

Such a Waste of Time and Money on Campus



Written by Victor Brown

Published: 01-19-2016

Page: 01

Thank goodness that we just had a semester break, with students and professors scattering for the holidays. It provided a well-needed respite from the nuttiness of the campus mayhem this past semester.

Watching the news footage, I felt anger at times, such as when the protesting students invaded a library and harassed students who were simply doing what they are supposed to be doing — studying and learning.

I felt amused at other times, especially when self-righteous faculty members showed the world how shallow their thinking can be.

I suppose my vantage point is a little different from many, having spent a three-decade career working in the international business environment, prior to teaching at a liberal arts college for thirteen years.

At this stage of my life, I am keenly aware of the enormity of the challenges facing us today. We are engaged in a long, deep, global cultural war, which will demand the best in both hard and soft skills to suppress violence while seeking ways to eliminate its causes.

Globalization has had a profound impact on our economies, and often in ways that we did not anticipate. Power has flowed to consumers in terms of product choice and price, but at the same time the power has flowed away from skilled workers. The actual work itself is shifting to lower wage countries, or falling victim to advances in process automation, or both. The result is indeed income inequality, but it cannot be remedied on a sustainable basis through simple tax-enabled wealth transfers, no matter what the ill-informed student protesters think. Instead, we need the brightest minds, using highly developed skills, to understand the many competing forces at work and to develop policies that will continue to maximize the many benefits of globalization, while minimizing the negative effects.

I can think of no other challenges that will demand more of the next generation of citizens and leaders —

who will need to be grounded in science, engineering, math, technology and economics, while at the same time culturally attuned and able to communicate effectively across the barriers that separate us — the barriers of race, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

Who are in the best position to take their places as leaders to face these challenges? Certainly it would have to include the students currently studying in our highly regarded network of American colleges and universities. We are told that they are the best and brightest of their generation, paying handsomely to have the leading instructors and take advantage of the most sophisticated learning facilities in the world. We are also told that these students will graduate and take leadership roles in the professions, multi-national corporations, non-profits and government policy positions that are the foundations of our society.

But that is not what I saw on the news last semester. I saw students with entirely too much time on their hands. I read “manifestos” and emails from students and professors that are juvenile in the extreme, and even lack the level of writing that I would expect of high school sophomores.

I read lists of demands that are patently absurd, as if firing an administrator or professor here, or demanding a cultural sensitivity class there, is really going to address the depth of the problems we face.

I saw students without a sense of global context, who seem to understand very little about real world dynamics, about the complexity of global policymaking, or even about the basic rigor of life that awaits them after they leave their campus.

Faculty must demand more, much more of these students. In fact we need faculty members who themselves understand all of these things, and who will relentlessly push students to develop the skills that are needed to meet our global challenges.

Such a Waste of Time and Money on Campus



Written by Victor Brown

Published: 01-19-2016

Page: 02

Setting up pup tents on the campus quad, harassing anybody who does not share their views, and demanding free tuition financed by the 1%, are all evidence of an extreme level of immaturity – on the part of the student protesters and the faculty that enables this type of behavior.

Why in the world would anybody pay exorbitant tuition costs and be content to be educated in such an inward looking environment? The role of students and faculty in our great institutions of learning is to look outward and upward; to understand the problems and the differences that separate us; to think deeply and creatively about solutions; to develop and hone their knowledge and skills through vigorous debate, study and involvement in the outside world.

The student protesters I saw are failing to demand the best of themselves, or to demand the best from their gold-plated education. The professors I saw calling for “trigger warnings” or “muscle over here” are showing me that they understand little about the essence of their own roles.

I went to work everyday, whether as a student in college, working in the corporation or later as an instructor back on campus, a little bit afraid. Afraid that I did not know enough, was not working hard enough, and was not keeping pace with my competition. That fear was uncomfortable, to be sure, but it spurred me on every day and it delivered results.

I'd like to see a little more of that fear in the eyes of these student protesters, and the faculty who coddle them. Conversely, I'd like to see more video of students like those who were trying to study in that Dartmouth library. They seem to know what they need to do today, in order to meet their responsibilities tomorrow.

[For more about the author, visit VictorBrown.net](http://VictorBrown.net)