

April 28, 2015

Kate Bachelder, writing in the WSJ, interviews Mitch Daniels who says where kids go to college is not as important as many believe. Daniels also has ideas about how colleges could do a better job of serving their customers.

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What matters is “how you go,” says Purdue University President [Mitch Daniels](#), the former governor of Indiana. He then lays out the results of the Gallup-Purdue Index, a national survey of 30,000 college graduates that was first released last year. The survey attempts to quantify not only what graduates earn but also how well they are navigating adult life.

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But only 14% of those surveyed said they had hit that trifecta in college. Other positive factors from undergraduate experience: working on a long-term project, having an internship and participating in extracurricular activities. Where graduates went to college barely registered as a predictor of job satisfaction. ...

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“I thought this whole process—it's sort of like a bubble, and people are using that term—just couldn't go on much further, and so why not get off the escalator before it broke,” he says.

Not many colleges have followed, and Mr. Daniels has a few theories about why. “Corporate boards 15 years ago or so were roundly and rightly criticized for being too compliant with the desires of management. If this was true of corporate boards, I think it's really been true of a lot of college boards and trustees,” he says. “They have such an affection for dear old alma mater, love those 50-yard-line seats, ‘Whatever you want to do, Mr. President.’ And so it's been observed a long time that colleges will spend everything they can get their hands on, in the absence of either market pressure or stewardship by a strong-minded board.” ...

WSJ Editors write on the colleges that were ruined by the governments of California and the US.

It's good that Education Department regulators don't oversee drone strikes. Behold how DoE's blunderbuss assault on the for-profit Corinthian Colleges has harmed thousands of students and employees.

On Monday the Santa Ana-based for-profit shut down its remaining 28 schools, which no buyer would purchase amid the government's regulatory ambush. The closure displaces 16,000 or so students—many mere months away from graduation—and 2,500 workers.

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Note that the federal government doesn't specify how for-profits calculate their job placement rates. States and accrediting agencies have disparate and often vague rules, which notably don't apply to nonprofit and public colleges. ...

Jesse Cole asks what a college degree might be worth today if English majors have no requirement to study Shakespeare.

'There is hardly a pioneer's hut which does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare,' Alexis de Tocqueville writes in Democracy in America, recalling his travels across the country in the early 19th century and suggesting the scope of the Bard's influence. From the log cabins of our young republic to the classrooms of contemporary China, where he is known as Shashibiya, Shakespeare has been arguably the most read writer in the English language. He is also certainly the most translated. His work has been rendered in Zulu, Mandarin, even Klingon.

Why, then, is he vanishing from the curricula of America's colleges?

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And Kevin Williamson writes on campus swastikas.

When tyranny arrives on these shores, it isn't going to start off looking like something out of George Orwell — it's going to look a lot like college, which is why the sort of people who twice made Barack Obama president of these United States will welcome it.

George Washington University ("the Harvard of safety schools," as alumnus Dan Foster calls it) has a swastika problem. This goes back a ways. In 2007, a Jewish student, Sarah Marshak, reported that her dorm-room door had been defaced with swastikas, and she complained that

the university was doing too little to investigate. But the university was in fact investigating thoroughly — it had, ridiculously enough, gone as far as consulting the FBI — and its sneakily hidden surveillance cameras recorded the vandal in action.

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There are 26 barbers and stylists at The Shop in Hyattsville, Md. Between them, they cut the hair of more than 100 people each day. That's around 600 people each week, 31,000 heads each year.

Over the last two years, 29 of those customers received a colonoscopy as a direct result of conversations they had with their barbers at The Shop. One of those people, says owner Freddie Spry, was already showing symptoms of colon cancer and is now getting treated. Many more of Spry's African-American clients learned that the cancer is one of the few that are preventable and — given blacks' higher-than-average risk for the disease— they should consider getting a first colonoscopy at 45.

"It makes me feel like I'm giving back to the community," said Spry, who opened The Shop in 2001. "In life, you're either helping or hurting. You're part of the problem or the solution."

The Shop was the first establishment to implement University of Maryland's Health In-Reach and Research Initiative (HAIR)—a one-of-a-kind outreach program that trains barbers to teach their clients about colorectal cancer and measures, like a colonoscopy, that can prevent it. ...

WSJ

How to Save American Colleges

The Purdue president on freezing tuition, how to reduce student debt, and busting the accreditation cartel.

by Kate Bachelder

West Lafayette, Ind.

With acceptance letters in hand, millions of high-school seniors ruminating over where to attend college—and their parents who are panicked that their kid might pick the place with the best climbing wall—should all take a breath: It doesn't much matter where you go to college.

What matters is “*how you go*,” says Purdue University President [Mitch Daniels](#), the former governor of Indiana. He then lays out the results of the Gallup-Purdue Index, a national survey of 30,000 college graduates that was first released last year. The survey attempts to quantify not only what graduates earn but also how well they are navigating adult life.

A mere 39% of college graduates report feeling engaged with their work, and in that group as many hail from top-100 schools as don't. The three most important contributions that college makes to a sense of workplace thriving after graduation: Having one professor who made you excited about learning, feeling as though teachers cared about you, and working with a mentor. Graduates who checked those boxes were more than twice as likely to sense they are flourishing at work.

But only 14% of those surveyed said they had hit that trifecta in college. Other positive factors from undergraduate experience: working on a long-term project, having an internship and participating in extracurricular activities. Where graduates went to college barely registered as a predictor of job satisfaction.

Mr. Daniels spearheaded the research, and his penchant for data mining is one reminder that he is a former White House budget director. His mantra is “higher education at the highest proven value,” and more than once during our conversation in his office at Purdue he refers to Joseph Schumpeter, the economist who popularized the concept of “creative destruction.” Mr. Daniels also offers a quick economics tutorial about “Giffen goods,” products for which demand grows even as their price increases—like, say, a college education today.

His office is a corner room that is capacious without being grand, reflecting a college administrator who has set out with a single-minded focus on cutting costs, taming the tuition monster, and increasing the quality and value of college degrees. The most notable decorations are his Bundy duck decoys and a photo commemorating the time he rode his motorcycle, a Harley-Davidson, across the football field during a halftime show as the school's marching band spelled out “MITCH.”

That was two years ago, soon after Mr. Daniels arrived at Purdue. His first order of business: freeze tuition.

“I had a sense, first of all, it seemed like the right thing to do. Not to skip over that. But secondly that we probably could do it without great difficulty,” he says. For decades college tuition has outpaced inflation, forcing students to increase their borrowing, but next year's Purdue seniors will have never seen a tuition increase.

“I thought this whole process—it's sort of like a bubble, and people are using that term—just couldn't go on much further, and so why not get off the escalator before it broke,” he says.

Not many colleges have followed, and Mr. Daniels has a few theories about why. “Corporate boards 15 years ago or so were roundly and rightly criticized for being too compliant with the desires of management. If this was true of corporate boards, I think it's really been true of a lot of college boards and trustees,” he says. “They have such an affection for dear old alma mater, love those 50-yard-line seats, ‘Whatever you want to do, Mr. President.’ And so it's been observed a long time that colleges will spend everything they can get their hands on, in the absence of either market pressure or stewardship by a strong-minded board.”

There is also what he considers an “insidious” idea that “if we don't raise our price, people will think we don't have confidence in our product.” He points out that “in the absence of proof,

people assume a higher price must be a better product or education.” But according to data released last year, half of high-school seniors accepted by their first-choice college attended a different school, and most cited cost as the reason.

The jig is about up. “I don’t know what the rate of the shake out will be, but you can already see the front edges,” Mr. Daniels says, referring to colleges that have begun shutting down. “A year or two ago, it was schools you hadn’t even heard of. This year it was Sweet Briar,” he says, of the 114-year-old Virginia women’s college that announced last month it is closing because of “insurmountable financial challenges.”

Mr. Daniels notes: “The top 10 endowments have something like a third of all the money, and the top 40 have two thirds or close to it. If you’re outside that group, and you’re charging these tuitions, I hope you’ve got a Plan B.”

Mr. Daniels lists what he has discovered are the top concerns of Purdue students—the cost of tuition, the price of room and board and textbooks—and seems to be working his way down that list, including nitty-gritty projects like reducing the cost of the meal plan by 5%. The college has deputized 18 loan counselors to warn students about borrowing too much; in the past two years, total debt has dropped \$40 million. Amazon approached Mr. Daniels—ostensibly because the company sees him as an innovator—and worked out a deal to supply students with discount textbooks.

Mr. Daniels has also set out to measure what Purdue students are learning. More than 35% of college students at a range of four-year institutions showed no growth between freshman year and commencement in areas like critical thinking and writing, according to research by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa in their 2011 book “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses,” a work Mr. Daniels keeps on his bookshelf. Similar findings emerged from a 2005 Education Department report that found more than half of four-year college graduates could not compare viewpoints in newspaper editorials.

“I do think there’s a duty to try to validate a product charging this much money. People are saying: Show us there’s growth during those four years,” he says. “Particularly if you’re associated with a university you think is doing a fine job, I see this as an opportunity more than a defense mechanism.” The Purdue faculty, however, seems less enthusiastic about the opportunity—and though Mr. Daniels doesn’t say so, some teachers seem to be slow rolling his efforts by claiming they need more time to develop what they deem an academically valid standard.

Mr. Daniels also has some advice for Congress as the Higher Education Act of 1965 comes up for reauthorization. “Clearly an opportunity in deregulation,” he says. The act’s provision for Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a form that students use to figure out federal aid eligibility, has 108 questions, many of them useless.

Another problem: The aid-application system requires the disclosure of parental savings in addition to their current income, meaning it punishes parents who planned ahead. A potential new wrinkle in government hostility to saving for tuition came in January, when President Obama floated the idea of taxing so-called 529 accounts used by middle-class savers putting away money for their children’s education. A week later the administration backtracked amid irate public reaction. As Mr. Daniels dryly notes, “That one had a half-life somewhere at the bottom of the periodic table.”

In his drive to free students of debt, Mr. Daniels is considering innovations such as an unconventional financing option known as the income-share arrangement. Instead of taking out a loan, students promise an investor a certain percentage of their income for a fixed number of years. Graduates who earn more pay more, and those who earn little pay little. The concept, Mr. Daniels points out, isn't new. "Like a lot of my ideas, Milton Friedman thought of it decades before," he says with a grin.

Pondering what to call the income-share arrangement if he brings it to Purdue, home of the Boilermakers, Mr. Daniels has said he's thinking about calling it "Bet on a Boiler." The program would "start as something for people who had an affinity for a university," namely enthusiastic alumni. If it works, he says, the program could appeal to other investors: "Somebody who has never been within a thousand miles of here might be very smart to bet on one of our chemical engineers."

One roadblock: It's unclear how the feds would treat such contracts. He testified about the concept before a congressional committee in March, and then came media howling that Mr. Daniels favored "indentured servitude." He calls that charge "nonsense," noting that "you don't have to work, and by the way if you don't, it's no skin off yours; the investor loses." If anything, being beholden to a bank for 20 years is indentured servitude.

As a college administrator, Mr. Daniels has also taken notice of the bureaucratic accreditation process that is a prerequisite for receiving federal funds. Six regional groups blessed by the Education Department, as well as a coterie of program-specific organizations, sign off on an institution's programs. The ostensible goal when Congress coupled federal funding with accreditation in the 1952 G.I. Bill was to protect students from colleges hawking worthless degrees.

That hasn't happened. Instead, universities devote considerable resources to a useless process. Almost no institution misses the mark, and since accreditation is done geographically, an upper-tier school like Purdue is accredited by the same agency that has given accreditation to Indiana University East, where the six-year graduation rate is about 18%.

Purdue pays \$150,000 annually in direct accreditation fees, working with any combination of 17 agencies—but that doesn't include time. Stanford University Provost John Etchemendy said in a 2011 letter that the school spent \$849,000 in one year of a multiyear accreditation. "One suspects you have some basic inertia and some folks would rather spend their time being busy with this than doing something more productive," Mr. Daniels says with a faint smile. "I refer of course to the people on other campuses."

'All this time and money and in the end some really lousy schools get accredited, so I'm not sure what the student—the consumer—learns. An awful lot of make work involved, or so it seems," he says. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) is considering reforms, including untangling accreditation from federal funding, an idea that Mr. Daniels says "ought to be looked at."

Mr. Daniels has made a habit of searching out what "ought to be looked at" in his two years running Purdue, getting his school in shape for when the higher-education bubble implodes. It's all part of trying to provide the accountability that students and parents are starting to demand. "Higher education has to get past the 'take our word for it' era," he says. "Increasingly, people aren't."

Miss Bachelder is an assistant editorial features editor at the Journal.

WSJ - Editorial

Corinthian's Last Rites

The feds and Kamala Harris put 16,000 students on the street.

It's good that Education Department regulators don't oversee drone strikes. Behold how DoE's blunderbuss assault on the for-profit Corinthian Colleges has harmed thousands of students and employees.

On Monday the Santa Ana-based for-profit shut down its remaining 28 schools, which no buyer would purchase amid the government's regulatory ambush. The closure displaces 16,000 or so students—many mere months away from graduation—and 2,500 workers.

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Corinthian shuts all campuses, including Everest in Santa Ana

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At government gunpoint, Corinthian in July agreed to sell 85 campuses and wind down 12 others over six months. In November the nonprofit Education Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) agreed to buy more than 50 Corinthian campuses for \$24 million plus \$17.25 million in protection money to the feds for a release from liability. But ECMC passed up Corinthian's 23 schools in California because Ms. Harris wouldn't quit.

Earlier this month, DoE fined Corinthian \$30 million for misrepresenting job placement rates of roughly 900 students at 12 schools since 2007. Most alleged violations were paperwork errors and misrepresented Corinthian's systemic compliance. In 2010 Corinthian enrolled 110,000 at 100 some schools, which were in good standing with accreditors until last summer.

The penalty scared away prospective buyers and pushed Corinthian over the cliff. Department Under Secretary Ted Mitchell claims that the "closure decision was made by the company," though the government deliberately pushed Corinthian to the precipice.

To mitigate the political damage, DoE is deputizing financial aid counselors to help Corinthian's student refugees. Yet most community colleges don't offer Corinthian's vocational programs and flexible schedules, and many for-profits don't accept Corinthian's credits. Ms. Harris and the feds have also made clear they intend to continue their persecution of for-profits, so students could enroll in another political target.

As a political salve, the DoE says it will allow students thrown out of school to discharge their federal student debt, which means taxpayers might now be on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars.

Though Corinthian has established an escrow account for refunds, the reserve likely won't be sufficiently capitalized to cover 16,000 students. Maybe there would be more money for students if Corinthian didn't have to spend so much defending itself from the government. But for the Obama Administration, protecting students has always been second to its mission of doing whatever it takes to put for-profit schools out of business.

English Majors sans Shakespeare

[A new study shows that few top colleges require students to read the Bard.](#)

by Ryan L. Cole

'There is hardly a pioneer's hut which does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare,' Alexis de Tocqueville writes in *Democracy in America*, recalling his travels across the country in the early 19th century and suggesting the scope of the Bard's influence. From the log cabins of our young republic to the classrooms of contemporary China, where he is known as Shashibiya, Shakespeare has been arguably the most read writer in the English language. He is also certainly the most translated. His work has been rendered in Zulu, Mandarin, even Klingon.

Why, then, is he vanishing from the curricula of America's colleges?

A new study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) reveals, depressingly, that only four of the nation's top colleges and universities require a Shakespeare course, even for English majors. ACTA, a non-profit based in Washington, D.C., that encourages college

trustees to act on behalf of academic freedom and excellence, surveyed *U.S. News and World Report's* top 25 national universities and top 25 liberal-arts colleges. Of the former, only Harvard (the lone Ivy League institution to make the cut) and the University of California–Los Angeles require English majors to study Shakespeare. Of the latter, only Wellesley College and the United States Naval Academy do.

What today's English departments do offer is the expected cocktail of popular culture and political correctness. Princeton's "Literature, Food, and the American Racial Diet," for example. Or "Punk Culture: The Aesthetics and Politics of Refusal" at Cornell, or "The Politics of Hip Hop" at Emory.

Though this be madness, there is of course a method to it, to paraphrase Polonius. Part of the motivation is economic, as departments pander to their customers with courses on children's literature, cinema, television, Harry Potter, and vampires. Another part is political, involving academia's devaluing of Western classics and its hostility to anything white, male, or old, adjectives that supposedly mean irrelevant and ethnocentric.

This is nonsense. Shakespeare's plays and poetry, with their themes of romance, intrigue, and tragedy, touch all aspects of the human condition and transcend the age and the culture in which he wrote. For over four centuries his work has resonated with people from vastly diverse backgrounds and stations of life.

For just one illustration of this universality, consider that last year, on the occasion of the Bard's 450th birthday, the London-based Globe to Globe project launched an effort to perform *Hamlet* in every country on earth. Performances have been staged or scheduled in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Russia, Kenya, and Uganda, to name just a few. This gives some indication that the tragedian's work still strikes common chords and moves the hearts of men and women regardless of race or class. Or, as the late Maya Angelou said, succinctly, "Shakespeare was a black girl."

Many English majors will emerge from our most prestigious institutions of higher learning without ever setting their eyes on *King Lear*, *Othello*, or *The Tempest*. They will, however, have completed such courses as Penn's "Gender, Sexuality, and Literature: Our Cyborgs, Our Selves." Some consolation. Shakespeare has stood the test of time. It's open to debate whether such modern fads as neuro-lit will have the same staying power. And pity the high-schoolers who will end up as the pupils of a generation of English teachers who never studied Shakespeare.

ACTA suggests that concerned university alumni and donors raise their voices against such curriculum oversights and, in protest, withhold their charitable giving. This is a good starting point, but perhaps we as a culture should remind ourselves that literature by authors who are "dead," "white," "male," and "Western" can certainly share space with more modern fields of study. If the academy and popular culture continue to insist on this fatuous association, many great ideas and beautiful works of art — from Michelangelo to Shakespeare to the Founding Fathers — will be closed off to rising generations of all backgrounds,.

In the fourth act of *Henry VI, Part 2*, Lord Saye observes that "ignorance is the curse of God; knowledge is the wing wherewith we fly to heaven." For nearly half a millennium, Shakespeare has been such a wing. Our colleges and universities should do their part to keep it that way.

Ryan L. Cole, a former adviser to Mitch Daniels, writes from Indiana.

National Review

George Washington University's Swastika Problem

The Left discovers the value of fake hate crimes.

by Kevin D. Williamson

When tyranny arrives on these shores, it isn't going to start off looking like something out of George Orwell — it's going to look a lot like college, which is why the sort of people who twice made Barack Obama president of these United States will welcome it.

George Washington University ("the Harvard of safety schools," as alumnus Dan Foster calls it) has a swastika problem. This goes back a ways. In 2007, a Jewish student, Sarah Marshak, reported that her dorm-room door had been defaced with swastikas, and she complained that the university was doing too little to investigate. But the university was in fact investigating thoroughly — it had, ridiculously enough, gone as far as consulting the FBI — and its sneakily hidden surveillance cameras recorded the vandal in action.

No points for guessing that the malefactor was Sarah Marshak.

Recently, somebody drew swastikas on the wall of a GWU dormitory. Whether that is the work of another hoax artist or a genuine free-range national-socialist graffitist is unknown, but the school's students have an unproud history of faking hate crimes. A group of left-wing students some years back drew up a phony anti-Muslim flier that was falsely attributed to a conservative group, the Young America's Foundation, in an attempt to smear the organization as racist.

(If you're wondering what these jackasses grow up to become, consider that Matthew Bruenig of *The American Prospect* and *Salon* similarly manufactured out of whole cloth a quotation he attributed to me, expressing sympathy for Donald Sterling during the controversy over his racist comments. I'd never even heard of Sterling at the time and assumed everybody was talking about a character on *Mad Men*. Purportedly respectable institutions still publish Bruenig.)

Fake hate crimes, like false rape accusations, now are a regular part of college life, and they serve the same purpose: a pretext for terrorizing unpopular individuals and organizations.

The hoaxers rarely if ever endure any serious punishment. Punishment is reserved for the innocent.

Or the mostly innocent. Given the low intellectual climate on George Washington's campus, the Jewish student returning from a trip to India with a Hindu symbol of auspiciousness — the Sanskrit word is *svastika* — surely must have known what he might be stirring when he tacked it up on the bulletin board belonging to his Jewish fraternity. He has been expelled from the fraternity and banished from the campus, and probably will be expelled from the university. Compare that with the treatment of "Jackie," the University of Virginia student whose manufactured tale of a brutal gang rape sent that campus into convulsions — nothing happened. The student who originally complained about the swastika retracted his complaint after learning that the iconography in question was Hindu rather than Nazi — that he'd assumed the wrong kind of Aryan — but none of that matters to university administrators.

Of course the streets patrolled by the thought cops (and the actual cops who enforce their edicts) are all one-way.

The resemblance between the Hindu swastika and the Nazi swastika is not coincidental. The eastern fascinations of Adolf Hitler's inner circle, particularly those of Heinrich Himmler, are well known, and the connection between the Third Reich and exotic mystical traditions lives on in the very odd world of "esoteric Nazism." (This is a very amusing book on the subject.) The Nazis' hijacking of the swastika was, culturally speaking, a very thorough one; when living in India, I found the symbol's ubiquity jarring, even in a land rich with striking religious images. I never got used to it. It often is painted over doors, and my newspaper's offices once were visited by a holy man who broke a coconut and finger-painted swastikas on our new computers for good luck. They were Windows boxes, unfortunately, and thus beyond even the intercession of the infinite proceeding from the infinite.

You cannot *not* notice a swastika.

But that doesn't mean that you must proceed as though you are too stupid to tell the difference between Nazi vandalism and something that is — let's be clear here — *not Nazi vandalism*. But those are the wages of multiculturalism, which is a moral pose that has displaced the actual study of culture — and *cult* is the first word in *culture*, which is why the study of religious thinking and tradition is a necessary part of any liberal education. Part of the value of a liberal education is that it helps you to avoid doing stupid things, e.g. effectively criminalizing the display of an ancient religious symbol in an institution purportedly dedicated in some part to the study of the liberal arts.

This is familiar territory. Violating what I had taken to be my own monopoly on goofy stories about events in Lubbock, Texas, in the early 1990s, GWU law professor John F. Banzhaf III points to an ill-advised effort on the part of my hometown public schools to police purportedly occult symbolism — with authorities circulating a list of images to be on the lookout for, including the peace sign and the Star of David. This was in the heyday of the Satanic cult panic, and Lubbock's Jewish families (both of them) were not very much amused that the school superintendent was targeting the symbol of their faith as something sinister, though they must have been amused that his name was Moses. (If you happen to be wondering how long I have been getting cranky about these things, I editorialized on the subject in the Lubbock High School newspaper lo those many years ago. No link, I'm afraid; the Web had not yet been invented; kids, ask your parents about "print.")

I do wonder how far the university wants to take this. If a two-dimensional Hindu swastika is enough to get you tossed, what about a three-dimensional, walking swastika? The *svastika* symbolizes *svasti*, or well-being, and "Svasti" is not an uncommon Indian name. (You could spend a lifetime studying India's naming conventions. Some years ago, an election in Meghalaya pitted Adolf Lu Hitler Marak against Frankenstein Momin.) There are businesses (the inevitable yoga studio) called "Svasti" or "Swasti," and there are no doubt young people walking around our nation's capital wearing T-shirts bearing brightly colored swastikas over the caption: "100 percent Buddhist," Buddhism being one of the many religions (Jainism, Zoroastrianism) in which the swastika is used.

It is impossible to imagine educating in that environment. No doubt GWU students wishing to study the works of Max Müller, the great Sanskrit scholar, would have to endure a raft of trigger warnings, sign a legal waiver, and produce a note from Mommy before being allowed to crack open the Upanishads.

George Washington University is a private school, and as such it ought to be allowed to expel students for whatever reason it likes — swastikas, Crocs, being this girl. But the public universities are, if anything, even more ruthless policemen of speech and thought than are their

private counterparts. And the modern public university — which is simply a beery extension of the modern public kindergarten — is a sort of terrarium version of the utopia that our progressive friends are always promising us. It is public, but you are there at the sufferance of those who operate these intellectual veal-pens. For the Left, the citizen exists at the sufferance of the state, not the other way around. Free speech on campus, if it is to be tolerated at all, is restricted to First Amendment “zones” — as though there were not a First Amendment zone stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Say the wrong thing on a college campus and you will be threatened with state-sanctioned violence.

But of course the streets patrolled by the thought cops (and the actual cops who enforce their edicts) are all one-way. FIRE — the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education — does important work documenting this sort of thing. When a Sam Houston State student activist named Morgan “Not That Morgan Freeman” Freeman set up a “free-speech wall” upon which students could write whatever they liked — including unkind observations about the school or about roving ex-boyfriends — some genius wrote “F**k Obama.” A professor insisted that the comment be removed, and when students refused, he vandalized the display. (Tenure is a hell of a drug.) Students complained to the police, who, seeing that the students’ rights had been violated and their property damaged, treated the students as though they were the criminals. More censorship was demanded. The students who were encouraging the exercise of free speech were threatened by gun-toting agents of the state not for expressing unapproved sentiments but simply for *allowing* for the expression of those unapproved sentiments. Offensive? Sure. Lots of things are offensive, and it seems to matter a great deal who is offended: “Piss Christ” gets you a federal subsidy; “F Obama” gets you a gun in your face.

“F Bush” would probably get you tenure at George Washington University.

Washington Post

How barbers are saving people from colon cancer

by Perry Stein



WASHINGTON, DC – APRIL 23: Christopher Bradley, owner, (barber at left), cuts the hair of Tyson Greaves, as barber Vince Smith, right, cuts hair for customer Lavon Stevens, as both barbers initiate conversation about their customer’s health at Christopher’s Grooming Lounge on April 23, 2015 in Washington, D.C.

There are 26 barbers and stylists at The Shop in Hyattsville, Md. Between them, they cut the hair of more than 100 people each day. That's around 600 people each week, 31,000 heads each year.

Over the last two years, 29 of those customers received a colonoscopy as a direct result of conversations they had with their barbers at The Shop. One of those people, says owner Freddie Spry, was already showing symptoms of colon cancer and is now getting treated. Many more of Spry's African-American clients learned that the cancer is one of the few that are preventable and — given blacks' higher-than-average risk for the disease— they should consider getting a first colonoscopy at 45.

"It makes me feel like I'm giving back to the community," said Spry, who opened The Shop in 2001. "In life, you're either helping or hurting. You're part of the problem or the solution."

The Shop was the first establishment to implement University of Maryland's Health In-Reach and Research Initiative (HAIR)—a one-of-a-kind outreach program that trains barbers to teach their clients about colorectal cancer and measures, like a colonoscopy, that can prevent it.

The initiative has just received a \$200,000 grant from the Cigna Foundation, the charitable arm of the health insurance company, to expand to ten barbershops in Maryland. And on Thursday, it launched its first outpost in D.C. at Christopher's Grooming Lounge on H Street NE—a two-year-old barber shop and salon with a predominately black customer-base.

So why barber shops, seemingly mundane places that don't conjure images of healthcare or doctors offices?

Stephen Thomas, a behavioral scientist who now heads the University of Maryland's Center for Health Equity, developed the HAIR initiative to reach African Americans in their own, often under-served, communities. In African-American communities, barbershops are often social hubs and customers build trusted relationships with their barbers over years. In the barber shop, people talk about their families, sports, relationships and plenty of awkward topics. So talking about health care wouldn't seem so of the ordinary.

"No self-respecting black barber says they'll get you in and out in 15 minutes," says Thomas, who first developed an iteration of the HAIR initiative in 2001 in Pittsburgh. "You are going to be there for a half a day and it doesn't matter how little hair you have."

The effort is intended to have a ripple effect, starting in barber shops-and hopefully seeping out from there to customers' families and friends. A 23-year-old getting his haircut may not need to think about getting a colonoscopy just yet, but he can tell his parents and grandparents to make an appointment.

Christopher's, owned by Christopher Bradley, a D.C. native, has 9 barbers and 5 stylists, all of whom will eventually go through HAIR's six-part training program so they can talk to their clients about colon cancer and other health problems plaguing black communities, like hypertension and diabetes. The idea isn't to transform these hair specialists into medical experts, but rather make them fluent in information about diseases, preventative measures, and risks to the black population that HAIR's leaders say everyone should know anyway.

"I've had people come in their car seats and now they're driving themselves to their haircut," says the manager at Christopher's, Lamont Whitmire, a longtime barber in the area. "To me, this is the way it's supposed to be...Our clients look forward to not only conversation, but wisdom."

Under the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies must cover screening for colorectal cancer. Thomas says this development solves the economic barrier for many people who need to get a colonoscopy; now he needs to bridge the information gap so people know to get the procedure.

“We need to get out of the Ivory Towers and meet people where they live, where they worship, where they play and where they get their haircuts,” says Thomas. “We realize we are not reaching the people who need to hear our message.”

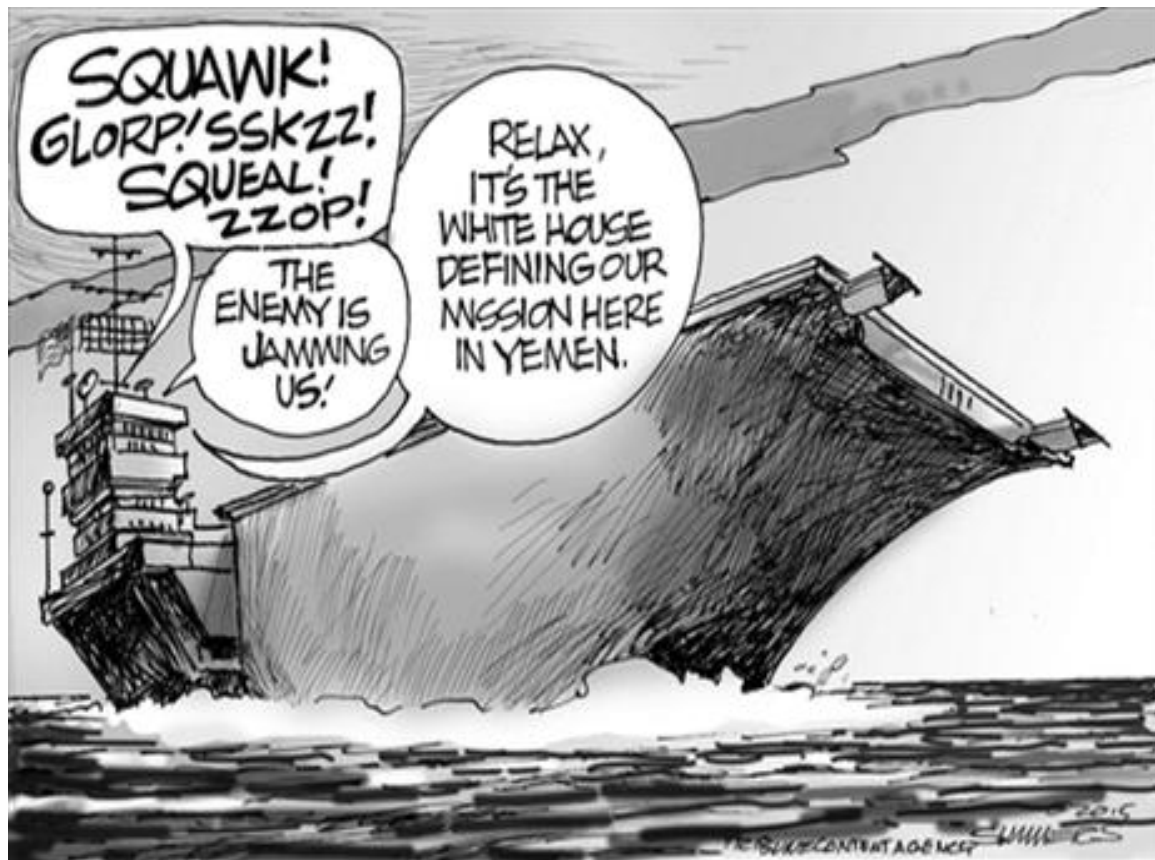
Thomas wants to address more than just colon cancer, which affects about 6 in 10,000 black people, and is working to transform these shops into mini-healthcare centers. Last Friday, a healthcare worker administered dozens of hypertension and breathing tests to people in Christopher’s Grooming Lounge.

A health care advocate from University of Maryland will frequently visit the participating salons in the region to map out customers’ family health histories so they know what diseases they’re most susceptible to. If someone doesn’t have health insurance, the barbers know who they should contact to help them navigate the system. The initiative is partnering with Capital Digestive Care, a large gastroenterology group, which will provide consultations and screenings to people reached through HAIR.

Thomas will track the success of the program—recording how many people get tested as a result of their interactions with their barbers—and apply for additional grant money to expand HAIR to more shops in the region.

So far, Thomas says the barbers and customers have been receptive and view barber shops as a natural place for this initiative.

“I’m 42, so I probably need one soon, right?” asks customer Kirwin Tromal, a New York resident who works at the Cafe Car on Amtrak and gets his haircut at Christopher’s when work brings him to D.C. “Everything educational is good



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