

Academic Honesty

At universities two topics that come up often are faculty governance and academic rigor. Since universities all over the world have basically eliminated the first topic, I will talk about the second one and its connection to academic honesty.

To begin, let's consider the simple question: Why do universities exist? To be a beacon of moral light for society or to discover truth. But what is Truth? Truth deals with who we are and where we are headed. Of course, many offspring of universities want to direct where we are headed. These offspring are comprised of many people who go by many classes: enlightened, educated, environmentalists, liberals, democrats, progressives, centrists, conservatives, republicans, socialists, communists, etc. This group is large, varied and constantly changing. Moreover, many of these offspring 'hate' one another with unbridled passion, while others just want to have open discussions on education, research, society, culture, government, who and why we are, etc.

However, even though it seems that the university should promote open discussion, completely open discussion exists at no university. Open discussion means having time set aside to talk about ideas in an open forum where most feel their thoughts and views are being heard. These discussions should center on who we are and where we are headed. They should also include what the university should be.

Of course, there is no common agreement on what the utopic university is. It is also true that many of the ills that face our Earth and our world are incredibly magnified at universities. Many university professors claim there are utopic countries on this planet. But what does this mean? Some of the countries that are said to be utopic or almost utopic have very little diversity in their culture. Some live off the natural resources of countries that are very poor and have no or few universities.

Certainly, our Earth is an unusual planet. It has lots of features that fascinate most humans, not just offspring of universities. Unfortunately, universities are responsible for much of the bulldozing, mining, drilling, exploding, blacktopping and concreting that negatively affects this beautiful planet of ours. It would be hard to find a weapon that has caused more destruction than a bulldozer, but we do not talk about this very much, even at universities.

The destruction of our planet should be the most important issue at the university. Each and every person at the university should be willing to discuss this issue with an open, inquiring and analyzing mind. One's perceptions or feelings are not going to solve this problem and the destruction of our planet is not going away. There are dire consequences for all life on this planet because of the current destruction.

How, you may ask, do environmental concerns matter to academic honesty at the university? The causes of this destruction are myriads. The reasons for devastation of our planet can be attributed to many things. Ignoring some because our perceptions want to believe it is another is not academic honesty. Ignoring this perilous topic is also not academic honesty. Believing that universities do not play a part in the destruction of the environment and that universities are solving the problem is not academic honesty.

Despite programs universities may have in place to norm us to the concept of academic honesty, few broach the concept from an environmental perspective. To address that oversight, each course taught at a university should provide students with the thought that there are

consequences for our actions and that these actions can be detrimental and not just to a student's academic integrity. Living one's dream can have a horrendously negative impact on the future for life. Believing that your research does not need to be critically evaluated in terms of negative impact on life is not academic honesty. Not bringing this issue up with students, administrators, professors, researchers, etc. at the university is not academic honesty.

Academic honesty demands open, honest and critical discussions on why our planet is where it is, on the living standards of all peoples and what impact research and production has on the health of humans, animals, plants and the Earth. Above all, academic honesty demands open, honest and critical discussions on why people lived relatively happily and free for thousands of years in virtual paradises before education systems were brought to these places.

We humans live most of our life in our minds. However, what we do outside of our minds is what matters most. Academic honesty requires that we study the mind in terms of actions, morality, ethics, spirituality, religion, faith, education, science and the arts. Scholastic honesty is important, yes, but universities should also be fighting for this kind of academic honesty, as well, and the faculty can do their part by leading this charge.