the past century, the first driven by ideas of progressive reform, and the second by radical preoccupations with cultural change. The first revolution created the liberal university and the second the left university. Both were far-reaching in the sense that they contributed to a reformulation of liberal or leftist doctrine and were thereby linked to broader movements for political reform. The left university has now been in place for more than a generation. Are there signs that another revolution is in the offing, one that will move the academy in a more constructive direction?

Consider, for example, the important developments of the past generation that academics in thrall to left-wing doctrines did not foresee and do not understand. There was, first of all, the fall of communism and the Soviet Union, both of which were said by academic experts to be in good shape until the very day they collapsed. There followed equally anomalous events as first socialism and then the welfare state were discredited at the same time that the market revolution gained force in Central Europe and Asia. The emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower confounded international relations experts who were convinced that a multipolar world was in the making or, alternatively, that the Communist and capitalist systems would eventually converge at some point close to the Swedish welfare state. The passionate interest around the world in liberty as conceived by Locke, Adam Smith, and the American Founders is perhaps the most puzzling development to the left academics because they have so little sympathy with it. In the domestic policy arena, academic experts claimed for thirty years that welfare programs were in no way implicated in urban poverty, crime, family breakup, and teen pregnancy--ideological views that were discredited by the success of the welfare reforms of the 1990s. Nor could academics, committed as they are to secular doctrines, foresee or understand the recent rise of fundamentalist religion around the world. Step by step, the outside world is systematically debunking the ideological prejudices of the left academy.

But the above is just the beginning of an extended catalog of errors, illusions, and misconceptions. For a generation now, universities have promoted research and coursework in something called "multiculturalism," a doctrine that purports to encourage study of foreign societies and cultures. After the terrorist attacks in 2001, however, we quickly learned that the nation had trained few specialists who understood the Arabic language or Islamic cultures and who might help us understand and counter this new threat. It turned out that multiculturalism was not at all about studying foreign cultures and languages, since this requires real effort, but rather about mobilizing various national groups to exert political influence within the United States. In terms of content, "multiculturalism" was every bit as hollow as "diversity."

And if it is true that the United States is in the midst of a moral counterrevolution that seeks to repair much of the cultural damage done by the excesses of the 1960s, then here, too, the universities are out of step. Rates of divorce and illegitimate birth are declining, urban crime is down from the epidemic levels it reached a few decades ago, teen drinking and drug use are declining, and various other measures of cultural vitality are showing signs of similar improvement. All of this suggests a rejection of the kind of antinomianism that took over the academy in the 1960s, and a reassertion of the enduring strength of middle-class ideals.

The academics have thus been wrong--and far wrong--about the most important developments of our time. From their point of view, as Yogi Berra said, "the future is not what it used to be." To a great degree, university faculties outside the sciences have lost the capacity either to understand or to influence the outside world. Their place is increasingly

being taken by private research centers and independent scholars in closer touch and in greater sympathy with these new developments. Centers like the Manhattan Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Hoover Institution have had far more influence in the public policy arena in recent decades than all the academic public policy schools combined. Various independent magazines and journals, such as the *New Criterion*, *Commentary*, and the *Hudson Review*, have seized intellectual leadership from the academy in the arts, humanities, and public affairs. The most prominent historians writing today are nonacademics like David McCullough and Ron Chernow, who, along with benefactors like Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman, have done far more than any academic historian to revive the study of American history. The academy is losing influence today because a generation ago it placed a wager on the radical ideas of the 1960s--a wager that it has now lost.

Furthermore, the failures of the left university, along with the excesses of some of its representatives, are gradually leading trustees and donors, and even some presidents and deans, to ask some long overdue questions about the path their institutions have followed. How, for example, can any university carry out its responsibilities if all faculty members think the same way, if genuine debate over vital questions is discouraged, if ideological rhetoric crowds out thoughtful discussion, if students know more about the peace movement than the Constitution and more about Ward Churchill than Winston Churchill?

Two decades ago, when Allan Bloom published his bestselling book *The Closing of the American Mind*, his was one of the few articulate voices calling attention to the destructive assumptions of the left university. Today, by contrast, there are numerous initiatives on and off the campus that not only diagnose the problem but also point to practical remedies. Indeed, there are now dozens of organizations promoting intellectual rigor and pluralism on the campus.

College and university trustees are beginning to break through the artificial barrier that says that only faculty are qualified to pass judgment on matters of curriculum and appointments. Earlier this year, for example, the alumni of Dartmouth College elected to its board of trustees two insurgent candidates who ran on a platform that called for intellectual diversity and higher academic standards on the campus. Trustees of the University of Colorado, disgusted by the Ward Churchill fiasco and what it implied about the intellectual standards at their institution, have gone further by creating a new undergraduate program in Western civilization. Trustees at the State University of New York and George Mason University in Virginia, encouraged by the Washington-based American Council of Trustees and Alumni, have also acted to bolster academic standards in Western civilization and American history. Several years ago the trustees of the City University of New York, alarmed by the collapse of standards that followed a radical takeover a generation ago, took steps to strengthen standards for admission and to incorporate real substance into the curriculum. Trustees

elsewhere, encouraged by such examples, are discovering that, if their institutions are to be rescued, they dare not rely on faculties to do it.

Legislators and public officials are also taking a look at possible actions in response to growing concerns about trends on campus. Thus, in response to concerns that anti-Semitic acts on campus have been fueled by Middle Eastern Studies programs receiving federal support, Congress is now considering legislation to strengthen oversight of such grants--and to strip institutions of support where such abuses are found. And, responding to similar concerns, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently announced that it will look into the scandal of campus anti-Semitism.

At the same time, some philanthropists have begun to see a connection between anti-Americanism on campus and other pathologies, particularly anti-Semitism, anti-Israelism, racial separatism, and hostility to business. They are surely right to see a connection among these malignancies, and right also to see that they need to be attacked as strands of a broad ideology that has found a home in the left university. Such donors, once they are in the field, will bring a new urgency to the challenge of dislodging this orthodoxy from the academy.

Perhaps the most promising development on campus in recent years has been the creation of various centers and programs dedicated to the study of political liberty and the history of free institutions--for example, the James Madison Program on American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton, the Gerst Program at Duke, the Salvatori Center at Claremont McKenna College, the Political Theory Project at Brown, and the Center for Freedom and Western Civilization at Colgate. Such programs have grown out of a collaboration between a handful of donors, often alumni concerned about left-wing trends at their institutions, and conservative and moderate professors concerned that students are learning a great deal about racial and gender identity, but little about the intellectual foundations of their civilization. Exemplary programs like these could come to exist on every major college and university campus, funded either by private donors or, better yet, out of the vast sums that have accumulated in academic endowments.

These developments represent just the leading edge of a growing movement to challenge the practices of the left university. The purpose of such efforts is not to give representation to conservatives on an equal footing with other campus interest groups. Intellectual pluralism, the search for truth, and respect for the heritage of free institutions are neither conservative nor left-liberal ideals. Jefferson, indeed, understood these ideals to be at the heart of the university, and central to his vision of a "republic of letters"; Humboldt, too, saw his liberal university as the means of carrying forward the principles of liberty, free inquiry, and the unimpeded search for truth. The effort to restore these ideals on campus is thus something that both conservatives and liberals should applaud. The left university should not be replaced by the right university. It should be replaced by the real university, dedicated to liberal education and higher learning.

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