

# PC education hurts graduate job hunt

Students arriving at the "Ivies" this fall are encountering a surprising phenomenon. Women's studies courses outnumber economic classes, often by as much as two to one. Princeton remains the lone exception, with 25 women's studies courses compared with 32 in economics.

This phenomenon has something to do with the fact that over 50 percent of those who graduated from college in May still cannot find jobs appropriate for their degrees. But that's only half the picture.

*New Republic* editor and outspoken liberal Michael Kinsley wrote this of his attempt to hire a recent college graduate as his research assistant: "[T]he government makes it comically difficult for the honest citizen to hire a single employee." Comical to some, but not to the recent graduate. Kinsley said government regulation "plunges you into an entirely new dimension of complexity as an employer" with "a minimum of 37 different forms and 50 separate checks to hire a single employee for a year." As a result of these regulations, Kinsley's assistant ended up back in the unemployment line.

Two simple reasons explain why half of today's college graduates cannot find jobs befitting their degree. First, colleges are not preparing students adequately and employers know it. Higher education is focusing on fads rather than spending limited resources on core academic subjects. Second, burgeoning government regulation is having a pernicious, and often underestimated, impact on the job market.

Thanks to a dramatic shift in the direction of college curricula, a degree no longer indicates proficiency in the basic skills. *The New York Times* reported that employers, "express a lack of confidence in the ability of schools and colleges to prepare

## COMMENTARY Kate Griffin

young people for the workplace." Nevzer Stacey of the Department of Education went one step further. "Employers have given up on the schools."

What are our colleges and universities doing wrong? While skill requirements for employment are increasing, the quality and substance of our educational institutions is eroding. Except at a few select schools which have maintained their commitment to quality academic instruction, multicultural and politically correct courses supplant classes that have practical value for future employment.

What courses are preparing our students for the work force? At Columbia University this fall: Race, Gender and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll and The Invisible Women in Literature: The Lesbian Literary Tradition. And Harvard, not to give the idea that the free market is a good thing, offers Alternative Economics: The Case Against Capitalism.

According to a recent survey in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, finding a good job is the number one reason students attend college. Yet schools are so caught up in hot political issues that they have lost sight of a critical aspect of their mission: training students for the work force.

Higher education's own responsibility for the attrition of opportunities for college graduates is joined by the culprit of government regulation. While Clinton panders to the twenty-something crowd with his expensive AmeriCorps and student loan programs, his administration's regulatory policies are having a baleful effect. Businesses are forced to spend vast resources complying with regulations rather than on expansion and hiring.

The numbers are staggering. There are four times more federal regulations today than in 1965 and 14 times more than in 1950, totaling over 200 volumes and 132,000 pages. Estimates show regulations costing the U.S. economy over \$500 billion annually. Employment quotas, for instance, set businesses back between \$5 and \$8 billion annually on direct compliance (government paperwork, mandated advertising in minority newspapers, etc.). Many billions more, however, are lost in indirect costs due to the diversion of management time, resources, and energy.

As a result of new and existing regulations, the jobs students have counted on are just not there. Rather than pay the price of expansion, businesses are either stagnant or cutting back. During July and August of 1995, manufacturing jobs declined by an average of 38,000 per month. Yet in August alone, government increased its payroll by 73,000 jobs.

The Clinton administration is more concerned about building demand for federal student loan programs than in planning for employment needs. Consequently, higher education continues to send graduates into ridiculously glutted markets, or into no markets at all.

Is it any wonder that over 50 percent of May's graduates are still looking for the jobs they hoped their degrees would lead them to? If we continue to ignore the obvious impact of an increasing politically correct curriculum, staggering new and existing regulations and poor investment planning with taxpayer dollars on the part of the Clinton administration; recent college graduates, once our brightest hope for the future, will be increasingly unwanted in the work force.

*Kate Griffin is the director of program development with Young America's Foundation*

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