

opinion

State of Union editorial

I wonder how many editors of college newspapers have put together a State of the Union editorial? Probably not many. Well, this editor is going to do just that.

Not that my opinion matters. I'm going to use my title and space to sort of "Get my feelings out on paper" so I can take a good look at the situations. You may like to read along. Who knows, we probably agree on a lot of things.

The next thing to do when writing a piece like this is to itemize the issues. Wow, there are so many: inflation, gas prices, food prices, the crisis in Iran, Afghanistan...etc! I think I'll stick to the two most closely related and most recent subjects: Iran and Afghanistan.

The reason I call this my State of the Union editorial is that I want to help show the reader what state the union is in, which isn't too good. For the past months, the papers, radio and television have screamed, "America held hostage," as 49 of our people have sat with their hands tied and their eyes blindfolded while some guy traps around the world looking for a place to live. In the meantime, his countrymen are asking for his return so they may prosecute a guilty man for injuring innocent people. While they're waiting, they are injuring innocent people, our people. That makes them no better than you know who.

So, America, whatcha going to do? It's been 80 days since the takeover of our embassy in Iran. Does anyone know what to do?

So much for that old news. Let's get on with the new. Not too far away from Iran there lies a small country that is in just as much turmoil, Afghanistan.

Just recently, the country was invaded by none other than our big neighbor, Russia.

What is this country going to do? We are being backed up against a corner and shivering with fear of the thought of another war.

If we go to war, where will it be? We have two choices; maybe both places. And if we do go to war, how will it end? Will we win? We have in the past, but that does not matter now.

As I stated, my opinion doesn't really matter. I'm just one. But still, I voice mine and you should, too. This is not the time for apathy. Americans should stick together like we did during the first two world wars. If nobody cares, we will lose. That's what makes all the difference.

feedback

Instructor upset

Teacher reacts against story

By Terence M. Shumaker
Drafting Instructor

For The Print

I'm upset. I get like this once in a while. Human nature I guess. Being an instructor, I've developed a meaningful measure of tolerance and patience towards those who are learning new skills. But like I said, I'm upset.

Students are not the source of my distress. No. Unfortunately I'm losing patience with certain "academics" lurking within the recesses of C.C.C. Yes, they're out there; those academics, and I'm just an unfortunate "non-academic", "non-traditional" drafting instructor. Uninformed in the subjective world of grades and bell curves.

GRADE INFLATION! God grant me a "C" student so my curve will work! Why have we devised a system that turns out quality employees? Where is mediocrity?

Why do I rave? Read the front page article on grade inflation in the Jan. 16 edition of The Print. Therein lies the source of my anger.

I won't mention the shallow nature of the article. I won't go into the fact that only science and social science instructors were interviewed at an institution that is principally (dare I say it), vocational. Where were the vocational instructors when the reporter was making the rounds?

Specifically I'm referring to two quotes. Statements made by John Hooley, division chairman of social science and humanities, and Don Epstein, history instructor.

John Hooley stated that, "...in some of the non-transfer areas, the instructors, who often come from non-traditional, non-academic backgrounds such as industry, have a different attitude toward grading. And as far as they're non-transfer it doesn't really matter what those students get..."

I ask you, is industry non-traditional? Then my background in drafting is non-traditional. Given the point of view of academia, industrial endeavors such as welding,

machine shop, drafting and mechanics are non-traditional areas. But I might add that it has been the "non-traditional" areas and "non-academic" disciplines that not only helped build this country and create a favorable atmosphere for "academic" pursuits, but have built and are a strong sustaining force in the life of this institution.

Mr. Hooley's statement was mild and seemingly tempered by the diplomacy befitting his position, but a statement by Don Epstein, history instructor, was not so tempered.

He contemptuously concluded that "many of the vocational courses give out too many 'A's and 'B's... the range of students here is so great that we tend to be grateful for any work at all."

Let's go back to the first part of his statement. "Many of the vocational courses give out too many 'A's and 'B's..." Too many? How many is too many? How does he know? Upon what does he base his conclusions? He pedantically postulates that we give too many and then informs us in the same breath of his grading policy and the policy of the College, the latter of which aids in promulgating the alleged problem. Nonsense. This slur towards the vocational areas is totally unneeded and will only add fuel to the fires of "traditional" faculty polarization.

The second half of that quote was, "we tend to be grateful for any work at all." Who, may I ask, is "we"? Certainly not myself or several of my colleagues. Perhaps he has that problem in history? Has he ever expored the possibility that this may be a direct reflection of his teaching abilities? Maybe some of his students do not recognize the importance of the destruction of the Spanish Armada and only wish to concentrate on the mechanical abilities which will eventually secure them employment.

I personally find no lack of production within the drafting department. The students put out tremendous amounts of work, and we don't have to grovel and be grateful for it.

They're learning something they will use to feed themselves one day; and they produce.

Perhaps Mr. Epstein needs to take a deeper look within himself in his search for the problem instead of pointing such accusing fingers at the vocational areas.

I guess my one peeve these days is that so many people refuse to question themselves and accept responsibility for their actions (or inactions). Why must there always be finger pointing? Why do people so often feel the problem is someone else's?

A few parting remarks concerning the horror of grade inflation. I don't doubt its existence. We drafting instructors have talked of it before and have tried to find some answers. But there are many contributing variables. One big one is our system. We insulate and protect our students so thoroughly from the humiliation of the "D" or "F" that we deny them the right to fall flat on their butts. Failure is an integral part of success, and any system that strives to eliminate failure from its regimen is doomed to fail itself.

As was stated in the article previously quoted, a student is given great leeway in regards to dropping a course. The remaining students may tend to be the brighter ones.

Another point: the drafting program strives to create quality employees; we don't turn out average drafters. We run our program with the thought that life isn't just a one-time, fill-in-the-blank-get-a-grade shot. If students screw up we give them a chance to rectify their errors and get it right. Like I said, we strive for quality. When you turn out a quality product, not too many "C's" appear on the grade rosters.

I would hope that the pointing fingers and pedantic platitudes emanating from the social sciences and humanities don't continue. The last thing we need at our "non-traditional" vocational institution is a good ole "traditional" polarization of the disciplines.

Let's look first at our own performance, not that of others.

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the print

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