



## MAJORING IN FUN

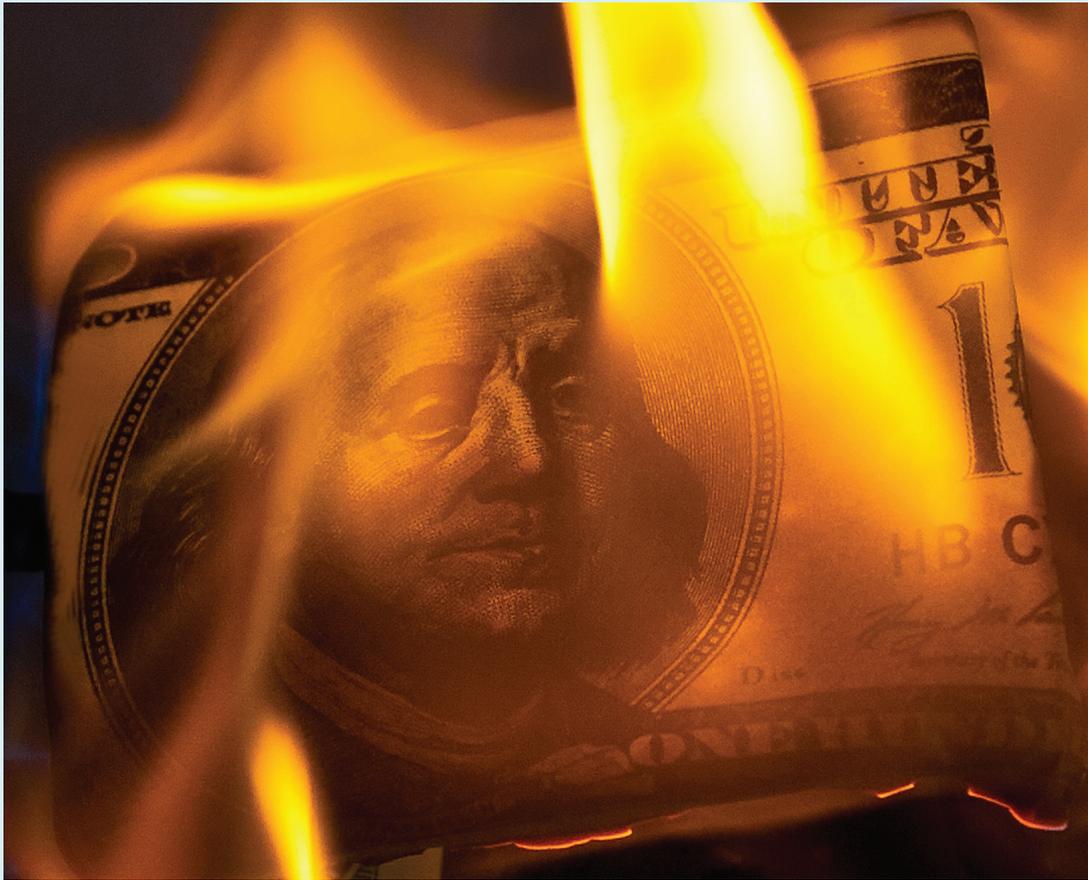
JACKSON TOBY | December 10, 2012

When Isaac Newton went to the University of Cambridge several centuries ago, he studied seven days a week, at least ten hours a day, and actively avoided the revelry that some Cambridge undergraduates engaged in even then. No one expects American undergraduates to work as hard as Isaac Newton or as medieval monks. However, what seems to be happening on many American college campuses is the development of such a powerful “fun” culture that a quarter of the students or more arrive thinking that having fun is the main reason they are at college and that the pursuit of knowledge should be resorted to only when they have nothing better to do.

Unlike students who work for pay during the academic year, where they must submit to employer supervision, students who do not take paid jobs have a great deal of freedom. Although they are supposed to study, they are not *compelled* to study. Moreover, if they live in campus dormitories or in off-campus housing rather

than commuting from home, they do not have parents supervising their comings and goings. American college students were never subjected to the rigorous discipline administered to recruits at the Marine boot camp at Parris Island. Yet before the campus rebellions of the 1960s, most colleges supervised not only classroom behavior, such as attendance, but also student life, including behavior in the dormitories. Administrators and deans, if not professors, believed that they were acting in place of parents. However, student life changed in the 1960s and 1970s. The doctrine of *in loco parentis* was discarded in deference to student rights. Nowadays, those students who live at college are free of most external constraints. No one will interfere if a student invites a member of the opposite sex—or the same sex—to sleep with him in his dormitory room. If a female student wishes to party on a Thursday evening, get drunk, and sleep through her Friday classes, nothing except her own conscience prevents her from doing so. This freedom enables many students to pursue “fun” relentlessly during the academic year.

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As two recent *New York Times* pieces show, it's becoming increasingly difficult to justify college for everyone. In the first piece, Jason DeParle told the story of two working-class girls whose struggles with college resulted in no degree and significant debt after four years. DeParle used these stories to underscore how American higher education seems to safeguard privilege while failing poorer students, whose interests are often not well-served by traditional institutions. Angelica, who attended Emory, juggled a rigorous courseload, work demands, and cultural disconnect. She ended up not graduating, returning home with \$61,000 in debt and no employment opportunities save a local furniture store. Like so many in her generation, her college experience has not left her much further from where she started.

The second piece features young people who are realizing just that. Shay Findlay, a 19-year old from

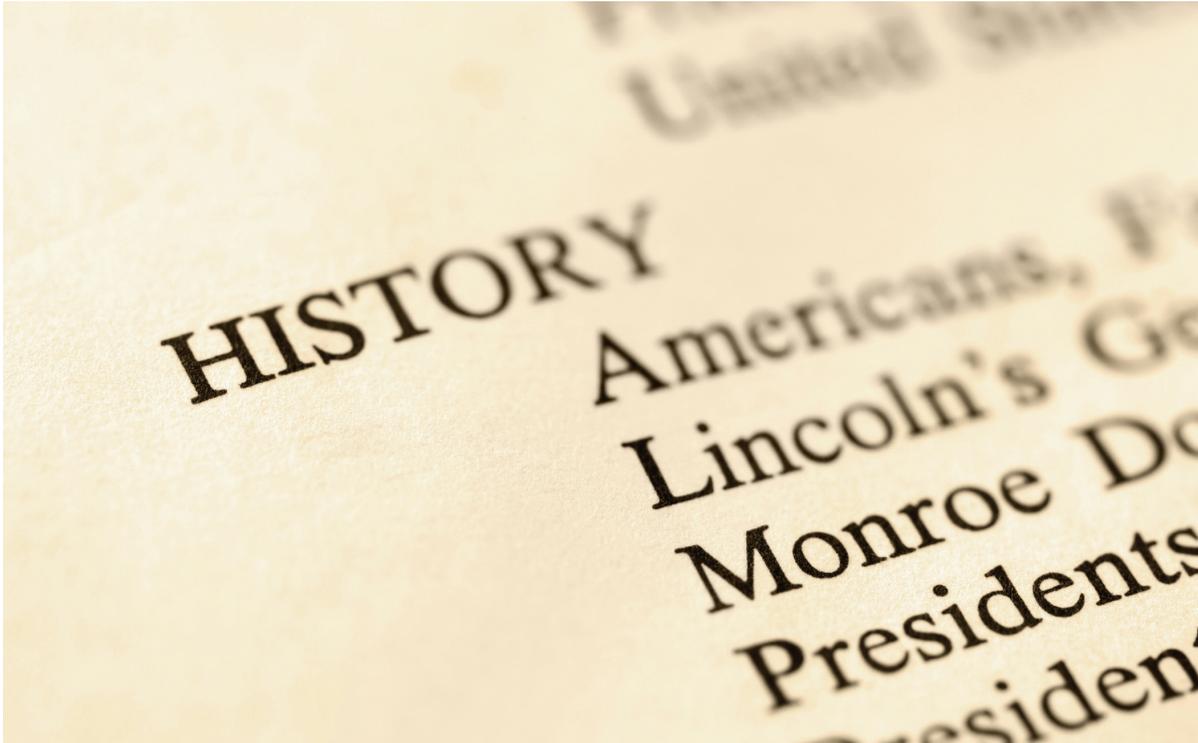
Sidney chose to forgo college in favor of employment in the state's booming energy industry. His reasoning? "I didn't want to waste the money and go to school when I could make just as much." Indeed, as he notes, his friends who attend low-quality institutions will need to find work, and it's unclear whether their degrees will lead to better opportunities than he currently enjoys. Tellingly, Findlay perceives that his friends' college experience is primarily social, not educational. Though we can't confirm Shane's perception, *Minding the Campus* readers know that our colleges often seem to be playgrounds for the rich and indebted alike. As the cost of college continues to climb and its benefits become murkier, one can anticipate scores of young people doing the cost-benefit analysis that leads them to choose Shay's path over Angelina's.

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*Judah Bellin is associate editor of Minding the Campus.*

# THE MANGLING OF AMERICAN HISTORY

DAVID GORDON | December 3, 2012



**T**he evolution of the historical profession in the United States in the last fifty years provides much reason for celebration. It provides even more reason for unhappiness and dread. Never before has the profession seemed so intellectually vibrant. An unprecedented amount of scholarship and teaching is being devoted to regions outside of the traditional American concentration on itself and Europe. New subjects of enquiry—gender, race and ethnicity—have developed. Never have historians been so influenced by the methodology and contributions of other disciplines, from anthropology to sociology.

At the same time, never has the historical profession been so threatened. Political correctness has both narrowed and distorted enquiry. Traditional fields demanding intellectual rigor, such as economic and intellectual history, are in decline. Even worse, education about Western civilization and the Enlightenment, that font of American liberties, and the foundation of modern industrial, scientific and liberal world civilization, has come to be treated with increasing disdain at colleges and universities.

This extraordinary bias began in the late 1960s with the anti-Vietnam war protests. Many participants, at least those who

subsequently went into academia, have never gotten over it. Their fossilized views have made their own disciplines largely museums of dead ideologies. Another of the remarkable changes within the historical profession has been the growth of women's history. With only a negligible representation in 1975, almost 10 percent of all historians today identify themselves as historians of gender and women's affairs.

The problem with this is that it has helped force out many other kinds of historical enquiry. It is important to emphasize women's role in society and in history. However, it is difficult to see how a feminist perspective could contribute very much to a purely economic history of the English industrial revolution (as opposed to its social consequences), or to a diplomatic history of Europe between the Napoleonic and the First World War. As a result, these kinds of studies are receiving ever less attention.

Worst of all, women's history has contributed to the current holy trinity of race, gender, and class that dominates the historical profession. Under normal circumstances, the tight focus on victimization would soon fade. Since oppression studies explain so little, they soon become boring. But, as a part of a political

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## THE MANGLING OF AMERICAN HISTORY *Continued from page 3*

chorus demanding ever-more extravagant entitlements for key voting groups, an essential part of the identity politics that is so destructive of national unity, the trinity is ensured a long life. Historians can grow tired of an intellectual movement. Politicians of a useful political tool, never.

There is also something else beyond the fanciful and fraudulent political and academic rhetoric of “equal opportunity - affirmative action.” That is jobs. Key voting groups designated as oppressed have been hired preferentially in the academy, most especially in the social sciences, including history. To justify these preferences, historians of gender and race must keep emphasizing oppression. How otherwise can their privileges be justified? Hence, the refiguring of history to justify their positions in the professoriate.

A remarkable generational change is also coming. Most of the historians in the declining fields—economic, intellectual and diplomatic history—earned their degrees more than 30 years

ago. At the same time, more than 50 percent of the new PhDs are now trained in women and gender history, in cultural history (a watered-down version of social history), in world and African-American history. This is going to make an extraordinary difference in what kind of scholarship will continue to be undertaken, and how the past will be taught. The history profession, seemingly innovative and robust, is in fact intellectually debilitated, and sadly reduced in scope.

Most ominously of all, changes in college curricula across the nation threaten to severely reduce the place of history in liberal arts education. Americans are threatened with losing touch with their past. We are in this regard on the brink of becoming a nation adrift. New core requirements at many institutions permit students to graduate without taking a single history course. When one considers how much first rate history scholarship and teaching remains in the academy, this is a tragedy. And yet, in contemplating the evolving state of the profession, one might equally ask—will they be missing so much?

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Grade inflation usually saves fun-seekers—as well as other academic underperformers—from being forced to leave college. In order to fail, a student has to work hard at defying academic norms. Not attending classes is usually not enough, because many professors stopped taking attendance and those who do rarely use attendance as a basis for grading. In addition to online services that offer for a fee custom-written papers that students can buy and hand in to their professors, most colleges have local-note taking services whereby students can buy notes taken by academically excellent students hired by the services to attend courses and make detailed notes. Thus, students can obtain the material from the lectures without attending them. Not taking any tests, including the final exam in the course, and not handing in required papers, may do it.

Although no college explicitly offer a major in fun, students may informally major in fun at college by taking an untaxing class schedule or by changing majors in order to prolong a leisurely stay at college. Johnny Lechner, a 29-year-old student, was in his twelfth year at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater campus by November, 2005, when *The New York Times* wrote an article about him. He accumulated \$30,000 worth of student loans

during his college career. Mr. Lechner seems to have lingered in college to pursue adolescent fun after most of his peers graduated and launched adult careers. He meandered through four majors—education, communications, theater, and women’s studies, accumulating 242 credits, more than twice the 120 required for graduation—without concentrating in any field sufficiently to fulfill its graduation requirements. Like Johnny Lechner, other students linger on the campus because they regard college as a time for fun or because the undemanding lifestyle suits them.

I do not know whether Mr. Lechner ultimately settled on a major, graduated, obtained a good job, and settled down to an adult life style by 2012; he must now be 36. But a college student today probably could not duplicate such a life trajectory because the cost of college has increased so much that only a very wealthy student could spend so long doing so little and because contemporary students have become aware that mere graduation does not guarantee a job. They have to know something. Despite the willingness of the Department of Education to make student loans without inquiring what the student is attending college to accomplish intellectually, economic constraints may undermine the fun major.

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*Jackson Toby is a retired professor of sociology and former director of the Institute for Criminological Research on the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers University.*

MARK BAUERLEIN | November 7, 2012



Here's one reason why the Republican candidates this election cycle were so weak: those politicians didn't study any conservative thinkers in college. When they talk, they say nothing that suggests they have read much serious discourse on the right side of the spectrum from Burke to Charles Murray. Leftists have their nostrils down pat (against racism, sexism, imperialism, economic inequality . . .), and however dated and predictable those utterances are, liberal politicians stick to the point and press it again and again. Again, one reason is that they received ample helpings of liberalism in freshman English, history, any "studies course," sociology, etc., reading some Marx, Foucault, Dewey, Malcolm X, a bit of feminism here and multiculturalism there. In school, those future conservative politicians likely rejected those texts, but they didn't plunge into the other side's corpus.

It shows in the absence of depth in so many Republican candidates. When you hear them speak, nothing in the tradition comes through—no Franklin on work ethic, Madison-Hamilton-Jay on power, Emerson on self-reliance, Hawthorne on Federal employment, Thoreau on Big Government, Booker T. Washington on

individual responsibility, Willa Cather on the pioneer spirit, and Hayek on social engineering. This is a fatal deficiency, and it neglects one of the strengths of conservatism (superiority in the battle of ideas). Worse, when conservatives don't have the tradition in their background, when they lose elections, they tend to look forward by examining their relationship to the electorate instead of their relationship to first principles and values. Conservative candidates don't need more political calculation that competes with liberalism, but rather more intellectual heft that presents a better alternative to liberalism.

It won't happen in college, so maybe organizations such as the Manhattan Institute should run two-week seminars for office-seekers. Not policy-making or campaign strategy sessions, but short courses in conservative words and ideas. Have them read Franklin's *Autobiography*, Washington's *Up from Slavery*, and Cather's *O Pioneers!* Let them know, too, that while we all await the Second Coming of Ronald Reagan, one way Reagan thrived in politics was by withdrawing for a time and reading Hayek and Friedman carefully, soberly, far from the madding crowd.

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*Mark Bauerlein is an English professor at Emory University and author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*.*

# WASTEFUL AND INEPT ADMINISTRATORS ARE RUINING OUR COLLEGES

BENJAMIN GINSBERG | January 7, 2013



Since the early years of the 20th century, America has boasted the world's finest universities, but that rosy picture is fading. The lower quality of American college graduates, the shift of foreign students to Asian and European schools and the slippage in the global rankings of American universities signal a serious decline—this at a time when higher education is essential for America's economic growth and ultimately for its survival as leading world power.

One reason for this change is the transformation within the academic community. Today's great universities were created by faculty who—contrary to the myth of the impractical professor—often turned out to be excellent entrepreneurs and managers. Over the last several decades, however, America's universities have been taken over by a burgeoning class of administrators and staffers determined to transform colleges into top-heavy organizations run by inept bureaucrats.

To professors, the purpose of the university is education and research, and the institution is a means of accomplishing these ends. To the professional deanlets and deanlings, though, the means has become the end. Teaching and research have been relegated to vehicles for generating revenue by attracting customers to what administrators view as a business—an emporium

that under the management of the deanlets may be peddling increasingly shoddy goods.

One typical example of administrative bloat and its consequences was illustrated by the American Association of University Professors and featured in a 2012 report by John Hechinger of Bloomberg News. Between 2001 and 2010, the number of tenure and tenure-track faculty at Purdue, of one of America's great land grant universities, increased 12 percent while the number of graduate teaching assistants actually declined by 26 percent. Student enrollments in this decade increased by about 5 percent.

During the same period, though, the number of administrators employed by the university increased by an astonishing 58 percent and resident tuition rose from just under \$1400 to nearly \$9000 per year in a pattern that appears highly correlated with administrative growth. One \$172,000 per year associate vice provost had been hired to oversee the work of committees charged with considering a change in the academic calendar—a change that had not yet even been approved. Since the average Purdue graduate leaves school with about \$27,000 in debt, the salary of this functionary is equivalent to the education loans of six students.

This new administrator blithely told the Bloomberg reporter, "My job is to make sure these seven or eight committees are aware of what's going on in the other committees." At the same school, the chief marketing officer earns \$253,000 and the chief diversity officer \$198,000 per year. The marketing officer spent \$500,000 to "rebrand" the university, developing the slogan, "We are Purdue. Makers, all. What we make moves the world forward." Very catchy, indeed! Perhaps the marketing department could develop a slogan that would help explain to parents and students why they must take on more and more debt to pay the salaries of ever-growing hordes of administrative parasites.

Unfettered administrative power often manifests itself in the form of administrative irresponsibility and pathology. At too many schools, presidents and other senior administrators have not only inflated the ranks of their managerial armies of deanlets and deanlings, but have also squandered tens of millions of dollars on such things as renovations to their official residences, foreign travel, chauffeurs, dubious expense accounts, and exorbitant salaries while faculty are told to do more with less and students are asked to pay more for less.

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*Benjamin Ginsberg is David Bernstein Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University and author of *The Fall of The Faculty*.*



Stanford Law School has opened the nation's first law clinic for the defense of religious liberty. As examples of the type of cases it will handle, the school cited Seventh-day Adventists fired by Fed Ex for refusing to work on Saturdays, a Muslim group challenging land-use laws that prohibit building of mosques, and a Native American prisoner denied the right to smoke a ceremonial pipe.

Funding to launch the clinic came in a \$1.6 million donation from the John Templeton Foundation, funneled through the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. James Wigginton, 26, a Muslim member of the clinic, said: "Religious ideas need to be expressed openly in public. Hopefully that attracts liberals as well as conservatives."

Maybe not. *The New York Times* caught up to the story today, and the report contained built-in indicators that liberals should be appalled. Lawrence C. Marshall, associate dean at Stanford Law was quoted as saying that "the 47 percent of the people who voted for Mitt Romney deserve a curriculum as well," though why Democrats and others who voted for President

Obama should not care about religious liberty was left obscure.

Most of the other 11 clinics at Stanford Law reflect the conventional liberal cast of our law schools, and apparently the *Times* considers this exception somewhat threatening. Much of the article contains liberal grumbling about the new clinic, capped off by a woman's complaint that "no one is mentioning the real religious freedom concern of our day, Islamophobia." That's just precious.

*John Leo is editor of Minding the Campus.*

## WRITE FOR US!

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Write us at [editor@campusmind.com](mailto:editor@campusmind.com)

# CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The mission of the Manhattan Institute's Center for the American University is to draw attention to the condition of the contemporary university. The CAU highlights the major challenges facing today's universities, including rising costs, the lack of intellectual pluralism, and the failure to provide students with a substantive education. Prescriptions for reform to restore the best traditions of liberal education on American campuses are set forth in the CAU's three unique initiatives: [MindingTheCampus.com](http://MindingTheCampus.com), the [VERITAS Fund](#), and the newly created [Adam Smith Society](#)—a group of business school students and alumni dedicated to exploring links among the economy, government, and society. For more information on any of our programs, contact Alison Mangiero at [amangiero@manhattan-institute.org](mailto:amangiero@manhattan-institute.org).

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If you have stories to report or comments to offer, write to [editor@campusmind.com](mailto:editor@campusmind.com).

The screenshot shows the Minding the Campus website interface. The main article is titled "A Hundred Ideas for Reforming Higher Education" by Peter Wood. The article text begins: "Perhaps as long as people have made maps they have also made maps of imaginary places. Sometimes inadvertently, of course. Some cartographers really did think Terra Australis filled up the bottom of the globe or the red marks on maps were the canals of Martian commerce. But imaginary maps have mostly been a recreation for those not entirely content with present realities. Reforming higher education sometimes seems to be a similar pursuit. It is connected—most likely, by an underground passage—to the cartography of the strange and impossible. Ask the great reformers of the academy in eight past hours, worked out. Even those who succeeded in creating new institutions—think of Thomas Jefferson, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Cardinal Newman—imagined far more than they achieved. It is a humbling prospect. Of course, most reformers have to settle for a lot less. Fourteen years of so before Milton began mapping hell and heaven and everything in between in Paradise Lost; he published "Of Education" (1644) his proposal for fixing what ailed the English academy. Like today's reformers, he was not in much doubt about the importance of the education: "one of the greatest and noblest designs that can be thought on" and one "to raise whosoever this Nation purchases Milton's curriculum of Pythagoras and Plato, the grounds of law and the Aëtic tragedies, pronunciation, grammar, and arithmetic, to as beautiful a dream of an imaginary curriculum as the Arabian Nights is a dream of flying carpets."

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- College Athletes: Go on Strike!, [David Henderson](#), Econ Library
- How NOT to Design a MOOC, [Debbie Morrison](#), Online Learning Insights
- Time to Play Offense, [David Maxwell](#), Inside Higher Ed

### Our Own Essays

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"Minding the Campus is indispensable to understanding the degradation of higher education in America today and the sad circumstances into which we send our nation's young minds and sensibilities."

—Alan Charles Kors, professor of history, University of Pennsylvania, co-founder of FIRE



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