

When Professional Philosophers Become Junior Administrators.

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When professional philosophers become junior administrators—as a perfect case-in-point, see the APA Blog article, “Why Philosophers Should Become Academic Leaders” (APA, 2022)—philosophy as the dialectical pursuit of wisdom and objective truth, dies, and professors become functionaries of institutions that are heavily saturated with expanding numbers of administrators who impose their work onto faculty in order to justify their positions. This includes making professors into “employees” and also into information-gathering (read “surveilling”) and information-processing agents of the state (read “college administrators,” who take their marching orders from the state). This is indicated by the following movements in education. I speak mainly for my own college, although one can easily see the same things, with local inflections, occurring at other colleges nationwide:

- There has been a decided shift in educational philosophy from content-based to consequentialist, corporate “bottom line” based, as indicated by increasingly heavy use of Student Learning Outcome (SLO), and done with increasing detail required in reporting.
- There is a significant increase in number, extent, and detail of reports and “reviews:” departmental, collegiate, etc.

- There are increased calls for mandatory training sessions on administrative processes, complete with student-type exams, on managing review issues such as peer review, etc.
- There are increasing number of administrators with regularly increased salaries, while keeping faculty numbers low and salaries limited in growth.
- Nationwide there is an ongoing reduction in tenure-track positions, replaced by adjuncts, while keeping full time professors busy with forms, collecting information on students, and engaging in multiple and repeated meetings to fulfill administratively-induced tasks, which largely serve only to justify administrative positions and high salaries.
- Additionally, there is an ongoing reclassification of professors from autonomous and expert academic discipline professionals to mere “employees” of the colleges.
- Along with this, there is a reduced emphasis on research and publication, and more on on-campus “presence” in the form of committee and other work.
- Relatedly, there is a push from “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” activists who have cudged their way into administration, to enact their racial DEI goals with mandatory compliance by faculty. Among other problems with this movement, this advocates a replacement of course content with ideology and both academic freedom and professorial content authority with “racial experts” who are being called to monitor professorial compliance with their racial goals. This makes classroom authority the administrators, to whom professors will be subservient.

The fact that college administrators at all levels have changed their viewpoint and attitude toward faculty, and to philosophy itself as a discipline, indicates the significant downturn in education in the United States. At my own college, various presidents have referred to philosophy as “useless” and “a waste of budgetary allocations.” Philosophy departments nationwide have been on the chopping block for years now, being significantly reduced or eliminated under such and similar pretenses. With faculty now considered to be “just employees,” at best to be treated as “junior administrators,” and given extra administrative-related workloads to compensate for their alleged utter uselessness, faculty now are becoming defined by how effectively they can serve as administrators and collectors and manipulators of data, particularly data on students. On the other hand, the main focus of administrators now is getting students prepared to “enter the corporate sector” — i.e., get a job — when they graduate. Any discipline that the new type of administrative ideology considers unworthy of or a threat to that goal is attacked as eliminable.

This direction of higher education will ultimately end with the demise of philosophy, given that corporate administrators, both in and out of the college itself, see philosophy as utterly worthless to maintaining one’s corporate job. This is to say nothing of

traditional content-based education and the need for not just intellectual information, but in the need for students to critically and logically analyze their information. The one thing administrators do not want, either in today's colleges or in corporate America outside the colleges, is to have employees who can think critically and ask questions. Socrates had already begun to turn in his grave, and his turn will become a perpetual spin as colleges now make professors into administrators and colleges into glorified vocational schools.

REFERENCE

(APA, 2022). Brennan, S., Stemwedel, J.D., Schroer, J., and Sager, A. "Why Philosophers Should Become Academic Leaders." *Blog of the APA*. 12 January. Available online at URL = <<https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/01/12/why-philosophers-should-become-academic-leaders/>>.