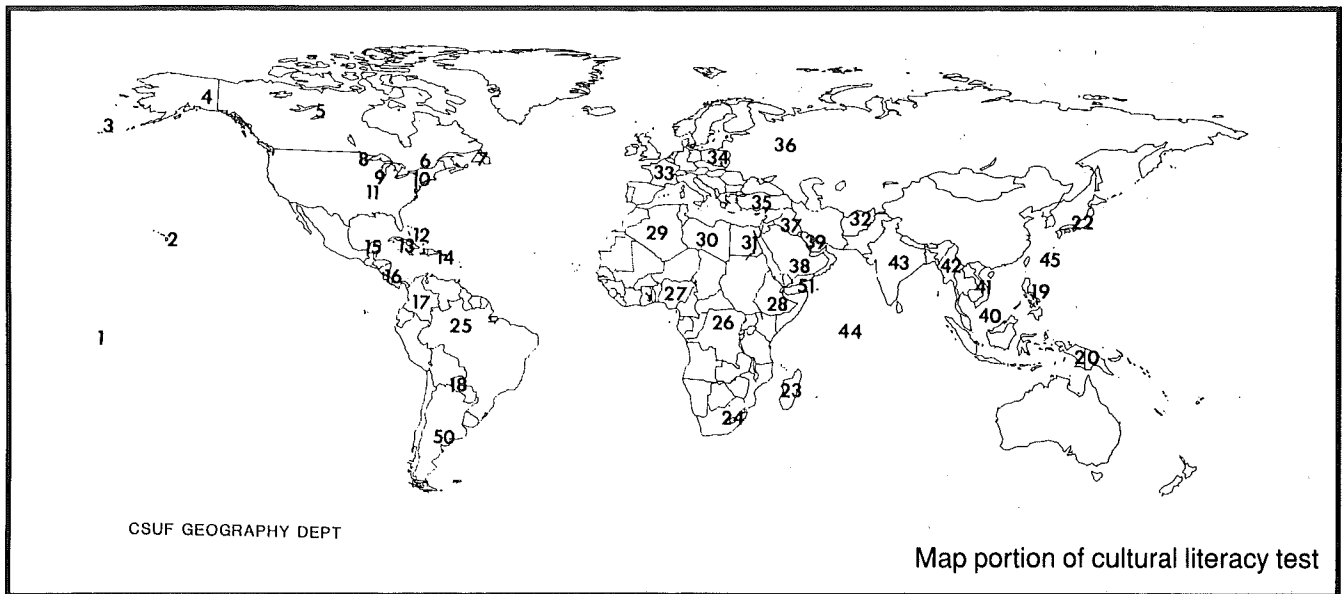


# SENATE FORUM

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## Cultural literacy at Fullerton



Identify: Afghanistan \_\_\_\_; The Persian Gulf \_\_\_\_; Nicaragua \_\_\_\_; Vietnam \_\_\_\_; Libya \_\_\_\_; The Amazon Basin \_\_\_\_; The French-speaking region of Canada \_\_\_\_  
(Answers on page 4)

**MEMBERS OF THE  
PRESIDENTIAL  
SELECTION ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE TELL  
WHAT THEY'RE  
LOOKING FOR.**

**ALSO:  
  
ARE WE FREE  
TO BE  
INTOLERANT?**

# Cultural Literacy: what Hirsch says you need to know, and why

William Vandament  
Psychology

*Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, by E. D. Hirsch, Jr., hit the nation's bestseller list in 1987, shortly after Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* had received widespread attention among critics of American higher education earlier in the year. Casual observers have linked the two authors, along with former Secretary of Education William Bennett, as advocates of an education that would prepare young people well for life in the 19th Century. This is a mistake.

A professor of English with an interest in general educational issues, Hirsch attempts to confront the challenges that time and human limitations place on the learning of new material. And make no mistake about it, new information is highly susceptible to loss during the processes involved in forming a long-term memory, particularly if it does not immediately activate prior memories.

First, most sensory information received by humans is lost for further processing within half a second of its offset unless it has previously established "meaning" to the individual. Then, in short-term or working memory, the surviving information is accessible to recall only for 20 - 30 seconds if intervening events interfere with rehearsal activities necessary for its transfer into long-term memory status. Further, a human can keep track of only a few pieces of information at once in short-term memory. George Miller (1956) took note of the capacity limitations in an article entitled "The Magical Number Seven: Plus or Minus Two," listing the accumulated research in which human subjects, when given tests for immediate recall, were found capable of memorizing on the average only seven unrelated digits, letters, syllables, or words. Humans often find ways to expand the basic seven-unit capacity by grouping information into chunks, each consuming only one of the seven bits. Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences at times form the basic chunks of information that are processed in active memory within the capacity that Nature has allotted.

It is at this fundamental level of vocabulary and grammar facility that Cultural Literacy as defined by Hirsch comes into play. The student who reads material containing a large proportion of unfamiliar words can be faced with an overwhelming set of tasks. The "meaningless" strings of letters not only consume scarce storage space; attempts to decipher them take up valuable time that may render the other familiar words

inaccessible to active memory when and if the deciphering has been completed. To paraphrase an old saw: for lack of a word, a phrase was lost; for lack of a phrase, a sentence was lost; and so forth. The deleterious effects of unknown words on memory are thus twofold, involving lack of retention and comprehension of familiar information along with the novel in the new context.

But the problems of ignorance get worse when the reader or listener is confronted with information that is implied rather than stated explicitly. In this situation, the writer or speaker requires that the audience possess appropriate information to fill in the missing pieces. Many words and phrases contain several layers of meaning that are comprehensible only to the person with a background that goes beyond that provided by a standard dictionary. To understand and thus retain a sentence in which someone is referred to as a "Quisling," for example, the reader must know that the writer is characterizing the person as one who collaborates with forces of evil.

Fortunately, the human proclivity to fill in voids in the actual environment—based on past experience or motivation—is widespread. At even a basic sensory level an incomplete visual image will sometimes be "seen" as complete by a subject. The viewer of a few leaves through the window will infer that an unseen tree is present. In dealing with verbal material, the receiving individual will use general contextual cues to infer the meaning that was intended in an incomplete description. Cognitive psychologists postulate the existence of personal "schemas" that are activated by minimal environmental cues, and then blended with the external information, to produce a consolidated account of what has transpired in the environment.

In short, the process of reading or listening involves an active partnership between the recipient of information and the provider, with the recipient responsible for supplying what the provider, perhaps without due consideration, has assumed was unnecessary to make explicit. Effective communication thus occurs only when provider and recipient share a common background and vocabulary which allows the recipient to infer much hidden meaning, or when the provider has taken great pains to use a scaled-down vocabulary that leaves virtually nothing to the imagination. Few writers or speakers dealing with complex subject matter are capable of doing the latter; indeed, most would protest correctly that such communication would be lengthy, tedious, and insulting to a literate audience.

Hirsch and associates have worked for several years to define a vocabulary that will help the learner deal effectively with the information contained in writings for a general, well-informed American audience. The intent has not been the construction of a vocabulary for specialists in various fields or of reader mastery in depth of terms and concepts. Rather, Hirsch, *et al* have sought to create a list of words and phrases for which the reader possesses that type of knowledge common to people who read periodicals and books of a nonspecialized nature. Stated in the terms of cognitive psychology, his goal is for the reader to develop a broad array of schemas that can be activated to aid the speedy comprehension of information found in the reading material of the literate American. It is not necessary that the reader identify Uriah Heep with Charles Dickens or *David Copperfield* or a given historical era—the image of an unsavory schemer posturing as humble is sufficient in the usual reference.

The methodology used in compiling the entries in two books, *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, Kett, and Trefil, 1988) and *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (Hirsch, 1989) for young people of age 11-12, has varied with the content area. In some instances, Hirsch and his associates have identified terms used frequently in newspapers and periodicals. For some terms and phrases, they have relied on the consensus among groups of experts—usually educators—to estimate the relevance to the material that will likely be encountered by the reader. In the vocabulary developed for the sciences, however, experts were consulted; they generated lists and definitions of terms and concepts that are basic. Hirsch acknowledges that arbitrary decisions were sometimes necessary. The compilation of lists will be a continuing project as terms change in their significance for general reading.

Given the empirical nature of the Hirsch methodology, how does the Cultural Literacy movement relate to the other calls for the reform of education?

Hirsch *et al* appear not to make judgments about the intrinsic value of information. Although the Hirsch approach is laboriously detailed in its attention to the content of education, this content is treated primarily as one component—almost as a set of tools—of the learning process. A review of the dictionaries compiled at the Cultural Literacy Foundation reveals many terms whose origins are in folk or popular culture—for example, beat around the bush, eleventh hour, tenderfoot, touch and go, by the book, black sheep. His approach could well be characterized as pragmatic, almost value-free.

In sharp contrast, many advocates of educational reform are promoting core curriculum requirements based on the presumably intrinsic value of specific writings and other information considered basic to our American culture. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom is sharply critical of the trends of cultural

relativism and permissiveness in higher education and places emphasis on immersing undergraduate students in the original writings of the great minds of western civilization. William Bennett (1984), noting that “the highest purpose of reading is to be in the company of great souls,” advocates that the curriculum be based on “original literary, historical, and philosophical texts rather than on secondary works or textbooks.” Both Bloom and Bennett treat the educational experience as one in which senior scholars, collectively in Bennett’s case, make judgments about the value of curriculum content based on intrinsic merits, and stress depth of understanding over breadth.

Thus, although both Hirsch and other educational reformers stress the need for a common core of knowledge for students, they have different methods of defining that core and different goals for its mastery. The core experiences derived by either method are faulted as discriminatory and conservative by some observers who note that both place heavy emphasis on Western, male historical influences at the expense of the contributions of others.

Hirsch, however, points out that the content on his lists is the product of a conservative process by which most cultures determine their language use. He notes the functional value of a national or cultural vocabulary that is slow to change, citing the usefulness of collective, stable schemas in providing the base for communication. He argues that the educator’s primary responsibility to current students is to prepare them to deal with what they have to read, not to advance ideological concerns by teaching them nonstandard vocabularies while leaving them ignorant of the shared vocabulary.

In essence, the educational dissenter who would stress cultural diversity in educational systems now has two lines of argument to challenge—conservatism



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by decree and conservatism by drift or laissez-faire. It seems somewhat paradoxical that the opposing camps—those favoring a multi-cultural, and therefore relativistic, approach and those stressing Western cultural heritage in education—both advocate the active imposition of curriculum content by elite professionals charged with fashioning educational policy. By contrast, Hirsch's approach may be considered empirically driven by, or passively reactive to, the ebb and flow of content that students will encounter in the culture at large.

Hirsch does have detractors in addition to those concerned with cultural diversity and equity. Postman (1989) characterizes the Hirsch thesis that "the more you know, the more you can learn" as a truism not worthy of the fanfare it has received. However, it should be noted that Hirsch's rather detailed analysis of the learning process goes beyond the statement of an intuitive principle; it offers hope that the remedy to some educational problems may be simpler than their chaotic symptoms would suggest if we concentrate on the building of shared vocabularies with our students. Most successful teachers through the ages have sought to present material by using terms and metaphors familiar to novices as a bridge to the technical vocabulary required for the mastery of new subject matter. Now this intuitive general insight about what is transpiring in the classroom can be subjected to more systematic analysis, and its validity tested. It is clear, among other things, that more attention should be given to the development of adequate student vocabularies early in our courses so that students can comprehend us. It is also clear that "schema bridging" between teacher and student deserves concentrated efforts if our lectures are not to serve as garbled foreign language presentations to naive learners. I believe we should offer our thanks and words of encouragement to Professor Hirsch and invite faculty colleagues to subject his ideas to the test of classroom instruction. §

*Acknowledgment: The author expresses appreciation to William Smith for his astute comments about the Cultural Literacy movement and his review of this manuscript.*

## Answers to cover quiz

	Answer	Student pct.
Afghanistan	(#32)	77%
Persian Gulf	(#39)	65%
Nicaragua	(#16)	55%
Vietnam	(#41)	67%
Libya	(#30)	53%
the Amazon Basin	(#25)	46%
French-speaking Canada	(#6)	57%

# Is Switzerland an anarchy?

Leon J. Gilbert

Department of Foreign Languages & Literature

During the 1984 summer Olympics, CSUF was the site of the team handball competition. One evening my family was seated directly behind a group of CSUF students. The first game of the evening was between Japan and Romania. "Who are you going to root for in this game?" one of the students wanted to know. "Well, not Japan, that's for sure" another answered, "I'd never root for a communist country." The Romanians eventually won the game handily, aided no doubt by this fan's enthusiastic support. The second game pitted Iceland against Sweden. "What language do they speak in Iceland?" one of them wondered out loud. "I think it's Lapp" one of the others responded. Then Switzerland played Yugoslavia, which prompted an inquiry as to the nature of the Swiss government. "It's an anarchy, isn't it?" one of them suggested, "Isn't that where you have a king and a queen?"

One could, of course, dismiss such cases of gross global ignorance among our students as anecdotal. This small group was hardly a representative sample. But growing evidence suggests that their lack of knowledge about the world around them reflected national trends. The most broadly based data on this subject is provided by a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study conducted in 1985, which tested almost 8000 high school students' knowledge of history and literature. Reporting on the preliminary findings, NEH chairman John Agresto stated on October 8, 1985:

*Two thirds of the seventeen-year old students tested could not place the Civil War in the correct half century; a third did not know that the Declaration of Independence was signed between 1750 and 1800; half could not locate the half century in which the First World War occurred. Half did not recognize the names of Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin.*

While the NAEP study focuses primarily on high school students' knowledge of American history and culture, several others, including an ETS national survey of 3000 college students and an Ohio State study of 340 of its own undergraduates, reveal similarly distressing statistics on students' global knowledge.

Concerned about such trends and curious about the state of our own students' global awareness, a group of more than two dozen CSUF faculty met throughout the Fall of 1987 under the auspices of an API grant to develop a "Global Literacy" test. The purpose was to probe the student knowledge of world

history, world politics, cultures, geography and current developments of global significance. Initially, two pre-tests of 100 items taken from 140 sample questions submitted by a broad cross-section of the faculty were administered to 636 students. The pre-tests were then evaluated for validity. A core group of seven faculty<sup>1</sup> met in March and April of 1988 to develop a final test consisting of the 55 statistically best questions taken from the pre-tests. This test was then given to 1145 students enrolled in a random sample of 75 classes selected from the Spring 1988 class schedule.

The results confirmed our worst fears. The average score reflected correct responses on only 49.8% of the questions, and while the average score did increase by class level, the improvement in global knowledge between the freshman and senior year was only 13 points, with freshmen scoring an average of 42% and seniors scoring an average of 55%. Age was apparently significant: scores improved by an average of 2 per cent for each 10 years of survival. Better scores were also associated with foreign travel. Men scored, on the average, 7 percent better than women. These findings were generally congruent with those of other studies of political and cultural awareness.

On the map portion of the test, 40% of our students were unable to locate Vietnam, half could not find Libya, and 55% did not know the whereabouts of the Amazon Basin. On the multiple choice section, over half were entirely ignorant about where and how the state of Israel came into existence; 56% were unable correctly to identify Martin Luther, and half did not know whether the first leader of the Soviet Union was Lenin, Marx, Stalin, or Trotsky. Sixty percent could not identify the only country among Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan that the USSR had not invaded in the last 40 years. Sixty percent did not know the location of the World Court and even fewer could name the five permanent members of the Security Council. Fifty-five percent did not know the major significance of the Magna Carta; 75% were unable to identify the non-Arab nation among Kuwait, Egypt, Iran, and Libya; and 80% could not identify the Latin American country in which Portuguese is spoken. A third could not define the European Economic Community; a third did not know the significance of 1949 in Chinese history; and more than half did not know the population of the world to the nearest billion.

This is sobering stuff indeed. It is clear from the results of the test that our students know extraordinarily little about the world in which they live, including the major events and individuals that have shaped and continue to shape it. Nor would it appear that the years that they spend under our tutelage improve that knowledge to any significant extent. In fact, transfer students scored on average somewhat higher than those who had received all of their college education here. In an almost apologetic tone, the final report on the API

### HOW WELL CAN YOU DO ON THESE ITEMS WHICH STUMPED MOST STUDENTS?

Sixty percent or more of the student sample got each of these questions wrong.

**1. The term "mutually assured destruction" refers to which of the following?**

- a) The notion, shared by many pacifists, that the destruction of all nuclear weapons will assure world peace
- b) a technical clause, contained in many peace treaties, referring to the destruction of the arsenals of defeated parties
- c) the likely fate of Western civilization in the event of a third world war
- d) a deterrence strategy that credibly threatens a significant level of population and industrial destruction should an adversary attack first

**2. Which of these phrases is descriptive of the U.S.S.R.?**

- a) culturally and ethnically diverse
- b) mercantilist and populist
- c) culturally and ethnically caucasian
- d) ethnocentric and monolingual

**3. The summer of 1961 marked the:**

- a) building of the Berlin Wall
- b) end of the Korean War
- c) convening of the Potsdam Conference
- d) signing of the Treaty of Versailles

**4. The world's oldest civilization was centered in what is the present nation of**

- a) Egypt
- b) China
- c) Iraq
- d) Kenya

**5. The Roman Empire did not touch:**

- a) the Baltic Sea
- b) the Adriatic Sea
- c) the Black Sea
- d) the English Channel

**6. Which European power was the last to give up control of its African colonies?**

- a) Great Britain
- b) France
- c) Belgium
- d) Portugal

**7. Which of the following languages is the mother tongue of the largest number of speakers on the continent of Africa?**

- a) Swahili
- b) Arabic
- c) Hausa
- d) Zulu

**8. During the 19th century, China's relations with the West were characterized by:**

- a) Britain's conquest of China which resulted in its becoming part of the British Empire.
- b) Establishment of spheres of economic and political influence in China by several western powers.
- c) Economic development and political unification with the assistance of western countries.
- d) The closing of China to western trade and investment.

[Answers on page 11.]



project notes that while our students scored just under 50% on the Global Literacy Test, this is no worse than what was reported by ETS and Ohio State.

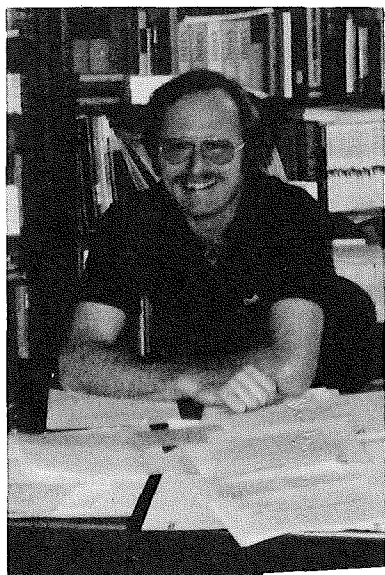
It seems to me, however, that the fact that our students are as globally illiterate as everyone else's is hardly comforting. After all, internationalization of the curriculum has been a frequently articulated goal of our university for several years. The university's Mission and Goals statement specifically enjoins us to emphasize multicultural and international issues wherever appropriate in the general education program as well as in our majors. Our official posture is thus in harmony with that of California's Joint Committee for Review of The Master Plan for Higher Education which, in the report *California Faces . . . California's Future: Education for Citizenship in a Multicultural Democracy*, urges us to "internationalize the college and university curriculum and . . . bring international issues into a wide range of programs" because they "transcend the particular professional and career training too often sought by undergraduates", and to do so is "in the best interest of California." But our professed educational philosophy has yet to be implemented in the curriculum in any consistent and systematic way.

Some preliminary efforts are underway with funding provided by an API development grant, two semester-long seminars were held during academic year 1988-89 for faculty who volunteered to add modules with an international dimension to their courses. Under a related FIPSE grant, faculty resource teams from

seven disciplines made a series of week-long classroom presentations with course-relevant international dimensions on an invitational basis, with the expectation that through this process, the instructors of those courses will add permanent international dimensions.

But we must go beyond voluntary programs based upon temporary funding, if we are really serious about our commitment to improve our students' global literacy. One of the clear outcomes of the Global Literacy study was that relevant course exposure (i.e., having taken courses with an international dimension) was significantly related to higher performance on the test and was so independent of the students' GPA. The easiest way to prepare our students to be knowledgeable and effective world citizens is to increase exposure to global issues throughout the curriculum.

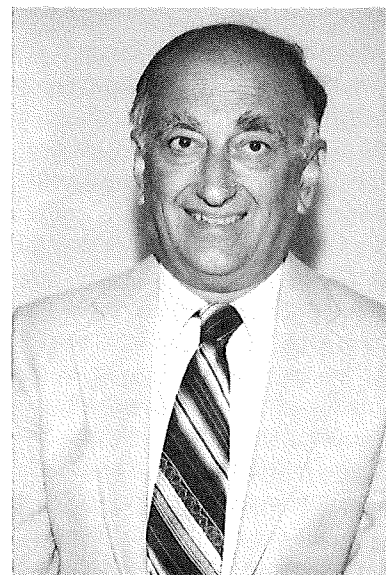
This is precisely what Executive Order 338 suggests we ought to be doing, at least within the framework of General Education. In the introductory comments to the GE distribution requirements in the CSU, EO338 comments that instruction approved to fulfill those requirements should "recognize the contributions to knowledge and civilization that have been made by members of various cultural groups and women." Later, in discussing the 24 units of course work devoted to the humanities and the social sciences, it notes that "studies in these areas should include exposure to both Western cultures and non-western cultures." This basic driving philosophy of General Education is also strongly endorsed in the report of the



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Bernard Kravitz, Department of Elementary and Bilingual Education, joined the CSUF faculty in 1961. He has written numerous articles on inquiry teaching.

# What's an OPEC?

Bayard H. Brattstrom  
Biology

In teaching general biology to non-science majors, I try to point out the relevancy of biology to their lives. To test whether I am out of step, or whether this group of students is as naive as the last, I often give my classes questionnaires. I am continually appalled by the students' lack of awareness of their world. In the early 1960's, for example, more than 20 out of 23 in an upper division biology course could not recognize the names of Andreas Segovia, e. e. cummings, Jackson Pollack, or the president of Mexico.

In the fall of 1985, I tested my non-major Biology 101 students (n=97), and those in my upper division Evolution course (n=22) on their ability to identify a series of acronyms. I had selected these acronyms over the previous week from TV newscasts, local newspapers, Time and Newsweek. All had occurred in the media fairly frequently.

FBI, CIA, and IRS were the only three acronyms correctly identified by more than half the students. Adding "ball park correct" (such as California Intelligence Association, Federal Drug Administration, Federal Drug Agency, National Aero Studies Agencies, Oil Petroleum Electricity Company), then more than half also recognized NATO, NASA, FAA, and FDA. Only 18% knew what the INS was, and in the year after the Olympics, only 4% recognized the IOOC! Though the printed questionnaire identified the acronyms as agencies or organizations, the most popular answers for NSF was "NOT SUFFICIENT FUNDS"!

There was no significant association of scores with the year in college though freshmen and juniors seemed to do slightly better than sophomores and seniors. There was no evidence that students from any one major did better than any other, but this is probably

biased by the majors of students enrolled in non-major biology (40% business, 20% engineering, 20% radio & TV communications). Biology majors did about the same as non-biology majors, though a few more recognized NSF and NIH than non-majors. One political science senior got 100%!

What do these data tell us? Perhaps that hearing acronyms on radio and TV is not sufficient for them to be recorded in the brain in such a manner so that they can be recognized when written. Perhaps that few of our students read or remember what they read in the popular press. Or, if they read it, they make only a general association but not an accurate translation! Knowing, for example, that the FDA has something to do with drugs without really distinguishing the role that the FBI and the Food and Drug Administration play. Perhaps we expect more from our students in these days of exploding information, and forget that the students come to us just as naive as ever, and that they are doing the best they can to learn as much as possible. In any event, we still have work to do, and as the world gets more complicated, we have an even bigger job of informing, clarifying, explaining, and, oh yes, trying to get them to think!§

	<u>Correct</u>	<u>Ball Park</u>	<u>Blank</u> <u>/Wrong</u>
F.B.I.	91%	3%	6%
I.R.S.	86	6	9
C.I.A.	68	13	18
F.D.A.	39	29	3
E.P.A.	39	2	59
N.A.T.O.	33	17	5
F.A.A.	26	28	45
N.A.S.A.	21	45	34
I.N.S.	19	4	77
O.P.E.C.	10	40	50
N.I.H.	7	0	93
I.M.F.	6	0	94
N.S.F.	4	2	94
I.O.O.C.	4	0	96

## Gilbert: continued

From page 5

Intersegmental Committee for a General Education Transfer Curriculum which, in reference to the humanities and social science core curriculum, encourages us to "focus on the received traditions of the West and the less familiar traditions of other cultures. . ."

The inescapable conclusion, it seems to me, is that it's high time we did something more than pay pious lip service to the call to internationalize our curriculum. We must rigorously and systematically review our

curriculum to ensure that a significant international component is present in every course where it reasonably ought to be, if not throughout the curriculum, then at least throughout GE. If we fail to do so, we will continue to send more generations of CSUF graduates out into the world believing that Japan is a communist country, that the Icelanders speak Lapp and that an anarchy is a system of government ruled by a king and a queen.§

1. Linda Andersen-Fiala, Anne Feraru, Charles Frazee, Lee Gilbert, Bill Haddad, Marianne Lanier, Bill Puzo, and Troy Zimmer.

# Beat not the poor students and teachers

Tom Klammer  
English and Linguistics

When *Newsweek* published an article called "Why Johnny Can't Write" in December of 1975, laments about the terrible state of student writing skills found a contemporary focus. The article stimulated something of a national panic that has not abated. We continue to describe ourselves as being in the midst of a "literacy crisis."

The more things change, the more they remain the same.

In 1841 the president of Brown complained that "students frequently enter college almost wholly unacquainted with English grammar." In the mid 1870's, Harvard professor Adams Sherman Hill assessed the writing of students after four years at America's oldest college: "Every year Harvard graduates a certain number of men—some of them high scholars—whose manuscripts would disgrace a boy of twelve." In 1896, *The Nation* ran an article entitled "The Growing Illiteracy of American Boys," which reported on another Harvard study. This one lamented the spending of "much time, energy, and money" teaching students "what they ought to have learned already." There was no conceivable justification, noted a rankled professor, for using precious revenues "in an attempt to enlighten the Egyptian darkness in which no small portion of Harvard's undergraduates are sitting."

In 1898 the University of California Instituted the Subject A Examination and was soon designating about 30 to 40 percent of those who took it as not proficient in English, a percentage that has remained approximately the same until today.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the "crisis" in student literacy is not new.

Statistics are often used to demonstrate educational decay, but consider our literacy crisis through the perspective provided by another set of facts:

- In the 1930's, "functional literacy" was defined by the Civilian Conservation Corps as a state of having three or more years of schooling.

- During World War II the army set the fourth grade as a standard.

- In 1947 the Census Bureau defined functional illiterates as those having fewer than five years of schooling.

- In 1952 the bureau raised the criterion to the sixth grade.

- By 1960 the Office of Education was setting the eighth grade as a benchmark.

- By the late 1970s some authorities were suggesting that completion of high school should be the defining criterion of functional literacy.

Within the lives of many CSUF faculty members, our definition of "literacy," our expectation of the kind of reading and writing that large numbers of the population can perform, has risen dramatically. At the same time, we have aimed at achieving advanced literacy in a broader segment of our population than most other "first world" countries. Consider, for example, that:

- In 1890, 6.7% of America's fourteen to seventeen year-olds were attending high school; by 1978 that number had risen to 94.1%.

- In 1890, 3.5% of all seventeen year-olds graduated from high school; by 1970 the number was 75.6%.

- In 1900 about 4 percent of American eighteen to twenty year-olds attended college. By the late 1960's, 50% of them were entering some form of postsecondary education.

- In the United States just over 75% of young people complete high school, while in Sweden 45 to 50% complete the *gymnasium* (grades 11-12), and in West Germany about 15% are enrolled in the *Oberprima* (grade 13).

Our public education system stresses openness to all citizens. We strive to educate a far greater percentage of our citizens than many other countries, not just to the level of high school graduation, but beyond. Our national goals in this regard have undergone continual advancement during the twentieth century. As we have invited more and more Americans to participate in postsecondary education, we have also radically changed the function and goals of such education in regard to the social classes it serves.

While from some points of view, our schools may seem to be failing, from another they are struggling valiantly to meet the demands of a pluralistic democracy. It may be that some of us look around at our entire culture radically changing and then incorporate our fears—of decay, of loss of order, of decline—into our analyses of our students' literacy and general scholastic performance. Even if, limiting our focus in this way, we wish to call what we see, rather hyperbolically, a "literacy crisis," we must acknowledge that this "crisis" has been with us for some time—our schools have been populated for a great while with students who don't meet some measure or other of academic preparation and achievement.

## What We Do, What We Should Do, and Why We Don't

Six months after the December 1975 article appeared in *Newsweek*, the Trustees of the CSU established what was to become the English Placement Test to assess the skills of entering freshman and lower



division transfers. In the same resolution they promulgated the principle that all students entering the CSU after implementation of the EPT "be required to demonstrate their competency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation." CSUF's Examination in Writing Proficiency and its Upper Division Writing Course requirements originate with that resolution, though we took until 1981 to implement fully the Trustees' mandate.

All entering freshmen and transfer students who have not achieved satisfactory scores on other tests (such as the SAT verbal) must now take the English Placement Test. Those who score poorly on this have to enroll in English 099 (some sections of which are reserved for ESL students) and then English 101 (freshman composition). English 099 carries no credit toward graduation. The more proficient go directly into English 101. A few exceptional students can pass the English Equivalency Examination, which obviates the requirement to take either 099 or 101, and grants 6 units of credit.

Later in their careers, all students must pass a course in their majors designated as having a heavy writing emphasis. Finally, all who hope to graduate must pass the Examination in Writing Proficiency, the central component of which is an essay evaluated by trained faculty readers drawn from almost every department.

Our best means of glimpsing how well our students can write is their performance on the Examination in Writing Proficiency. Many students do very well on this. The overall passing rate is about 75%. However, the EWP shows us that the writing ability of a sizable number of students approaching graduation is at the freshman level; in fact for some it has declined to a point below what we expect of students in English 101. This is not surprising. Research has demonstrated repeatedly that students who do not receive regular opportunities to write and to receive response to their writing after completing freshman composition gradually lose the abilities they acquired there, ending up by graduation at a level near where they were at entry to the university.

Three-fourths of our students with native languages other than English are unable to write at the minimal passing level of the EWP. This stunning failure rate is not the result of readers who overreact to minor interference from foreign languages, for EWP readers are trained to allow for "writing with an accent" on the timed, first draft essays of the examination.

We should be testing the reading and writing abilities of all entering ESL students and requiring those with inadequate skills to enroll in advanced ESL courses that would enable them to make rapid progress to the levels needed for college work. (Such instruction is not remedial: it is the equivalent of advanced instruction in a foreign language for native English-speaking stu-

dents.) However, additional test and course requirements for ESL students are currently very difficult to implement. Normal admission criteria, without any such special testing requirements, apply to most ESL students, who are not foreign (visa) students. A law suit at CSU Long Beach has stalled that campus's efforts to enforce a requirement such as we need; until it is resolved, the question of special ESL requirements is on hold system-wide.

In my discussion with the teachers of the upper division writing courses required in CSUF's various majors, the main complaint is not about having to require substantial amounts of writing, to design good writing assignments, or to respond to students' papers so that they can revise what they write. Rather, almost uniformly, the lament is that upper division students lack basic skills that their professors may not feel qualified to teach and lack the time to cover in an advanced disciplinary writing course. Clearly, our students need the kind of instruction and reinforcement that they could receive in the second semester freshman composition course that is required both in the UC and at community colleges, as well as at most other four-year institutions around the country.

A second semester of freshman writing is not part of CSU general education requirements. In current negotiations to create a common GE transfer core curriculum, the CSU faculty representatives have shown complete unwillingness to modify our GE patterns to include a second semester of composition, even though both the UC and the community college representatives have argued forcefully for such a requirement, which they already have. CSUF could, however, independently require an additional freshman writing course, as several CSU campuses already do.

Keeping composition classes small is crucial if faculty are to spend the amount of time needed on the work of each individual student. Sections of English 099 are now limited to 20 students, but in English 101, the limit is 25. This is set by system wide policy and exceeds by 20% the maximum recommended by the national professional associations, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the Association of Departments of English (ADE).

Students should take the EWP much earlier than most do now. If all students took the examination at the beginning of their junior year, as the university says they should, those who fail could enroll in additional writing classes (if seats were made available in such classes). Many students now postpone taking the EWP until their final semester; those who fail then must often delay graduation. Only the logistical problem of holding registration packets or carrying out whatever other enforcement procedures might be necessary prevents us from requiring the test earlier.

Finally, we need writing throughout the curriculum, not just in courses meeting the current upper

division writing course requirement. We could accomplish this in stages by requiring substantial writing and response to writing

- first, in upper division General Education classes;
- then, throughout courses in the major;
- finally, in all GE classes.

Many teachers already require writing in their classes, and most agree that more writing across the curriculum would be desirable. But the growing campus emphasis on research and the increasing amounts of released time allotted to faculty members mean larger class sizes and less faculty time for students and their writing, not more. Unlike the UC, we have few GAs to respond to student writing. Because our changing campus values and priorities are in conflict with our funding, the situation is growing less favorable for increasing student writing.

A variety of forces are working against the steps I have argued for, making progress in these areas seem harder to achieve than it needs to be. Frustrated and disappointed, we may be tempted to "beat," in vain, the writing teachers and students from whom we want so much more. Whether or not "crisis" is the appropriate term to apply to the widespread inadequacy in academic literacy that most faculty members perceive among CSUF students, I believe we do have the power to teach our students more effectively and to enable them to achieve whatever levels of writing and reading ability we desire—if we are willing to commit ourselves to creative change in instructional methods and curricular requirements.<sup>§</sup>

1. On the history of the literacy crisis, see Michael Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*, Free Press, 1989.

## SENATE FORUM

The Senate Forum is a publication of the Academic Senate at California State University, Fullerton. It is designed to stimulate discussion, debate, and understanding of a variety of important issues which the Senate addresses. Individuals are encouraged to respond to the materials contained in the Forum or to submit their own contributions.

**Editor:** Julian F.S. Foster, Political Science

**Editorial Board:** John Bedell, Chair of the Academic Senate and Professor of Sociology; Ed Trotter, Communications

# Making students literate

**Bernard Kravitz**

**Elementary and Bilingual Education**

According to E. D. Hirsch, the culturally literate person possesses information needed to live happily and with success in today's world. He defines cultural literacy as "information, attitudes and assumptions that literate Americans share." Professor Hirsch and his colleagues have drawn up a list of 4,500 words which they believe are the key to cultural literacy, thus providing a standard for measuring an individual's cultural literacy. He claims that one need not have detailed knowledge of these terms; having enough to recognize the term is adequate. For example, associating *The Canterbury Tales* with Geoffrey Chaucer is sufficient. One need not have read the book or know what it is about. I agree with Hirsch's critics who say that this standard is not satisfactory. Adoption of Hirsch's standard, they claim, will lead to the emphasis on superficial knowledge as the major criterion of deciding who is and is not culturally literate.

Professor Hirsch and other critics of contemporary education claim the United States is doing a poor job of reducing cultural literacy. He sees a decline in literacy and in shared knowledge. The National Assessment of Educational Progress results showed a decrease between 1970 and 1980 in the ability of 17-year old students to understand written materials. The verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores have declined rapidly in the past 15 years. According to Hirsch, only two-thirds of our citizens are literate, and most of those are at a level that is too low. It was his conviction regarding the need to improve the level of cultural literacy that motivated him to write his book.

Critics of Hirsch claim that cultural facts are being taught now as never before. For example, never in the history of American education have a larger number of elementary and secondary school students have been exposed to the chronological study of serious noncontemporary literature, American and world history. According to Edgar Schuster, an editor of textbooks and professor of English, compendious anthologies of American literature have never sold better. Nor have American and world history textbooks. The accompanying articles give us some basis for deciding which view is nearest the truth at Fullerton.

Why is it important for the populace of a democratic nation to be culturally literate? The benefits accrue to the individual and to society. The individual needs to be able to read with comprehension. Authors assume that their readers have a background of knowl-

edge; if they don't, the authors will be unable to communicate with them. Those who are culturally illiterate cannot enrich their lives by reading. People who cannot read with comprehension are deprived of essential rights of citizenship and human dignity. Those who are culturally literate, on the other hand, can use what they know about the culture to understand themselves and to become fully functioning individuals.

We live in a pluralistic society with a diversity of religions and ethnic traditions. This heterogeneity of beliefs, values and customs is protected by the Constitution, which is also the foundation of our unity. Accordingly, diverse people must be able to communicate effectively with one another for our nation to remain united. To do this, they must share a common background of knowledge. In addition, a common background of information is essential to secure traditional democratic values, especially equal economic opportunity, the freedom to participate in public affairs, and the protection of civil rights and due process of law.

If we as CSUF faculty accept that cultural literacy greatly benefits our students and our society, then an important goal in teaching should be to help students attain a common background of knowledge. We need to utilize approaches to teaching that will help to motivate our students and to ensure permanency of learning. The problem is that cultural information in all subject areas is being taught ineffectively to students who do not want to learn it. I believe the following four suggestions can be easily incorporated into each instructor's style of teaching and will bring about an improvement in the teaching of cultural information.

First, faculty need to convey the importance of the content they are teaching to the lives of their students. We should not assume that students can figure out for themselves why they should be learning the subjects we teach. The excellent teacher succeeds in making clear to students how the content he/she is presenting can make a difference to them. Unless a subject is made meaningful to them, students will memorize it to pass an examination and only too quickly forget it.

Second, faculty need to relate the content they are teaching to what is going on in the world outside the university campus. Just as we make a mistake in assuming students can figure out for themselves the importance of the subject they are studying, we cannot take for granted that they will on their own apply what we teach to issues in contemporary society, and to the universal concerns of people striving to cope with the pressures of living in a complex world. Examples of how content relates to the real world will help students form a mental pattern or schema that will help them to understand how the concepts they are studying fit in. Thus they will learn the content more easily, and the probability of their recalling it will increase.

Third, we need to share our enthusiasm for our

subject with our students on a personal level. Beginning instructors in higher education quickly discover that the overwhelming majority of their students are not interested in what they are supposed to be learning. The chances of raising student interest improve if faculty share anecdotes and relevant personal experiences. A human dimension is added to the body of knowledge in any subject field when students hear about the different interpretations, the controversies, the conjecture, and the unanswered questions that scholars are addressing. Interestingly, students frequently remember the anecdotes and shared personal experiences long after they have forgotten the concepts and facts presented in lectures and read in textbooks.

Finally, I recommend that you immerse your students in sustained study of limited topics to give them the opportunity to do on-going inquiry and to develop understanding by thoughtful interaction with the content. Another mistake many of us make is to think of quantity as a criterion of good teaching. We feel the students will learn more if we require them to read "X" number of supplemental books a semester and to finish a certain number of pages from the basic textbook each week. Students may complain that requirements in our courses are excessive, and that we cram too much information into our lectures. The result is that we spoon feed the content we want them to learn and they repeat it back on examinations. I believe that only by requiring our students to study fewer, well selected, topics will they have the time to engage in such scholarly activities as analyzing, comparing, synthesizing, evaluating, communicating and defending their ideas. With this approach they can internalize the content they are studying; it will be more meaningful to them; and will be remembered.

I agree with Bill Vandament's assessment of the worthwhile service Professor Hirsch has provided to faculty at all levels of education. Hirsch has caused us to consider the importance of shared knowledge to the individual and to a democratic society. He has followed through on the difficult task of formulating a body of content that culturally literate individuals should possess. Although there is considerable disagreement on the specifics of his content, his standard for determining cultural literacy, and his recommended means of helping youngsters to attain it, he and his colleagues are to be congratulated on presenting us with an idea that can improve the education of our students. §

Answers to the questions in the box on page 5: 1D, 2A, 3A, 4C, 5A, 6D, 7A, 8B.

# Discrimination and the university

Albert Flores  
Philosophy

Why should we adopt an anti-discrimination policy? And what precisely should such a policy include? Important questions - even more so because we are teachers and scholars with the capacity to marshal the forces of reason and education against the injustice and oppression that is prejudice.

As a community of thinkers, dedicated to learning and scholarship, the university is an institution founded on the ideal of reason as the principle basis for action. Certain traditions evolve that sustain it well in its pursuit of these goals and ideals. Perhaps the most important of these are openness and tolerance. Openness involves a willingness to consider an idea on its merits and to pursue it seriously if it can contribute to our knowledge or understanding. Tolerance can be defined as the acceptance of a variety of perspectives from which knowledge and truth are achieved and a belief that much is to be gained from the ferment of competing perspectives. As a result of the civilizing forces of our shared lives together, these traditions naturally undergo continual revision as we refine the limits to which we remain open and tolerant of differing ideas and their various modes of expression.

Prejudice and bigotry are the antitheses of these traditions. They cannot be reconciled with the goals of the university. Both practices are grounded in ignorance and the acceptance of stereotypes or false assumptions. They inevitably lead to results that violate principles of rationality. Decisions about who to admit, hire, or promote must be made on the basis of an individual's qualifications and not on the basis of factors logically irrelevant to a rational decision. Race, gender, religion, ethnicity, and so on, are irrelevant to any such decision and should be explicitly excluded from consideration. Hatred toward individuals merely because they belong to some such group is not only irrational but also an unjust violation of their human rights. Actions springing out of such hatred cannot be tolerated and should be the object of the most serious censure that an institution such as ours can issue.

The rejection of discrimination is of singular importance to academic institutions because it signifies our commitment to reason rather than power as the basis for action. History provides countless examples of how reason has failed to defeat the forces of prejudice and the hysteria bred of bigotry. Insofar as education is

our principal objective we cannot avoid teaching these lessons if we are to remain true to our commitment to rationality (not to mention fairness) as a basis for action.

Simply stated, prejudice and bigotry are forms of aggression against those so victimized. They tend to be more virulent when nurtured in the vacuum of ignorance and intolerance. Prejudice threatens individual security because one never knows what outrageous opinion constitutes the basis of another's judgment. May one's race or religion, for example, disqualify one from a job or admission to a university? Bigotry in its extreme form can lead to overt terrorism that can violate basic rights and sometimes result in a loss of life. More commonly, bigotry finds its expression in hate literature and derogatory epithets intended to threaten one's sense of well-being and self-worth.

To act on these bases implies an acceptance of violence as a means of dealing with others, especially those who are different. It legitimizes the acceptance of injustice as a proper force inherent in the nature of human relations. It encourages the victimization of those who are most vulnerable. It means eschewing rational restraints in the exercise of power and acquiesces to the rule that "might makes right." In all its forms, discrimination creates disharmony and social instability and remains at odds with the civilizing trends that are an essential part of the exercise of reason and the mission of a university.

Thus, as members of an institution committed to education and a life of reason, we must publicly commit ourselves in our actions and policies to challenge all forms of discrimination. No other act is more central to our mission and ideals.

We often know quite well who is likely to be the victim of discrimination. We also know the common forms and contexts in which this discriminatory behavior is likely to arise, and when what is said is an expression of prejudice or bigotry. Ambiguous references should not be tolerated and should be challenged for clarification whenever there is a hint of prejudice. We need not try to list all the forms within which such attitudes can be expressed; the ingenuity of the hater knows no limits. Why rouse the cleverness of those who would attempt to avoid censure on a technicality? Our commitment to reason often lead us to over-rationalize what should be obvious to everyone - to discriminate is wrong. Anyone who says or does anything harmful or degrading because of prejudice or bigotry is discriminating and deserves censure. §

# The Freedom to be Intolerant

Keith Boyum  
Political Science

Serious people who care deeply about higher education believe the following propositions:

- Incidents of intolerance and discrimination are on the rise in our society.
- The California State University (system-wide and individual campuses) should adopt policies designed to oppose intolerance, to insure welcoming climates for all students.
- Some speech -- at least "fighting words" -- should be prohibited.

Succinctly, my own views about the propositions are these:

- We don't know whether intolerance is on the rise. But whether or not intolerance is increasing, there may be something more interesting occurring.
- We ought to welcome thoughtful programs designed to insure congenial environments.
- I'd rather not ban fighting words even though I oppose them. I doubt the effectiveness and I fear the "chilling effect" of such a ban.

We hear quite often nowadays that incidents of intolerance are on the increase. I am not sure that this is true. We need to clearly distinguish between reports of incidents, and incidents *per se*. Suppose someone said they would survey dentists to discover how many tooth cavities Americans had. An alert 11 year old (indeed, my own) can spot the flaw: not all cavities are reported to dentists, and reports from dentists could vary entirely independently from variation in the real incidence of cavities.

Though almost nobody knows it (and some may not believe it), the incidence of rape (and indeed, of violent crimes generally) appears to have been slowly declining in the United States, at least since 1973. The observation is founded on a real measure of the incidence of crime: the National Crime Survey, begun in 1973. In the same years reports of rape have skyrocketed. Press accounts of "increases" in that crime have in fact been increases in *reports*.

Beliefs about the frequency of incidents of intolerance seem to me to parallel beliefs about the incidence of rape. Many recent compilations show large increases in *reports* of intolerant incidents. But the real frequency of intolerant behavior could be rising, falling, or unchanged: we don't know.

The point is *not* that intolerance or rape are somehow not problems. The point instead is subtler, and ultimately more interesting. We may have something at work here reminiscent of the line from a movie of just a few years back: "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more!"

And if "not taking it anymore" is what's really happening lately in the realm of intolerant incidents, I'm encouraged. We all ought to like that kind of intolerance. As nobody should tolerate rape, nobody should tolerate intolerance. I also think that 'intolerance of intolerance' is a preferred basis on which to take policy action. Policy premised on righteous indignation is always strong, and will nearly self-evidently be stronger than policy based on a premise that may be mistaken.

The policy problem boils down to how best we might be able to get people to do what we want them to do: be tolerant. Let us suppose that we can choose (A) the threat of (negative) sanctions, (B) inducements (rewards), or (C) rational persuasion.

(A) The threat of sanctions often signals that an important social norm is involved, and that can be a strength of policies premised on it. But costs of enforcement can be a problem, and most would find oppressive a social order that fundamentally, or even frequently, relied on the threat of sanctions. We are *not* making policy for Albania. Basing policy on the threat of sanctions ought to be avoided if possible.

(B) Inducements normally feel less oppressive, and should because of that be preferred to the threat of sanctions. We are familiar with inducements at the university, of course: our students commonly choose Cal State because California taxpayers heavily subsidize their educations. But we want them to love us, too. Be a Titan! Selling (in effect) one's compliance lacks the moral quality of taking action on the basis of beliefs.

(C) Rational persuasion is least oppressive, and occupies the moral high ground. Indeed, the University is based on the belief that ideas are greatly important, and that rational persuasion is possible.

I conclude that a university should stress rational persuasion — teaching — in regulating behavior. After all, if *we* don't believe in ideas, and in teaching, who will? Inducements should be employed only if necessary, and the threat of sanctions should be a last resort, in the face of urgent need.

## Why We Should Not Ban Fighting Words

I think there is much support for an outright ban on that portion of hateful language that amounts to fighting words. "Fighting words" are personally abusive epithets which, when directly addressed to any ordinary person are, in the context used and as a matter of common knowledge, inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction whether or not they actually do so. Such words include terms widely recognized to be derogatory references to race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and other personal char-

acteristics. Our campus community strongly shares a fundamental norm that discrimination and hateful speech are wrong. That's important: I'll return to this observation. But I find two major problems with a formal ban on hateful language by campus regulation.

The first problem with banning fighting words is creating what lawyers call a "bright line." Laws or regulations that forbid things need to be very clear, or else someone accused of violating them can argue unfair treatment. "I didn't know it was against the law" is, as the saying has it, no excuse; but "The law did not plainly forbid this activity" can be not only an excuse, but an occasion for finding the law unconstitutional (void for vagueness, a denial of due process of law.)

In the face of this, regulation might employ the definition of fighting words used above, as the University of California has done. To generate an even brighter line, one could list the words to be outlawed. (The University of Wisconsin has issued lists of such forbidden words.) Such a regulation might pass constitutional muster. But how long would it take a person intent upon hate to substitute another word, a hint, a coy phrase, a gesture? Not long, I think.

My conclusion is that an attempt to ban hateful speech through fair, non-vague regulation is to chase a will o' the wisp. The fairer one tries to be by creating a bright line, the easier it is for the haters to evade. On the other hand, that the university should not employ unfair, vague definitions seems self-evident.

Perhaps worse, a "chilling effect" can occur when people who wish to obey a law not only avoid crossing the line into illegal conduct, but in fact avoid coming near the line. For example, in the face of bans on obscenity some artists and authors might avoid any explicit discussions of sex. With that, our appreciation of an important and basic human reality can be stunted.

We need to talk about race and ethnicity, about religion and about sex. Indeed we affirm that need in

the university curriculum, with programs and courses in, amongst others, Afro-Ethnic, Chicano, American, Religious, and Womens Studies.

With a ban on fighting words at least some in our community would discuss these topics less frequently and less vigorously. Why risk charges and hearings and the rest — generally, having administrators on your case? How's *that* going to look in a tenure (or other) review? I think that no amount of assurances would overcome this effect. Ultimately, a ban on fighting words would handicap a conversation we very much need to have.

If we decide not to ban them, we need not tolerate fighting words. Government policies, law, in legitimate political systems embody norms arising from the shared sense of right and wrong in the community. But the range of the community's sense of right and wrong is very broad. Not everything the community thinks is right is made a legal requirement, and not everything the community thinks is wrong has a corresponding legal prohibition.

But that doesn't mean that communities tolerate deviations from important norms. Communities through celebrations and ceremonies and through everyday reminders, teach norms. And re-teach, celebrate, renew, invigorate and reinvigorate them. As well, communities meet deviations with sanctions. Deviants are met with anger, preaching, cold shoulders, expulsion from the lodge, pressure to resign. (He missed this point when Richard Nixon asserted, "I am not a crook.")

If we are as strongly opposed to discrimination and hate as I think we are, we have a rich variety of ways to show our intolerance of intolerance. We have the curriculum and the classroom. We sponsor student activities and lecture series. We communicate often and intensely.

We can use those tools, and we ought to. §



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## (In defense of) a ban on 'fighting words'

Craig K. Ihara  
Department of Philosophy

Over the last few years there has been a disturbing number of racial incidents on campuses across the country, including Stanford and Michigan to cite two of the best known cases. On our campus too there is mistrust and misunderstanding between different student groups. Currently the most outstanding example involves MEChA and the Associated Students' leadership. Happily we have not yet had the worst kinds of incidents that other campuses have experienced, but we cannot be confident that such incidents will never occur here.

Another concern is to graduate more underrepresented students. To do this we must have a campus environment that attracts and retains students from areas that are sometimes so different from traditional Orange County that they might as well be from a different country. Unfortunately, as a survey conducted last spring shows, our campus is not perceived as a very hospitable place by many such students.

An essential element in the overall effort to improve the campus climate and prevent serious incidents must be for the University to state clearly and prominently its position against invidious discrimination. If nothing else, such a policy affirms the institution's support and encouragement to anyone likely to be victimized by discrimination, racial or otherwise. (Imagine how likely a white student would be to attend a predominantly black university where (1) there was reason to believe that at least some anti-white attitudes existed, and where (2) those in authority refused to adopt a general prohibition against verbal abuse.)

However, across the country anti-discrimination policies have been opposed on the grounds that the prohibitions they include against discriminatory verbal abuse infringe on academic freedom and the First Amendment. Such objections can be avoided by eliminating all such prohibitions. Unfortunately, policies containing only exhortations is not likely to be taken seriously, and the important message that it addresses to the campus community is likely to be dismissed as mere verbiage. Whether we like it or not what the institution prohibits will be regarded as what the institution feels most strongly about. Much as we would like to depend exclusively on non-punitive and non-restrictive measures to promote tolerance and non-discrimination on our campus, we cannot rely on them

alone because there will always be some who will not respond.

The restrictions in the policy proposed for CSUF are all borrowed from other state and federal policies, including various CSU Executive orders. The most controversial is a prohibition against "fighting words," which the Supreme Court has ruled does not constitute protected speech under the First Amendment (Chaplinsky, 1942). However much we want to protect free speech we cannot and do not protect speech that slanders others, or incites sedition or other kinds of violence. The question is whether "fighting words" should be placed in the category of protected speech or prohibited conduct. Given its intent and potentially harmful consequences, it seems to me that it clearly belongs in the latter.

Some would disagree, dismissing "fighting words" as "merely offensive," conflating them thereby with bad odors, vulgar dress and other matters of poor taste. This is a kind of insensitivity to the nature of racial and other kinds of discriminatory abuse when directed at specific individuals. Such abuses amount to attempts to intimidate and to subjugate people through the threat of violence. At some point speech is no longer dialogue but an attack, often on those who are the least in a position to defend themselves.

This is not to deny that there are legitimate issues raised by "fighting words." One concern is what Keith Boyum calls the "bright line" problem. Briefly put, in order to be fair as well as constitutional, prohibitions on speech need to be very clear. However, language clear enough to pass constitutional muster will be so specific that those so inclined can easily express their hate in other words.

One must agree with Keith that we cannot hope to eliminate all ways of expressing hate. Any policy with that intent would be foolish, and really would infringe on free speech. The "fighting words" clause does not attempt so large a task. Its intent is merely to provide recourse to those who are victimized in a very particular way, through the use of epithets commonly recognized as "inherently likely to provoke a violent response." Clearly this prohibition only provides protection from name calling and other demeaning references of the worst sort, but even this minimal protection is better than none.

It might be objected that it would be messy and time-consuming if the university involved itself in every incident of name calling on campus. Anyone who thinks that there is that much name calling on this campus has a very dim opinion of our student body. There are isolated cases, but in general, people do not bring trifling incidents to the attention of those in authority. Thus there are very few official reports of sexual harassment, even though the language of the Executive Order 345 on that topic is very broad.

Another concern has to do with the "chilling effect" of a prohibition. Academic freedom is a most cherished value on any university campus and above all we must not inhibit the free discussion of any point of view, however repugnant. But there are limits to even our most cherished and important freedoms. Academic freedom should not permit personal attacks on students, especially by those in authority. Such attacks do not contribute to a free exchange of ideas, nor deserve to be called the presentation of a point of view. They are not intended to inform but to harm, and as such impede the pursuit of truth which is the underlying rationale behind free speech and academic freedom. Aggressive racism is more chilling than any prohibition of it could be.

The cliché that "The best remedy for bad speech is more speech" oversimplifies the situation. A group of individuals hurling racial epithets at someone is not inviting a dialogue, and without regulations on the basis of which complaints can be brought there may be no subsequent discussion about why racial epithets ought not to be used. In the classroom, where the professor's authority is supreme, students need to be empowered to voice their objections. If they are not, various forms of discrimination may simply slide by without being addressed.

Part of the anxiety about the chilling effect of prohibiting "fighting words" should be dispelled by a clear understanding of the courts' interpretations. What "fighting words" prohibits is knowingly directing abusive epithets to a specific person or group of persons in a context in which it is likely to provoke a violent reaction. So, for example, there is no prohibition against using quotations which include derogatory references to race or sex, or against making the most exhaustive lists of chauvinist or racist epithets if it is for a legitimate academic purpose such as examining attitudes about women or African-Americans. To invoke a distinction often made in philosophy, "mentioning" such words does not amount to "using" them in a way which is prohibited.

Once it is made clear that it is specific uses of "fighting words" that are prohibited, it should also be clear that using such a word because one did not know its derogatory nature is not itself a violation of the policy because it is not used in an abusive manner. In any case, such unintentional uses should be rare because "fighting words" must be "commonly recognized to be inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction." (As we grow older, professors may become increasingly out of touch, but hopefully not that out of touch.)

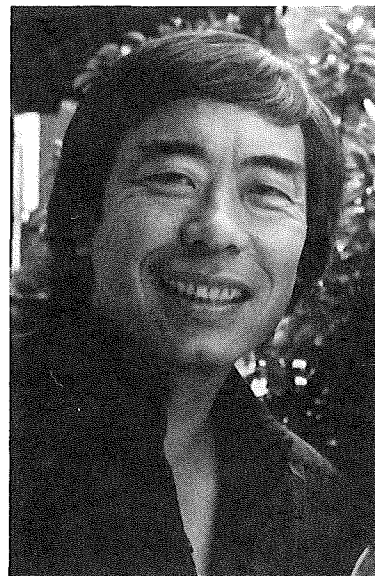
Furthermore it should also be clear that the prohibition of "fighting words" does not rule out advocating offensive views. One may argue for the intellectual inferiority of African-Americans, but one cannot call anyone a "nigger."

If one still believes, despite these reassurances, that

some "chilling effect" remains, it's worth considering that this might be a good thing. We need to be careful of what we say about gender, race, sexual preference, et cetera. An awareness that someone might find our language offensive is part of what it means to be sensitive to others, and that is what all of us must be if we are to live successfully together in a multi-cultural society.

In short, the prohibition of "fighting words" is not objectionable because it is too broad. The real objection to it is that it is too narrow. It is so limited that it does not cover a variety of racist and discriminatory behavior. So, for example, since it only covers direct, face-to-face confrontation, it does not prohibit racist graffiti, or caricatures, such as occurred during the "lip sync" incident last spring on our campus. Unfortunately, more inclusive language is both more problematic and less politically viable.

State Assembly Resolution No. 126 mandates the UC and CSU to "correct any existing behaviors, practices, and policies...that result in differential treatment among its students" including "adoption and enforcement of specific policy statements...that discriminatory policies, behavior, and practices will not be tolerated." Thus, the University has the legal responsibility to protect students from racial and discriminatory harassment that impedes their educational opportunities. It appears to me that adoption of an anti-discrimination policy is imperative. For these and the other reasons cited above, it appears to me that the adoption of this anti-discrimination policy is both the best, as well as the least, that we can do. §



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# Choosing a president: a conversation

**Julian F.S. Foster**  
Political Science

*The choice of our next president is likely to affect the campus in major and lasting ways. All faculty should interest themselves in this. The Senate Forum here introduces the members of the Presidential Selection Advisory Committee (PSAC), who will make the key preliminary decisions, the final choice being up to the Board of Trustees.*

*We asked each of the committee members to respond to six questions in the hope of discovering the approach which they will bring to the task. We reached eleven of the thirteen (Chancellor Reynolds and Trustee Lansdale being the exceptions.) Of the eleven, two were reluctant to deal with the specific questions. Trustee Campbell felt that it was wisest to bring no preconceptions to the selection process, so as to be able to focus an open mind on finding the sort of president Fullerton needs. Trustee Vitti was concerned that members of the Board should speak only for the Board, not as individuals. The remaining nine responded to the questions, which responses form the basis for what follows.*

**Does a university president need skills and personal qualities different from those of a CEO of a corporation of comparable size?**

*Several respondents noted that a university president needs academic qualifications and a background in teaching, research and academic administration. Beyond that, WHITE said that the new president needs all the*

*qualities of a CEO. Others drew various distinctions:*

**HAMPTON:** The university doesn't produce products, but rather is a people-oriented organization. Interpersonal skills are vital.

**LABRADO:** In the corporate world there is more flexibility, wider scope for action. A university like this one is more structured, which inevitably places limitations on what a president can do.

**HAAK:** Unlike a typical corporation, the university is a professional organization with its own customs and traditions.

**SIMON:** Business and academia are very different environments. In a corporation, the profit margin is always the bottom line. On a campus, a lot of competing interests and philosophies have to be harmonized.

**BARNES:** CEOs function in top-down organizations, where profit-making is essential. University presidents must work collegially. Their decision-making should include the people most involved in and knowledgeable about each topic.

**BEDELL:** My view of a CEO is that this person tends to keep the cards close to the chest. He/she tends to be authoritarian and may have a tendency to be a legend in his or her own mind because these persons frequently have a need to be obeyed. On the other hand, a university president will not survive personally or professionally if challenges are threatening and taken personally.

## Selection Committee members



**Barnes**

**Carol Barnes** has been at CSUF since 1975. She has been Coordinator of the Elementary Education Program, and has acted as Coordinator of Child Development. She was elected to the statewide Senate in 1981, reelected in 1984 and 1987, and has been involved in numerous evaluative activities for the Chancellor's Office. She was elected to the PSAC by the Academic Senate.



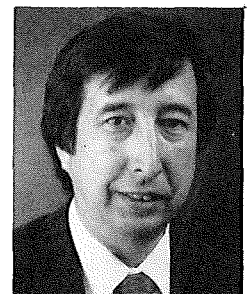
**Bedell**

**Jack Bedell** joined the Sociology department here in 1969, later becoming its chair. He has served on the CSU statewide Academic Senate, and was Chair of it 1982-84. After two years as an acting Vice-Chancel-

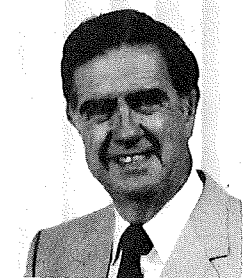
lor, he returned to the Fullerton campus in 1986; he became chair of the campus Senate in 1988, and was elected by it to serve on the PSAC.

**Larry Labrado**, elected by the staff to the PSAC, has been Coordinator of the Equal Opportunity Program for 17 years. He has also served on the Orange County Manpower Commission for 7 years. He has taken part in several searches for administrators, both on campus and off.

**Arnold Miller**, Advisory Board representative on the PSAC, earned



**Labrado**



**Miller**

## PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION

**Will gender or ethnic background play a significant role in the selection of the new president? Should they?**

*The most outspoken answer was also one of the briefest:*

**SHULTZ:** They should. I don't know whether they will.

**HAAK:** *(perhaps leaning in this direction)* Certainly affirmative action considerations should be considered significantly in this, as well as in all other administrative and faculty appointments.

*But affirmative action may just mean non-discrimination:*

**BARNES:** Clearly we will adhere to all Affirmative Action policies. We must ensure that women and minority candidates receive the same consideration as white males. We should pick the best candidate, regardless of gender or ethnic background.

**HAMPTON:** There is no doubt that being a woman or an ethnic minority can be a handicap. The Board of Trustees is committed to Affirmative Action - which in this instance means a commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. The overarching criterion must be the needs of the Fullerton campus.

**BEDELL:** Gender and ethnic background play a significant role in being sure that the pool of candidates is as diverse, broad and representative as possible. We must get the best person for the job, selecting from the most representative pool possible.

*Others dealt with this topic briskly:*

**LABRADO, WHITE:** No - and No.

**SIMON:** I hope the new president will be sensitive to

ethnic concerns, but I don't think we should deliberately seek out a woman or minority candidate.

**MILLER:** *(spelling out that sex-blind, race-blind point of view most completely)* We should be looking for the best person to deal with the total scope of the job... The search should not focus on any given trait or traits, but rather consider the total personality and background of the candidate - evaluate each as a totality. The new president should be sensitive to the diversity and scope of our student body.

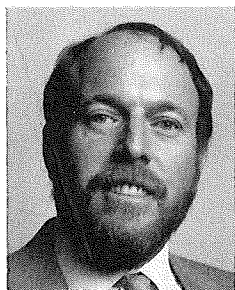
**If you could direct the new president to give priority to one or two problems or areas of development, what would they be?**

*The off-campus members - HAAK and HAMPTON - understandably said they would be learning about this in meetings of the PSAC. Two of the three elected faculty representatives said almost identical things:*

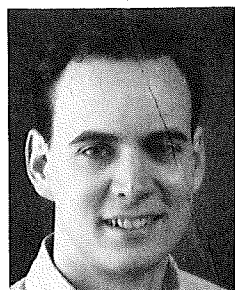
**SHULTZ:** 1. Student retention: the new president will have to address the changing demographics of Orange County. 2. Recruitment and retention of a quality faculty. Local living costs may be the greatest obstacle to achieving this.

**BARNES:** 1. Recruitment, retention and education of an ethnically diverse student body. We should make excellence in teaching our central concern. 2. We need to recruit and retain a first-class faculty; the evidence of the coming teacher shortage is only too clear. *BARNES slipped in a third priority: increasing the amount of non-state money we raise, a cause endorsed by BEDELL.*

**BEDELL:** If we are going to achieve excellence and even continue to do well what we do, we must develop alternative sources of funding. *BEDELL also mentioned*



**Shultz**



**Simon**

a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from UCLA. A Registered Professional Engineer in California, he has published over 60 papers, monographs and patents. He joined the Xerox Corporation in 1973, becoming President of their Electronics Division and a Vice President of the corporation. He is now President of the Technology Strategy Group.

**Harris Shultz** (Mathematics) came to CSUF in 1970. He has published extensively in professional journals, and has been deeply involved in the mathematics education reform movement. He directs the Honors Program. In 1989 he was chosen for the CSU's Outstanding Professor award. He was elected

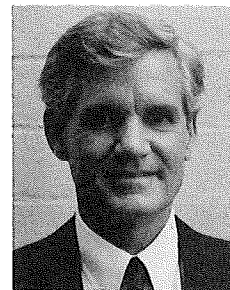
to the PSAC by the Academic Senate.

**Jim Simon**, the student representative on the PSAC, is also the current President of the Associated Students. A 22 year old business major, he hopes in the near future for a career in property development, with either law or politics as more distant goals. He has been involved in two other searches on the campus.

**Royleen White**, who represents the alumni on the PSAC, got a B.A. from Fullerton in 1969, and a master's degree in Public Administration in 1980. She taught high school for one year. She is now Director of Administrative Serv-



**White**



**Campbell**

the importance of good teaching, insisting that the research vs. teaching argument was a false debate which should be put to bed.

**MILLER:** The new president should be concerned with innovative ways of teaching, and must also balance the demands of teaching and research within the construct of the CSU...address the strategies necessary to meet the major faculty recruiting and restructuring challenge faced by CSUF in the 90's.

**SIMON:** I believe the next 10 years will be crucial for CSUF. Students care about this; it determines the value of their diploma. Are we going to try for national recognition, or be content with being a locally based college? Also we need to decide whether or not we are going to be fully committed to our athletic program.

**The selection procedures require that candidates be evaluated in terms of their "appropriateness for the campus." What do you think is "appropriate" at Fullerton?**

*WHITE, SHULTZ, HAAK and HAMPTON indicated that in general, they hoped that this would emerge in the course of*

*PSAC discussions. HAMPTON added that the right candidate will be the one who can maintain the momentum which Fullerton has already generated.*

**SIMON:** We need someone who can identify with a large commuter campus. Someone whose academic experience was at a small liberal arts college might be at quite a disadvantage here.

*The remaining four respondents all referred to that mysterious artifact, the 'Fullerton Way.'*

**MILLER:** The new president should understand the 'Fullerton Way' - a methodology whereby senior administrators and faculty develop approaches and their implementation in a collegial fashion.

**LABRADO:** The new president will need to be a team player, comfortable with the 'Fullerton Way.'

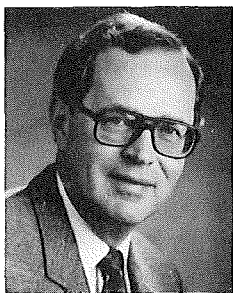
**BARNES:** We want someone who is enthusiastic, excited about the 'Fullerton Way', which involves heavy faculty participation in governance.

**BEDELL:** 'Appropriate' at Fullerton means depending on trust, listening and being devoted to the 'Fullerton Way.' This means cherishing and advocating consulta-

ices for the city of Tustin, and also works as a consultant. In both capacities, she has engaged in talent searches.

#### *Off-campus representatives*

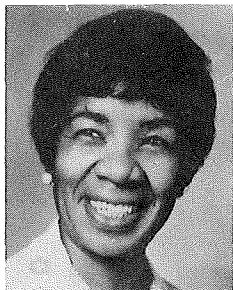
**W. Denny Campbell** earned his J.D. at U.S.C., and has been a member of the California State Bar Association since 1963. A Director of several companies, he has been on the Board of Trustees since 1987 and is currently its Vice-Chair. He serves as Chair of the PSAC.



**Haak**

**Harold Haak** earned a Ph.D. in political science at Princeton. He taught at San Diego State for 7 years, then becoming an administrator - a dean at San Diego, AVP at Fresno State, Chancellor at the University of Colorado/Denver, and (in 1980) President at CSU Fresno. He represents the presidents on the PSAC.

**Claudia Hampton** has been a member of the Board of Trustees for 15 years, during which time she has been part of several presidential searches. She is also a member of CPEC. She earned her doctorate at USC, and is Director of the Human and Community Relations Resource Office of the Los Angeles City Unified School District.



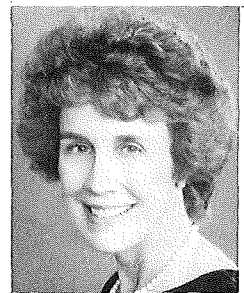
**Hampton**

**Marianthi Lansdale** holds the title of Vice President in the Marina Pacific Oil Company. She has been involved in many civic activities, mainly in the Long Beach and Palm Springs areas, and was named to the CSU Board of Trustees in 1985. She currently chairs the Board, and is thus an *ex officio* member of the PSAC.



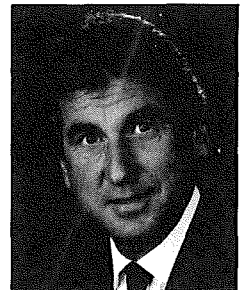
**Lansdale**

**W. Anne Reynolds** has a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Iowa, and has published extensively in developmental biology. She taught at Ball State University and the University of Illinois before becoming provost at Ohio State. A member of numerous boards of directors and commissions, she was appointed Chancellor of the CSU in 1982, a position which places her on all presidential search committees.



**Reynolds**

**Anthony Vitti** holds a J.D. from the San Fernando College of Law, practiced as an attorney from 1970 to 1981. He then went into banking and real estate development, presently being president and sole shareholder in Vitti Enterprises. He was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1989.



**Vitti**



tion, respect and active listening.

**Is it appropriate for a university president to criticize publicly the Governor or the Legislature or the Board of Trustees if he/she feels that they have adopted policies which are damaging to the university?**

*This question produced the widest range of disagreement among the panel members.*

**HAAK:** As a current president I find this question too loaded and fraught with ambiguity for me to give a reasonable answer. Our processes certainly include abundant opportunities for us to make, in a public fashion, the best cases for our campuses

*Voices of caution:*

**LABRADO:** To do this would be politically unwise, and I doubt whether a president who acted in such a way would last very long. Constructive criticisms are best made privately.

**HAMPTON:** I certainly would not advise it! To do this is impractical, and rarely serves the interests of the institution well. Generally speaking, everyone involved wants what is best. Their perceptions of what that is may vary, and reasoned, rational dialog through the normal organizational channels is the best way of resolving such differences.

*Middle positions:*

**SHULTZ:** A president should feel free to speak on issues which relate to the university.

**WHITE:** The new president will be working in a political arena. The 'official' answer to this question is probably negative, but in practice I think the president should be free to speak out provided that doing so does not risk bringing bad consequences down on the campus.

**BARNES:** A president first should try a 'honey' rather than a 'vinegar' approach. However, he/she has a responsibility to speak out forcefully to educate the legislature, the trustees and the public about our needs. If the situation becomes grave and the quality of our students' education is threatened, a president has a moral and ethical obligation to criticize publicly.

**MILLER:** A president needs to have good working relationships with the Governor, the legislature and the Board. However, there are circumstances where it may well be constructive and appropriate for the university president to be openly and publicly critical of adopted policies.

*Unqualified claims for independence:*

**SIMON:** Yes. The president represents several constituencies: students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Each of these should feel confident that the president is representing them.

**BEDELL:** Absolutely. The new president will not be serving anybody, including the Governor and the Legislature and the Board of Trustees, if he/she sits still while the university is damaged. The students and employees deserve better, and the president must have

the guts, even if it means career loss, because in the end those who honor principles are rewarded.

**Some leaders operate by building consensus and compromises, others by being strongwilled, dynamic, and forceful. Which type comes nearest to describing the person you will be looking for?**

*No one opted for the dynamic and forceful type. The division between those who saw attractions in both sets of characteristics, and those who made the need for building compromise and consensus the fundamental requisite.*

**SHULTZ:** One needs combination of the two.

**HAMPTON:** A blend of both. Some occasions require consensus-building, while others demand more forceful, immediate decisions. One can have a dynamic approach to consensus building.

**MILLER:** It is not an either/or proposition. A leader has to be innovative and lead if he is to succeed. If he tries to implement his ideas alone, without gaining the support of the faculty and other senior administrators, he will fail.

**SIMON:** Future policy needs to be based on a consensus, which has been generally successful in the past. Yet a dynamic leader could give us a real boost. We need to set our sights higher, and this calls for a visionary rather than a manager.

*More forthright endorsements for consensus-building:*

**WHITE:** Any successful leader has to build consensus. This is especially true in a university, where there is less of a hierarchy than there is in many other kinds of organizations.

**LABRADO:** We need someone to build consensus.

**BARNES:** We should prefer consensus and compromise. Those affected by a decision should always be involved in making it - and this means a genuine gathering of input, not a pretense of consultation. However, ultimately we need decisiveness and dynamism.

**BEDELL:** The answer to this question is obvious. This campus is built on consensus and compromise. You can also be a dynamic and forceful consensus-builder, and I would hope we will get a hard working, charismatic person who respects and is respected by all members of our academic community.

**HAAK:** In my opinion, the current leadership literature, with its emphases on 'vision' and 'transformations,' needs to be downplayed. I doubt that your campus needs or would benefit from an Old Testament prophet or a captain of industry in your presidency.

*The Forum thanks those members of the PSAC who made this article possible.*