

# SAFS Newsletter

*Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship*

Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship  
Maintaining standards of excellence in academic decisions about students and faculty

Number 56

www.safs.ca

September 2010

## PLAYING GOD IS UNDERRATED

**We should be more concerned about mad regulators turning societies into bureaucratic nightmares and wastelands**

*George Jonas*

Craig Venter, the controversial American scientist and entrepreneur, stirred up considerable media excitement last week by announcing the birth of Synthia. Described as "the first-ever synthetic life-form," the creature seems happy oozing and splitting in her dish, doing whatever bacteria do, as if she were God's design rather than Dr. Venter's.

Synthia is a big step in Frankensteinism, the quest for creating life in the laboratory. Apparently Dr. Venter's team took the existing cell of a bacterial creature, some kind of yeasty beast, deciphered its chromosome, replicated it in a test tube, then re-inserted this artificial DNA into the cell. Synthia now has a synthetic soul, as it were, in a "natural" body, somewhat like a \$50 replica of a \$5,000 Hermes bag.

There's a long way between creating a new species like Synthia in the lab, scientists tell us, and an entirely new bacterial creature designed and produced from scratch. Then there's an even longer way between bacteria and higher life forms, such as plants. Still, if a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, Dr. Venter seems to have taken it. Even those who have reservations about what he's doing describe him as something of a genius.

When the news penetrated academia, bio-ethicists surfaced like schools of ink fish to expectorate black clouds over the nation's front pages. They say those who can, do and those who can't, teach. Those who are

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 CAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom
- 3 SAFS Letter to U of C President Cannon
- 4 U of C Violates Due Process
- 5 U of C Refuses to Hear Students' Appeal
- 6 SAFS Letter to Trent U President Franklin
- 6 President Franklin's Response to SAFS
- 7 U of O President Rock and Ann Coulter
- 8 Diversity and Myth of White Privilege
- 9 Real Discrimination at Universities is Against Men
- 11 Daring to Discuss Women in Science
- 13 Legislation Won't Close Gender Gap in Sciences
- 15 Excellence, not 'equity'
- 16 Top French Schools Asked to Diversify
- 18 Faith and Freedom
- 19 UC Irvine Suspends Muslim Group Over Disruption

Published by the **Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship**, a society open to all (whether in a university or not) who accept the principles of freedom in teaching, research and scholarship and maintaining standards of excellence in decisions concerning students and faculty.

ISSN 1704-5436

**Editor:** Dr. CLIVE SELIGMAN

**E-mail:** safs@safs.ca

**Fax for newsletter submissions:** (519) 661-3961

**Mail for newsletter submissions:**

Dr. Clive Seligman  
Psychology Department  
University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, N6A 5C2

left seem to specialize in bioethics. Emerging from the tenured obscurity of sheltered coves, they paid lip service to Synthia's potential benefits, then declared that society had a problem.

Not only did society have a problem, bio-ethicists told us last week, we had one that would be unwise for us to tackle without their expert assistance. Attempting to create new life, Dr. Venter and his team were coming perilously close to playing--well, can you guess? Right: Playing God.

Selecting with unerring instinct the most shopworn of all available cliches, the pontificators issued dire warnings about the dangers of playing God. A redeeming feature of cliches is that, even though they're stale, they're generally true. "Playing God" is an exception. When used as an admonition, it's just plain false. Playing God has been mankind's principal game. It's a fundamentally human endeavour. If we hadn't been playing God, we'd probably be playing in the trees still.

The alternative to playing God is letting nature take its course. Animals do that, but humans haven't been content to let nature take its course ever since an inventive ancestor hurled a stone at a prospective prey or predator, resolved to have breakfast rather than become it. Other creatures submit to nature or flee from it. We negotiate. The first tribal shaman who put tree bark on a wound to stem the flow of blood was playing God.

For us to sound the alarm about playing God isn't only

incongruous; it's hypocritical. Beings that transplant hearts aren't letting nature take its course. What they do is let human nature take its course. It isn't "natural" for people to fly to the moon or to clone Dolly the Sheep -- it's "playing God," if you will -- but since it's our nature that makes us fly and clone, and human nature itself is natural enough, it must have pleased the Creator to make mankind a God-playing creature.

For those who don't believe in God the point is moot. For those who do, there's God's own word that playing him is okay. God actually licenses man to play him in Genesis 1:26. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Having been made in God's image, after His likeness, confirms the legitimacy of Frankenstein's quest. It practically confers an obligation on man to play God. In fact, two verses down God further reinforces Dr. Venter's mandate, instructing him in Genesis 1:28 to "replenish the earth, and subdue it" which is precisely what a new strain of waste-eating bacteria (to use one example) might accomplish.

Synthia may grow up to do all kinds of useful things, or mutate into cousins who do. Dr. Venter may design one branch of the family to gobble up oil spills, for instance. They could use such bacteria around the north shore of the Gulf of Mexico right now.

True, a strain might emerge that gobbles up bio-ethicists. That would be a pity, but hey!

My worry is that if the bio-ethicist is here, can the regulator be far behind? A mad scientist creating Frankenstein's monster is a Hollywood concern, a good plot for a horror or disaster movie. It's not something to dismiss out of hand, nor anything to lose any sleep over.

A real-world concern is mad regulators turning societies into bureaucratic nightmares and wastelands.

I think God needs no help from the state's guard dogs. He can certainly keep a secret, thank you very much, and has a way of dealing with trespassers in his cosmic kitchen. It isn't God's recipes that need protection; it's man's freedom to inquire.

*National Post*, May 26, 2010. □

## **CAUT POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

(1) Post-secondary educational institutions serve the common good of society through searching for, and disseminating, knowledge, truth, and understanding and through fostering independent thinking and expression in academic staff and students. Robust democracies require no less. These ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.

(2) Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof; freedom in producing and performing creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express freely one's opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; freedom from institutional censorship; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies.

(3) Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual. Academic freedom makes intellectual discourse, critique, and commitment possible. All academic staff must have the right to fulfill their functions without reprisal or repression by the institution, the state, or any other source.

(4) All academic staff have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, and association and the right to liberty and security of the person and freedom of movement. Academic staff must not be hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through free expression of opinion on matters of public interest. Academic staff must not suffer any institutional penalties because of the exercise of such rights.

(5) Academic freedom requires that academic staff play a major role in the governance of the institution. Academic freedom means that academic staff must play the predominant role in determining curriculum, assessment standards, and other academic matters.

(6) Academic freedom must not be confused with institutional autonomy. Post-secondary institutions are

autonomous to the extent that they can set policies independent of outside influence. That very autonomy can protect academic freedom from a hostile external environment, but it can also facilitate an internal assault on academic freedom. To undermine or suppress academic freedom is a serious abuse of institutional autonomy. ▢

### **SAFS LETTER TO PRESIDENT CANNON**

July 12, 2010

Dr. Elizabeth Cannon  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
University of Calgary

Dear President Cannon:

Congratulations on assuming your new position as President of the University of Calgary.

We are a national association of scholars ([www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca)) dedicated to academic freedom, free speech, and the merit principle in higher education.

We are writing to you because of our continuing concerns about the lack of commitment of your university to academic freedom and free speech rights for those on your campus. The CAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom states that academic freedom includes "... freedom to express freely one's opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; freedom from institutional censorship..."

More than a year ago, we wrote to President Weingarten about the abuse of students' rights to protest concerning the issue of abortion, <http://www.safs.ca/issuescases/harveyweingarten.html>. As you know, the university's actions in that case received wide and negative publicity, and ultimately the university's position was found to be legally untenable. At that point, we had hoped the issue was over, and that the university would cease to harass students engaged in lawful behaviour, whether involving social debate or protest.

Thus we were gravely concerned to read a Recent Editorial in the Calgary Herald,

[http://www.calgaryherald.com/opinion/violatesprocess/3180449/story.html?cid=megadrop\\_story](http://www.calgaryherald.com/opinion/violatesprocess/3180449/story.html?cid=megadrop_story) that begins as follows: "The University of Calgary's mishandling of a Facebook group critical of one of its professors is a black mark on the institution." We are astounded that, if true, the university would involve itself in the manner and substance of student criticisms of a professor, and go so far as to convict the students of a non-academic misconduct based on the comments they posted on Facebook. We are also concerned about possible administrative improprieties, which may have allowed the complainant's spouse to serve on an investigating committee.

We won't repeat the other excellent points raised in the editorial, except to say we agree that your university's actions appear, once again, to have been arrogant and contemptuous of free speech and the right of all members of the university community to criticize. But all this happened under someone else's watch, and you should not be held to account for other administrators' violations of academic freedom.

As the new president of the University of Calgary, we call on you to change course. We urge you, first, to reverse the misconduct decision against the students, and, second, to recommit the university, in action and expression, to academic freedom and free speech, without which there can be no true Academy.

We look forward to your response, and we will post it on our website along with our letter to you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clive Seligman, SAFS President. □

#### SUBMISSIONS TO THE SAFS NEWSLETTER

The editor welcomes articles, case studies, news items, comments, readings, local chapter news, etc. Please send your submission by e-mail attachment.

*Mailing Address:*

Dr. Clive Seligman  
Psychology Department  
University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, N6A 5C2  
Fax: (519) 661-3961  
E-mail: [safs@safs.ca](mailto:safs@safs.ca)  
Web: [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca)

## U of C VIOLATES DUE PROCESS

### Editorial

The University of Calgary's mishandling of a Facebook group critical of one of its professors is a black mark on the institution. In a case that goes to the heart of free speech and rule of law, the university prosecuted 10 students involved in the social media site named "I no longer fear hell, I took a course with Aruna Mitra," and convicted them of nonacademic misconduct.

Now 20-year-old twins Keith and Steven Pridgen, who started the Facebook group, have been forced to go to court, requesting a judicial review they hope will clear their names.

Indeed the court should rule the university acted inappropriately by disciplining the students, who have the right to express their opinions and prove what they say is either the truth or fair comment. What court has heard so far of what appeared on the website seems quite mild. Other sites, such as Rank My Professor, freely allow students to say far worse about their professors. Rank My Professor gave Mitra, who is no longer at the U of C, the dreadfully low ranking of 1.1 out of five.

The Facebook group criticized her lack of knowledge of the course material, said she frequently said "don't quote me on that," and often answered students' questions with "what do you think?" The group also described the professor as inept, awful, and "illogically abrasive," and claimed that she said "um" over 260 times during one class.

The Pridgens argue their constitutional right to freedom of expression has been violated. The university's position is the page was "injuring (the professor's) reputation and character in a public manner," U of C lawyer Kevin Barr told the court.

Universities are supposed to be bastions of free speech, yet U of C appears to be moving further down the precariously dangerous path of censorship. Instead of encouraging independent thought, critical thinking and a free exchange of ideas, the institution's actions have put a chill on criticism. Equally troubling is its heavy-handed, disciplinary process which robbed defendants in this instance of a fair hearing.

One of the professors who investigated on behalf of the university was Mitra's spouse, and hardly impartial. When the students appeared before the investigating panel, they were refused an opportunity to give evidence. Surely the dean of legal studies, who headed the panel, knows about the defence of truth, which the law of defamation affords, meaning the students should have been given the opportunity to prove their statements.

Yet, two 20-year-olds -- who paid good money to study at the U of C-- find themselves in court, seeking due diligence, and along the way, exposing the sham of a process they were subjected to by the school. The boys should be commended for having the courage to stand up to this injustice.

The university needs to learn a lesson. Its actions, at least in relation to the Facebook incident, have left it with egg on its face and no amount of censorship will cover that up.

*Calgary Herald*, June 21, 2010. □

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY APPEAL BOARD  
REFUSES TO HEAR APPEAL OF STUDENTS  
FOUND GUILTY OF  
“NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT”**

CALGARY: The Appeal Board at the University of Calgary has refused to hold a hearing to consider the appeal of eight University of Calgary students found guilty of “non-academic misconduct” for having set up a controversial pro-life display on campus on April 8, 2010. The students have refused to comply with the University’s censorship demands that their signs be turned inwards in such a way no passersby can see the signs. The Appeal Board has upheld the finding of “guilty” without the benefit of a hearing at which the students and their lawyer could present evidence or arguments.

The students and their lawyer, John Carpay, will be available for comment at a press conference today:

Date: Thursday, September 9, 2010

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Place: MacKimmie Library Building, University of Calgary campus

U of C students Alanna Campbell, Leah Hallman, Cristina Perri, Ryan Wilson, Cameron Wilson, Peter Csillag, John Mcleod and Joanna Strezynski were found guilty of “non-academic misconduct” this past May, for having refused the University’s demand that they turn their pro-life display’s signs inwards such that no passersby could see the signs.

The U of C has informed these students that their conduct is a “Major Violation” in the same category with theft, vandalism, fraud, sexual assault, firearms misuse, and selling drugs. The students face penalties which include expulsion from the university.

“The Board of Governors has the authority to overturn this outrageous decision, and restore freedom of expression to all students at the University of Calgary, without discrimination based on viewpoint,” stated lawyer John Carpay, indicating the students intend to appeal this decision to the university’s highest authority.

“A government-funded, public university does not have the right to repudiate its own mission, that of being a forum for the pursuit of truth, by singling out one viewpoint for censorship,” continued Carpay.

*News Release*, September 9, 2010. □

**SAFS Board of Directors**

**2010-2011**

Clive Seligman, Ph.D. (UWO) President  
*safs@safs.ca*

Rodney Clifton, Ph.D. (U. Manitoba)  
*clifton@ms.umanitoba.ca*

Andrew Irvine, Ph.D. (UBC)  
*andrew.irvine@ubc.ca*

Tom Flanagan, Ph.D. FRSC (U. Calgary)  
*tflanaga@ucalgary.ca*

Steve Lupker, Ph.D. (UWO)  
*lupker@uwo.ca*

Mark Mercer, Ph.D. (Saint Mary's U.)  
*mark.mercer@smu.ca*

John Mueller, Ph.D. (U. Calgary)  
*mueller@ucalgary.ca*

Peter Suedfeld, Ph.D. FRSC (UBC)  
*psuedfeld@psych.ubc.ca*

Past Presidents

Doreen Kimura, Ph.D. FRSC (SFU)  
John J. Furedy, Ph.D. (U. Toronto)

## SAFS LETTER TO PRESIDENT FRANKLIN

July 12, 2010

Dr. Steven Franklin  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
Trent University

Dear President Franklin:

We are a national organization of scholars dedicated to maintaining academic freedom ([www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca)). We are writing to you to ask for clarification regarding your new vision statement, as described by Penni Stewart in her President's Column in the June 2010 issue of the *CAUT Bulletin*, p. A3. You can access this column at: [http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_current.asp?sectionID=1259&articleID=0](http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_current.asp?sectionID=1259&articleID=0).

Professor Stewart states that the Trent Senate approved a new vision statement that includes the following sentence: "We foster an environment where Indigenous knowledge is respected and recognized as a valid means by which to understand the world."

Our organization takes no stand on the validity of Indigenous approaches to knowledge, but we are troubled by the notion that a university might decide to declare any specific approach to understanding the world valid. In an academic setting, it is inappropriate to designate any school of thought as worthy of special respect, since all points of view and all disciplines need to be subject to healthy skepticism, vigorous debate, and potential discrediting.

We are also concerned that this vision statement implies that dissent from this "policy" will be regarded as unacceptable. If our inference is correct, it follows that criticism of Indigenous knowledge would violate the new vision statement. We would consider that position to be an abridgement of academic freedom.

Importantly, the Statement of Goals and Objectives now posted on your webpage, [http://www.trentu.ca/calendar/overview\\_goals.php](http://www.trentu.ca/calendar/overview_goals.php), contradicts the new approved vision statement. The first goal says: "To create a teaching, learning, research and living environment fundamentally committed to the promotion of free inquiry and expression."

We fail to see how free inquiry, which your university claims to endorse, could be compatible with a statement that effectively declares that inquiry about the validity of Indigenous approaches to knowledge is off-limits. Possibly your Senate had some other purpose in mind when it approved the new vision statement.

We would greatly appreciate a clarification of the meaning of the vision statement. In particular, we would like to be assured that the new vision statement does not prevent inquiry about or criticism of the validity of Indigenous approaches to knowledge.

If it does, then it violates academic freedom. The CAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom clearly states "Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof ..."

We look forward to your response, which we will post on our website along with this letter to you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Clive Seligman, SAFS President. □

## PRESIDENT FRANKLIN RESPONSE TO SAFS

July 30, 2010

Dr. Clive Seligman  
President, SAFS  
London, Ontario

Dear Dr. Seligman

Thank you for your e-mail dated July 12, 2010 and subsequent follow-up on July 26, 2010.

I would like to assure you, and your colleagues, that there is no intention to abridge academic freedom by Trent's Senate and Board of Governors in approving the Vision for Trent University.

This vision does not determine any pedagogical or

academic approach or introduce policy to discourage any viewpoint, but instead is meant to encourage debate, the exploration of ideas and the interpretation of knowledge. The Vision for Trent is not intended to prevent inquiry about or criticism of the validity of Indigenous – or any other – approaches to knowledge.

Trent remains committed to academic freedom. Thank you for your comments on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Steven E. Franklin, Ph.D.  
President and Vice-Chancellor. □

### **ALLAN ROCK PRESSED FOR GAG ON 'FOUL-MOUTHED POLTROON' ANN COULTER**

*Tasha Kheiriddin*

Conservative author and pundit Ann Coulter is certainly used to controversy, but even she must be shaking her head at the antics of University of Ottawa President and former Liberal Cabinet Minister Allan Rock.

Canadian Press has obtained excerpts from an email exchange between Mr. Rock and Francois Houle, the university's provost. They make clear that Mr. Rock was the guiding force behind Mr Houle's now-infamous letter to Ms. Coulter warning her not to run afoul of Canada's hate laws when she was invited to speak at the campus last March.

"Ann Coulter is a mean-spirited, small-minded, foul-mouthed poltroon," Rock wrote to Houle in a March 18 email. "She is 'the loud mouth that bespeaks the vacant mind'."

"She is an ill-informed and deeply offensive shill for a profoundly shallow and ignorant view of the world. She is a malignancy on the body politic. She is a disgrace to the broadcasting industry and a leading example of the dramatic decline in the quality of public discourse in recent times."

At the same time, he argued, "we should not take any steps to interfere with her plans to speak next week on our campus."

Instead, Rock advised Houle he should write to Coulter informing her of the different rules surrounding free speech in Canada compared with those in the United States.

"You, Francois, as Provost, should write immediately to Coulter informing her of our domestic laws. ... You should urge her to respect that Canadian tradition as she enjoys the privilege of her visit."

After seeing a copy of the final email to Coulter, Rock praised Houle: "Quel excellent message! Merci et felicitations. I am sure she has never been dressed down so elegantly in her life!"

Most disturbing is not Mr. Rock's point of view – he is entitled to his opinion, however small-minded and mean-spirited it may be. It is his attempt to curb Ms. Coulter's "foul mouth" by means of Mr. Houle's missive that raises serious questions about his capacity as president of a university.

Universities are not political parties, where messages are massaged, controlled and spin-doctored. They are (supposedly) places of free inquiry where dissent is not only tolerated, but welcomed and encouraged.

Mr. Rock's view of "Canadian tradition" raises the question of what kind of tradition he wishes to impart to the students of Ottawa U: the Liberal line of state multiculturalism, political correctness and anti-Americanism? Mr. Rock's disdain for Ms. Coulter, and his attempt to muzzle her, however "elegant", speaks volumes about the attitudes of Canadian elites towards those who disagree with them. It is the same attitude displayed by critics of the new SUN TV who fear that the purity of Canadian debate and thought will be polluted by actual controversy and debate.

Worse yet is that Mr. Rock fudged when initially questioned about the letter. He stated that "it was sent with my knowledge" – when the truth is it was sent at his instigation. When it blew up into a controversy, he let Mr. Houle take the brunt of the heat. Talk about the boss hiding behind his staff.

And while there was some faint hope of redemption, as Mr. Rock apparently wanted to invite Ms. Coulter back after her speech got cancelled due to a protest (if Bill Blair had been in charge of security there, maybe she would have got to the stage...), that evaporated

too, when he was talked out of it by advisors.

Oh well. I'm sure Ms. Coulter is not losing any sleep over the incident. To paraphrase her comments when she was here, "take a moose, Allan Rock."

*National Post*, June 30, 2010. □

## **DIVERSITY AND THE MYTH OF WHITE PRIVILEGE**

**America still owes a debt to its black citizens, but government programs to help all 'people of color' are unfair. They should end.**

*James Webb*

The NAACP believes the tea party is racist. The tea party believes the NAACP is racist. And Pat Buchanan got into trouble recently by pointing out that if Elena Kagan is confirmed to the Supreme Court, there will not be a single Protestant Justice, although Protestants make up half the U.S. population and dominated the court for generations.

Forty years ago, as the United States experienced the civil rights movement, the supposed monolith of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant dominance served as the whipping post for almost every debate about power and status in America. After a full generation of such debate, WASP elites have fallen by the wayside and a plethora of government-enforced diversity policies have marginalized many white workers. The time has come to cease the false arguments and allow every American the benefit of a fair chance at the future.

I have dedicated my political career to bringing fairness to America's economic system and to our work force, regardless of what people look like or where they may worship. Unfortunately, present-day diversity programs work against that notion, having expanded so far beyond their original purpose that they now favor anyone who does not happen to be white.

In an odd historical twist that all Americans see but few can understand, many programs allow recently arrived immigrants to move ahead of similarly situated whites whose families have been in the country for generations. These programs have damaged racial

harmony. And the more they have grown, the less they have actually helped African-Americans, the intended beneficiaries of affirmative action as it was originally conceived.

How so?

Lyndon Johnson's initial program for affirmative action was based on the 13th Amendment and on the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which authorized the federal government to take actions in order to eliminate "the badges of slavery." Affirmative action was designed to recognize the uniquely difficult journey of African-Americans. This policy was justifiable and understandable, even to those who came from white cultural groups that had also suffered in socio-economic terms from the Civil War and its aftermath.

The injustices endured by black Americans at the hands of their own government have no parallel in our history, not only during the period of slavery but also in the Jim Crow era that followed. But the extrapolation of this logic to all "people of color"—especially since 1965, when new immigration laws dramatically altered the demographic makeup of the U.S.—moved affirmative action away from remediation and toward discrimination, this time against whites. It has also lessened the focus on assisting African-Americans, who despite a veneer of successful people at the very top still experience high rates of poverty, drug abuse, incarceration and family breakup.

Those who came to this country in recent decades from Asia, Latin America and Africa did not suffer discrimination from our government, and in fact have frequently been the beneficiaries of special government programs. The same cannot be said of many hard-working white Americans, including those whose roots in America go back more than 200 years. Contrary to assumptions in the law, white America is hardly a monolith. And the journey of white American cultures is so diverse (yes) that one strains to find the logic that could lump them together for the purpose of public policy.

The clearest example of today's misguided policies comes from examining the history of the American South.

The old South was a three-tiered society, with blacks



and hard-put whites both dominated by white elites who manipulated racial tensions in order to retain power. At the height of slavery, in 1860, less than 5% of whites in the South owned slaves. The eminent black historian John Hope Franklin wrote that "fully three-fourths of the white people in the South had neither slaves nor an immediate economic interest in the maintenance of slavery."

The Civil War devastated the South, in human and economic terms. And from post-Civil War Reconstruction to the beginning of World War II, the region was a ravaged place, affecting black and white alike.

In 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt created a national commission to study what he termed "the long and ironic history of the despoiling of this truly American section." At that time, most industries in the South were owned by companies outside the region. Of the South's 1.8 million sharecroppers, 1.2 million were white (a mirror of the population, which was 71% white). The illiteracy rate was five times that of the North-Central states and more than twice that of New England and the Middle Atlantic (despite the waves of European immigrants then flowing to those regions). The total endowments of all the colleges and universities in the South were less than the endowments of Harvard and Yale alone. The average schoolchild in the South had \$25 a year spent on his or her education, compared to \$141 for children in New York.

Generations of such deficiencies do not disappear overnight, and they affect the momentum of a culture. In 1974, a National Opinion Research Center (NORC) study of white ethnic groups showed that white Baptists nationwide averaged only 10.7 years of education, a level almost identical to blacks' average of 10.6 years, and well below that of most other white groups. A recent NORC Social Survey of white adults born after World War II showed that in the years 1980-2000, only 18.4% of white Baptists and 21.8% of Irish Protestants—the principal ethnic group that settled the South—had obtained college degrees, compared to a national average of 30.1%, a Jewish average of 73.3%, and an average among those of Chinese and Indian descent of 61.9%.

Policy makers ignored such disparities within America's white cultures when, in advancing minority

diversity programs, they treated whites as a fungible monolith. Also lost on these policy makers were the differences in economic and educational attainment among nonwhite cultures. Thus nonwhite groups received special consideration in a wide variety of areas including business startups, academic admissions, job promotions and lucrative government contracts.

Where should we go from here? Beyond our continuing obligation to assist those African-Americans still in need, government-directed diversity programs should end.

Nondiscrimination laws should be applied equally among all citizens, including those who happen to be white. The need for inclusiveness in our society is undeniable and irreversible, both in our markets and in our communities. Our government should be in the business of enabling opportunity for all, not in picking winners. It can do so by ensuring that artificial distinctions such as race do not determine outcomes.

Memo to my fellow politicians: Drop the Procrustean policies and allow harmony to invade the public mindset. Fairness will happen, and bitterness will fade away.

*Mr. Webb, a Democrat, is a U.S. senator from Virginia.*

*The Wall Street Journal, July 22, 2010. □*

## **THE REAL DISCRIMINATION AT UNIVERSITIES IS AGAINST MEN**

*Andrew Irvine*

As someone who teaches at a Canadian university, I'd like to think that when my students graduate and apply for jobs, each applicant will be considered on his or her merits. Unfortunately, that's not how things work at many universities today.

Although some people have expressed concern that the first round of Canada Excellence Research Chairs have all gone to men, much more common are university job searches that are biased in favour of women.

In one recent job search, a Canadian arts faculty encouraged only women candidates to apply. Once applications were received, only women were considered and only women were interviewed. This kind of restriction didn't happen in the case of the Canada Research Chair searches where both men and women were considered for positions.

Discrimination against men isn't always so extreme. Most departments allow men to apply, but almost always "give preference" to women. For anyone who favours non-discriminatory hiring, even this is a shameful practice.

For those of us who have worked in Canada all our lives, is this the kind of job market we want to leave to our children and grandchildren? For the many people who immigrate to Canada each year, is this the kind of non-discriminatory society they're hoping to discover once they arrive? Probably not.

So why do such practices persist?

Partly it's because they're supported by a small but active group of ideologues, people who mistakenly believe they'll be able to prevent the perceived wrongs of 50 or 100 years ago from ever recurring by refusing to hire a generation of young men who had no role in past discrimination.

More often it's because such practices are encouraged in today's world of identity politics. Twenty years ago, many people expressed tremendous moral outrage when slightly more men than women were enrolled in Canadian universities. Now that the percentages have reversed and university degree programs are filled with many more women than men, there's not word of complaint.

Far from wanting to introduce a few temporary, gender-neutral procedures intended to help advance the cause of non-discrimination, it turns out that what most advocates of affirmative action really wanted was to advance the interests of a few favoured groups. Pretending to be friends of the merit principle, they convinced governments and universities that temporary discriminatory measures were essential for combatting so-called "systemic discrimination." What was never mentioned was that this newly discovered form of discrimination was to be found only in male-dominated disciplines, never in female-dominated ones.

It was a neat trick. As one colleague memorably put it, "Saying you will hire someone preferentially in order to combat discrimination is like saying you would give your right arm to be ambidextrous."

Partly, too, such policies remain in place because it's always easy to find pragmatic careerists who are willing to implement them. These are the people who tell you privately with great earnestness that they are opposed to discriminatory searches. But somehow, in public, they always find it necessary to act otherwise, especially if failing to do so might jeopardize their career advancement.

Of course, such moral hypocrisy is nothing new. Sometimes it may even result from genuinely difficult moral choices.

For people who want to pursue a career they love, or who want to support their families, it's often necessary to become a team player. Sometimes this involves going along with morally suspect policies. It's easy to say you'd never join a restricted golf club if you don't play golf. But if golf is your livelihood, and if there's only one golf club in town, the decision becomes more difficult.

Even so, at some point people who say they are opposed to discriminatory hiring need to speak up in department and faculty meetings and refuse to participate in discriminatory searches. People who say they are opposed to discrimination need to stand up and refuse to administer discriminatory policies.

This isn't just because discrimination is immoral. It's also because it's every university's responsibility to find the very best people to teach and do research.

Every time a job search is restricted in a medical faculty, it becomes less likely that an improved cancer treatment will be found. Every time a search is restricted in a history department, it becomes less likely that we'll be able to discover the truth about controversial events of the past.

Universities that restrict searches and hire from among only the best men, or from among only the best women, will never know whether they have succeeded in hiring the very best person for the job. Universities that "give preference" to some groups rather than others end up in exactly the same position.

Admittedly, opposing university policies is sometimes easier said than done. More than one talented academic has been hounded from a university because of his or her opposition to affirmative action.

Others have found that speaking invitations begin to dry up, or that they have become isolated in other ways. But for those who remain, perhaps there is some comfort to be found in the words of Thomas Paine.

Paine's acquaintance Benjamin Franklin once remarked, "Where Liberty dwells, there is my country." Paine's reply was telling: "Where Liberty is not, there is mine."

*Over the years, Andrew Irvine has been affiliated with several universities in Canada, Australia and the United States. He is currently a professor in the philosophy department at the University of British Columbia and a SAFS Board member.*

*The Ottawa Citizen, May 27, 2010. □*

## DARING TO DISCUSS WOMEN IN SCIENCE

*John Tierney*

The House of Representatives has passed what I like to think of as Larry's Law. The official title of this legislation is "Fulfilling the potential of women in academic science and engineering," but nothing did more to empower its advocates than the controversy over a speech by Lawrence H. Summers when he was president of Harvard.

This proposed law, if passed by the Senate, would require the White House science adviser to oversee regular "workshops to enhance gender equity." At the workshops, to be attended by researchers who receive federal money and by the heads of science and engineering departments at universities, participants would be given before-and-after "attitudinal surveys" and would take part in "interactive discussions or other activities that increase the awareness of the existence of gender bias."

I'm all in favor of women fulfilling their potential in science, but I feel compelled, at the risk of being

shipped off to one of these workshops, to ask a couple of questions:

- 1) Would it be safe during the "interactive discussions" for someone to mention the new evidence supporting Dr. Summers's controversial hypothesis about differences in the sexes' aptitude for math and science?
- 2) How could these workshops reconcile the "existence of gender bias" with careful studies that show that female scientists fare as well as, if not better than, their male counterparts in receiving academic promotions and research grants?

Each of these questions is complicated enough to warrant a column, so I'll take them one at a time, starting this week with the issue of sex differences.

When Dr. Summers raised the issue to fellow economists and other researchers at a conference in 2005, his hypothesis was caricatured in the press as a revival of the old notion that "girls can't do math." But Dr. Summers said no such thing. He acknowledged that there were many talented female scientists and discussed ways to eliminate the social barriers they faced.

Yet even if all these social factors were eliminated, he hypothesized, the science faculty composition at an elite school like Harvard might still be skewed by a biological factor: the greater variability observed among men in intelligence test scores and various traits. Men and women might, on average, have equal mathematical ability, but there could still be disproportionately more men with very low or very high scores.

These extremes often don't matter much because relatively few people are involved, leaving the bulk of men and women clustered around the middle. But a tenured physicist at a leading university, Dr. Summers suggested, might well need skills and traits found in only one person in 10,000: the top 0.01 percent of the population, a tiny group that would presumably include more men because it's at the extreme right tail of the distribution curve.

"I would like nothing better than to be proved wrong," Dr. Summers told the economists, expressing the hope that gender imbalances could be rectified simply by eliminating social barriers. But he added, "My guess is that there are some very deep forces here that are going

to be with us for a long time.”

Dr. Summers was pilloried for even suggesting the idea, and the critics took up his challenge to refute the hypothesis. Some have claimed he was proved wrong by recent reports of girls closing the gender gap on math scores in the United States and other countries. But even if those reports (which have been disputed) are accurate, they involve closing the gap only for average math scores — not for the extreme scores that Dr. Summers was discussing.

Some scientists and advocates for gender equity have argued that the remaining gender gap in extreme scores is rapidly shrinking and will disappear. It was called “largely an artifact of changeable sociocultural factors” last year by two researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Janet S. Hyde and Janet E. Mertz. They noted evidence of the gap narrowing and concluded, “Thus, there is every reason to believe that it will continue to narrow in the future.”

But some of the evidence for the disappearing gender gap involved standardized tests that aren’t sufficiently difficult to make fine distinctions among the brighter students. These tests, like the annual ones required in American public schools, are limited by what’s called the ceiling effect: If you’re measuring people in a room with a six-foot ceiling, you can’t distinguish among the ones taller than six feet.

Now a team of psychologists at Duke University has looked at the results of tests with more headroom. In an article in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Intelligence*, they analyze the test scores of students in the United States who took college admissions tests while they were still in the seventh grade. As part of an annual talent search since 1981, the SAT and ACT tests have been given to more than 1.6 million gifted seventh graders, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls participating.

The Duke researchers — Jonathan Wai, Megan Cacchio, Martha Putallaz and Matthew C. Makel — focused on the extreme right tail of the distribution curve: people ranking in the top 0.01 percent of the general population, which for a seventh grader means scoring above 700 on the SAT math test. In the early 1980s, there were 13 boys for every girl in that group, but by 1991 the gender gap had narrowed to four to

one, presumably because of sociocultural factors like encouragement and instruction in math offered to girls.

Since then, however, the math gender gap hasn’t narrowed, despite the continuing programs to encourage girls. The Duke researchers report that there are still four boys for every girl at the extreme right tail of the scores for the SAT math test. The boy-girl ratio has also remained fairly constant, at about three to one, at the right tail of the ACT tests of both math and science reasoning. Among the 19 students who got a perfect score on the ACT science test in the past two decades, 18 were boys.

Meanwhile, the seventh-grade girls outnumbered the boys at the right tail of tests measuring verbal reasoning and writing ability. The Duke researchers report in *Intelligence*, “Our data clearly show that there are sex differences in cognitive abilities in the extreme right tail, with some favoring males and some favoring females.”

The researchers say it’s impossible to predict how long these math and science gender gaps will last. But given the gaps’ stability for two decades, the researchers conclude, “Thus, sex differences in abilities in the extreme right tail should not be dismissed as no longer part of the explanation for the dearth of women in math-intensive fields of science.”

Other studies have shown that these differences in extreme test scores correlate with later achievements in science and academia. Even when you consider only members of an elite group like the top percentile of the seventh graders on the SAT math test, someone at the 99.9 level is more likely than someone at the 99.1 level to get a doctorate in science or to win tenure at a top university.

Of course, a high score on a test is hardly the only factor important for a successful career in science, and no one claims that the right-tail disparity is the sole reason for the relatively low number of female professors in math-oriented sciences. There are other potentially more important explanations, both biological and cultural, including possible social bias against women.

But before we accept Congress’s proclamation of bias, before we start re-educating scientists at workshops, it’s worth taking a hard look at the evidence of bias

against female scientists. That will be the subject of another column.

*New York Times*, June 7, 2010. □

## LEGISLATION WON'T CLOSE GENDER GAP IN SCIENCES

*John Tierney*

If the Senate passes legislation establishing regular “workshops to enhance gender equity” in academic science, what exactly would scientists and engineers do at them? The legislation, already approved by the House, is a little vague beyond directing researchers and heads of academic departments to participate in “activities that increase the awareness of the existence of gender bias.”

But let me venture one prediction: There will be lots of talk about the male chauvinists on the Swedish Medical Research Council who awarded 20 postdoctoral fellowships in 1994.

The analysis of those fellowships, published in *Nature* in 1997, is the fundamental text of the gender-bias movement, cited over and over at conferences, in papers and in lobbying materials. If you’re looking for evidence of discrimination against female scientists, this article seems to be the one clear, unambiguously scandalous finding.

The article was written by Christine Wenneras and Agnes Wold, two of the unsuccessful applicants for those Swedish postdoctoral fellowships. After learning that male applicants were much more likely than female applicants to succeed, they sued to get the data behind the decisions and then analyzed the 114 applicants’ publication records. They concluded that a woman had to be two and a half times as productive as a man to receive the same rating of competence.

The shocking findings made headlines, but how representative was that one Swedish study of 114 applicants? At that time, female applicants to the National Science Foundation were succeeding just as often as men were, and much larger studies since then have repeatedly failed to find gender bias.

When two Swedish researchers, Ulf Sandstrom and Martin Hallsten, did a follow-up study analyzing the Swedish medical fellowships awarded in 2004, they found that female applicants were actually rated more favorably than comparable male applicants. In 2005 a large study, conducted by the RAND Corporation, concluded that female applicants for research grants from federal agencies in the United States typically got as much money as male applicants.

In 2008, an analysis of more than 2,000 grant proposals in Australia reported that female applicants did as well as males, and that applicants received similar ratings from both male and female reviewers. Last year two researchers, Herbert W. Marsh of Oxford and Lutz Bornmann of the University of Zurich, reported on an analysis of more than 350,000 grant proposals in eight countries. They found “no effect of the applicant’s gender on the peer review of their grant proposals.”

Also last year a task force of the National Academy of Sciences concluded from its investigation of 500 science departments that by and large, men and women “enjoyed comparable opportunities within the university.” The task force reported that at major research universities, female candidates “had a better chance of being interviewed and receiving offers than male job candidates had.”

So why are women still such a minority in math-oriented sciences? The most balanced answer I’ve seen comes from two psychologists at Cornell, Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams — who, by the way, are married and have a daughter with a graduate degree in engineering. After reviewing hundreds of studies in their new book, “*The Mathematics of Sex*” (Oxford), they conclude that discrimination is no longer an important factor in keeping out women.

They find consistent evidence for biological differences in math aptitude, particularly in males’ advantage in spatial ability and in their disproportionate presence at the extreme ends of the distribution curve on math tests (the topic of last week’s column). But given all the progress made in math by girls, who now take more math and science classes than boys and get better grades, Dr. Ceci and Dr. Williams say that differences in aptitude are not the primary cause of the gender gap in academic science.

Instead, they point to different personal preferences and choices of men and women, including the much-analyzed difference in the reaction to parenthood. When researchers at Vanderbilt University tracked the aspirations and values of mathematically gifted people in their 20s and 30s, they found a gender gap that widened after children arrived, with fathers focusing more on personal careers and mothers focusing more on the community and the family.

Dr. Ceci and Dr. Williams urge universities to make it easier for a young scientist to start a family and still compete for tenure, but they don't expect such reforms to eliminate the gender gap in academic science. After all, the difficulty of balancing family and career is hardly unique to science, and academia already offers parents more flexible working arrangements than do other industries with smaller gender gaps.

The gap in science seems due mainly to another difference between the sexes: men are more interested in working with things, while women are more interested in working with people. There's ample evidence — most recently in an analysis of surveys of more than 500,000 people — that boys and men, on average, are more interested in inanimate objects and “inorganic” subjects like math and physics and engineering, while girls and women are more drawn to life sciences, social sciences and other “organic” careers that involve people and seem to have direct social usefulness.

You can argue how much of this difference is due to biology and how much to society, but could you really affect it by sending scientists and engineers off to the workshops mandated by the bill now in Congress? Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the editor of a recent book “The Science on Women and Science” (AEI Press), says the workshops' main effect would be to provide jobs for researchers and advocates promoting a myth of gender bias.

She criticizes the National Science Foundation for sustaining this industry over the past decade with more than \$135 million from its Advance program promoting gender equity.

While some projects were worthwhile, Dr. Sommers says, the science grants were also used to stage “The Vagina Monologues,” develop a game called Gender

Bias Bingo and present workshops featuring skits in which arrogant men mistreat female colleagues who are clearly their intellectual superiors.

Aided by the continuing federal grants, researchers and advocates have developed theories that women are being held back from pursuing careers in engineering and physics by “stereotype threat,” by “implicit bias” and by a shortage of female role models and mentors. Yet none of these theorized barriers prevented girls and women from dominating the fields that most interested them.

The life sciences and social sciences were once male bastions, yet today women make up a majority of working biological scientists, and they earn nearly three-quarters of the doctorates in psychology. Now that women are earning a majority of all undergraduate and graduate degrees, it's odd to assume they're the gender that needs special help on campus. If more women prefer to study psychology and medicine than physics and engineering, why is that a problem for Washington to fix?

I'd love to see more girls pursuing careers in science (and more women reading science columns), but I wish we'd encourage their individual aspirations instead of obsessing about group disparities. I can't see how we're helping them with scare stories about the awful discrimination they'll face. And I can't imagine that many scientists, male or female, are looking forward to being yanked out of the lab to play Gender Bias Bingo — or hear once again about the Swedish chauvinists of 1994.

*New York Times*, June 14, 2010. □

### Bequest to SAFS

Please consider remembering the Society in your will. Even small bequests can help us greatly in carrying on SAFS's work. In most cases, a bequest does not require rewriting your entire will, but can be done simply by adding a codicil. So please do give this some thought.

Thank you.

*Clive Seligman, President*

## EXCELLENCE, NOT 'EQUITY'

### Editorial

Here we go again: Another day, another trumped-up controversy about Stephen Harper's supposedly retrograde agenda.

On Tuesday, the Toronto Star breathlessly informed its readers that "not one woman" could be found among a new batch of academic grant recipients.

"Of the 19 people who were selected to be the first of the 'prestigious' Canada Excellence Research Chairs, receiving up to \$10-million in total in federal money over the next seven years, all were men," reported the Star. "I felt kicked in the stomach," says Wendy Robbins, co-ordinator of women's studies at the University of New Brunswick and one of a group of academics who mounted a successful human-rights challenge to the gender imbalance in a previous, federal research-chair program ... Robbins says that she's in discussions now to see whether a new human-rights complaint may be necessary."

Ah yes -- kicked in the stomach. Where does the Star find all these women, gays and visible minorities who supposedly spend day and night enduring endless blows in the midsection from Stephen Harper's Conservatives?

It's a wonder half the country isn't writhing around on the pavement, gasping for breath.

But here's a question for Ms. Robbins, and the Toronto Star reporter who went running to her for a reaction quote: How many men teach women's studies? Has an effort been made to recruit male academics to balance the faculty in women's studies departments? Or are there just too few qualified men who apply? What about other traditionally "female-dominated" fields of study, like nursing? Have women launched "human rights complaints" to get men into those areas? If not, why not? Shouldn't gender equity be the priority in the hiring practices of every department?

The answer to this last question, of course, is no, it shouldn't be. This is especially true at the highest level of academia, which is the stratum being targeted by the Canada Excellence Research Chairs, a program that aims to lure world-class academic talent to Canada in environmental sciences and technologies; natural

resources and energy; health and related life sciences and technologies; and information and communications technologies. Excellence, not political correctness, should be the deciding factor when apportioning taxpayer money in this way.

According to Suzanne Fortier, head of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the reason for the lack of female appointees is a paucity of female applicants. Women aren't heavily represented at senior levels in the fields of research involved.

If Ms. Robbins and her colleagues want to encourage equity, then encourage qualified women to apply for positions. But if those women don't exist, or don't want to apply, you can't invent them or force them to do so. And you shouldn't appoint less qualified women simply because they are female. Not only would such a move be a waste of taxpayer dollars, it would also stigmatize those female scientists who do happen to operate at the elite levels of scientific research as if they were affirmative-action cases.

As for the charge of gender bias against Mr. Harper's government, it is bunk. This government desperately wants to appoint women to all sorts of places. To take but one example of many: From 2006-2008, a member of this editorial board served on the Judicial Appointments Committee for the Tax Court of Canada. The committee was told at the start of its mandate that the government wanted to appoint more women to the bench. But the body faced the same issue as the Research Council: Fewer women than men applied; most were not qualified; and, as a result, the majority of the recommendations ended up being men.

What was the government's reaction? The committee was asked to re-examine a number of female applicants who'd initially been rejected, to make sure it hadn't missed something that would entitle them to a recommendation. These applications were rejected again -- because they simply weren't up to par. Eventually, other women did make the grade, and were appointed to the court, but they got there based on their ability, not their gender.

Which is as it should be. Whether in a science lab, or in a courtroom, Canada's elite talent should be picked on the basis of merit, not identity politics.

*National Post*, May 20, 2010. □

## TOP FRENCH SCHOOLS ASKED TO DIVERSIFY, FEAR FOR STANDARDS

*Steven Erlanger*

PARIS — France is embarking on a grand experiment — how to diversify the overwhelmingly white “grandes écoles,” the elite universities that have produced French leaders in every walk of life — and Rizane el-Yazidi is one of the pioneers.

The daughter of protective North African parents in the tough northeastern suburb of Bondy, Ms. Yazidi is enrolled in a trial program aimed at helping smart children of the poor overcome the huge cultural disadvantages that have often spelled failure in the crucial school entrance exams.

“For now we’re still a small group, but when there will be more of us, it’ll become real progress,” said Ms. Yazidi, 20. But she is nervous, too. “We’re lucky, but it’s a great risk for us,” she said. “We might never make it” to a top school.

Because entrance to the best grandes écoles effectively guarantees top jobs for life, the government is prodding the schools to set a goal of increasing the percentage of scholarship students to 30 percent — more than three times the current ratio at the most selective schools. But the effort is being met with concerns from the grandes écoles, who fear it could dilute standards, and is stirring anger among the French at large, who fear it runs counter to a French ideal of a meritocracy blind to race, religion and ethnicity.

France imagines itself a country of “republican virtue,” a meritocracy run by a well-trained elite that emerges from a fiercely competitive educational system. At its apex are the grandes écoles, about 220 schools of varying specialties. And at the very top of this pyramid are a handful of famous institutions that accept a few thousand students a year among them, all of whom pass extremely competitive examinations to enter.

“In France, families celebrate acceptance at a grande école more than graduation itself,” said Richard Descoings, who runs the most liberal of them, the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, known as

Sciences Po. “Once you pass the exam at 18 or 19, for the rest of your life, you belong.”

The result, critics say, is a self-perpetuating elite of the wealthy and white, who provide their own children the social skills, financial support and cultural knowledge to pass the entrance exams, known as the concours, which are normally taken after an extra two years of intensive study in expensive preparatory schools after high school.

The problem is not simply the narrow base of the elite, but its self-satisfaction. “France has so many problems with innovation,” Mr. Descoings said. Those who pass the tests “are extremely smart and clever, but the question is: Are you creative? Are you willing to put yourself at risk? Lead a battle?” These are qualities rarely tested in exams.

But the schools fear that the government will undermine excellence in the name of social engineering and say the process has to begin further down the educational ladder. The state, they say, should seek out poor students with potential and help them to enter preparatory schools. Of the 2.3 million students in French higher education, about 15 percent attend grandes écoles or preparatory schools. But half of those in preparatory schools will fall short and go to standard universities.

In 2001, Mr. Descoings, 52, who cheerfully admits that he failed the concours twice before passing, began his own outreach program to better prepare less-advantaged students for Sciences Po. Last year, the school accepted 126 scholarship students out of a class of 1,300, and two-thirds of them have at least one non-French parent, he said. But that is a far cry from 30 percent.

One of them, Houria Khemiss, 22, is about to graduate from Sciences Po in law. The daughter of Algerian parents growing up in impoverished St.-Denis in the Paris suburbs, she was pushed by a high school teacher to the special preparatory program. She wants to become a judge, “because then you have a direct impact on people’s lives.” Many at Sciences Po will become the leaders of France, she said, “and because we are there it gives them another point of view.”

Oualid Fakkir, 23, who is graduating with a master’s in finance, said, “It’s very dangerous for France to close



its eyes and say, 'Equality. We have the best values in the world.' It's not enough. There has to also be equality of chances."

But other elite grandes écoles are more specialized than Sciences Po, concentrating on engineering, business management, public administration and science, and they are more concerned about the government's program.

Pierre Tapie, 52, is the head of the business school ESSEC and chairman of the Conférence des Grandes Écoles, which represents 222 schools.

While he shares the government's objective of diversity, he said, there is a long educational track before the concours. "We cannot be the scapegoat of any demagogic decision because we are the finest and most famous part of the whole system," he said. Gen. Xavier Michel, 56, runs École Polytechnique, one of the world's finest engineering schools and still overseen by the Ministry of Defense. Known as X, the school is extraordinarily competitive, and its students do basic training and parade wearing the bicorne, a cocked hat dating from Napoleon, who put the school under the military in 1804.

"The fundamental principle for us is that students have the capability to do the work here, which is very difficult," with a lot of math, physics and science, very little of it based on cultural knowledge, General Michel said. Even now, he said, the school takes only 500 students a year, barely 10 percent of its specially educated applicants. "We don't want to bring students into school who risk failing," he said. "You can get lost very quickly."

Despite the misgivings, in February the Conférence des Grandes Écoles, under considerable pressure, signed on to a "Charter of Equal Opportunity" with the government committing the schools to try to reach the 30 percent goal before 2012 or risk losing some financing.

But how to get there remains a point of contention. There is a serious question about how to measure diversity in a country where every citizen is presumed equal and there are no official statistics based on race, religion or ethnicity. A goal cannot be called a "quota," which has an odor of the United States and affirmative action. Instead, there is the presumption here that

poorer citizens will be more diverse, containing a much larger percentage of Muslims, blacks and second-generation immigrants.

The minister of higher education, Valérie Pécresse, argued that French who grow up in a poor neighborhood have the same difficulties regardless of ethnicity.

But the government is examining whether the current test depends too much on familiarity with French history and culture. "We're thinking about the socially discriminatory character, or not, of these tests," Ms. Pécresse said. "I want the same concours for everyone, but I don't exclude that the tests of the concours evolve, with the objective of a great social opening and a better measure of young people's intelligence."

The government, with Mr. Tapie's group, has moved to unify and expand scattered outreach programs from different schools. Copied to some degree from Sciences Po, the program Ms. Yazidi attends tries to reach out to smart children, give them higher goals and help them get into preparatory schools. About 7,000 high school students are currently enrolled, but it is too early to tell whether it will produce a large number of successful applicants.

At one recent session, 10 students, all children of immigrants, were working to pass a special concours for a top business school instead of going right into the job market. Their teacher, Philippe Destelle, pushed them to "look more self-confident" in oral exams and "don't be afraid to have an opinion." He told one, "You have the answers, but you don't trust yourself."

Salloumou Keita, 22, is vocal and social, but worryingly behind on his math. "We have to prove something," he said. "There is a look we always get, a questioning — 'Can he adapt?'"

Awa Dramé, is 22, French-born of African parents, confident and talkative. "I don't mind being a guinea pig, so long as the experiment works," she said. "Reaching this level was unthinkable before, and I can see myself going higher," she said. "I'm full of dreams."

*Nadim Audi and Scott Sayare contributed reporting.*

*New York Times, June 30, 2010. □*

## FAITH AND FREEDOM

*Scott Jaschik*

Canada -- a country with a tradition of academic freedom and strong faculty unions -- is having a major debate over what academic freedom is and who should define it.

Christian Higher Education Canada has announced that it is organizing meetings to bring together faculty members and administrators from a range of institutions to discuss and, maybe, define academic freedom. The group's announcement comes as the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the largest faculty association in the country and a union as well, has moved to investigate colleges that require statements of faith -- pledges of shared belief, frequently accompanied by a code of conduct -- as a condition of employment.

The Association has announced that it will create a list of institutions that require the statements, and that the association doesn't consider them worthy of the name "university." And, prompted in part by the debate, the association that represents all of Canada's colleges -- the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada -- is now revising its statement of academic freedom.

To faculty leaders, the move by CAUT (the national faculty association) is simply a matter of standing by principles. "We don't believe that a person's ideology or faith should be a condition of hiring or of continuing appointment -- whether it is Marxism or fundamentalist Protestantism," said James Turk, executive director of the association. "Nothing that calls itself a university should have a faith test. That's just not acceptable."

Turk added, however, that he's surprised that Christian colleges are offended, given that those with statements of faith don't hide them. "We are advertising only what they proudly proclaim," he said.

Al Hiebert, executive director of Christian Higher Education Canada (which represents 33 colleges and universities of various Protestant denominations, all with statements of faith), said that the faculty group's actions made his members realize that there was a problem in the way academic freedom is being defined. "Our concern is that it is irresponsible for any

one organization to define academic freedom for all of Canada," he said. "And it is irresponsible for any one organization to define the meaning of a university for all of Canada."

Statements of faith are common at Christian colleges and universities, although the actual statements vary widely in their specificity. In the United States, the American Association of University Professors has policies that would normally bar colleges from judging job applicants or employees based on their beliefs, but the association exempts religious colleges in some respects and does not consider a statement of faith as grounds for censure, nor does it investigate colleges simply because they have such a statement. The association does expect the statements to be publicly available so that a job candidate or faculty member would not apply or be hired -- only to subsequently find out about belief expectations.

Turk, of the Canadian faculty group, said that his association believes that the same nondiscriminatory standard should apply to all beliefs. Of statements of faith, he said that "these are requirements we would never tolerate in any other way." He also argues that it is possible for colleges to maintain religious identity without statements of faith, offering as examples Canada's Roman Catholic colleges and universities. Like their American counterparts, they do not require statements of faith and regularly hire (and educate) people who do not share their beliefs. (Turk said he is not bothered by Catholic or other religious colleges hiring only clergy or only members of their faith as president, but sees faculty jobs as being in a different category.)

To date, CAUT has placed one institution -- Trinity Western University -- on its list of institutions with inappropriate statements of faith. The association has finished investigations (but not yet published the results) on two others -- Canadian Mennonite University and Crandall University. And CAUT is about to start an inquiry into Redeemer University. Because these institutions all have statements of faith the CAUT is expected eventually to have all, the Christian colleges on its list of unacceptable institutions. Trinity Western responded to the association's report on its policies with its own report criticizing the faculty group.

Hiebert, of the Christian colleges, said that the idea

that one after another of the institutions would be investigated and criticized was part of the motivation for calling for new definitions of academic freedom. He said that his association and its members back the definition of academic freedom that has been the policy of the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (which includes Christian colleges among its members). He noted that the association's policy talks of both academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

"It is essential that universities have the freedom to set their research and educational priorities," says the association's statement. "How the members of universities will teach and impart skills, conduct research and the pursuit of knowledge, and engage in fundamental criticism, is best determined within the universities themselves. It is here that academic freedom, in its collective form of institutional autonomy, can ensure freedom of inquiry for individual faculty members and students. Historically there has been a struggle for university autonomy, arising from the conviction that a university can best serve the needs of society when it is free to do so according to the dictates of the intellectual enterprise itself."

Hiebert said that the reference to universities defining academic freedom themselves affirmed the Christian colleges' views that they could require belief in a set of theological views while still upholding values of academic freedom.

Christine Tausig Ford, secretary of the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, said that group is now revising its statement -- but that the basic concepts would not change. She said that the CAUT's criticism of statements of faith has been much discussed among her member presidents.

She said her association hasn't yet taken a stand on the call by the Christian colleges for new national meetings to define academic freedom. The Christian association plans to invite the faculty group, and Turk said his association would most likely accept the invitation.

*Inside Higher Ed*, June 9, 2010. □

## UC IRVINE SUSPENDS MUSLIM GROUP OVER DISRUPTION

*Jacob Adelman*

LOS ANGELES A University of California, Irvine, disciplinary committee ruled that a Muslim student group should be suspended for at least a year because of a protest that disrupted a talk by Israel's ambassador and led to the arrest of 11 students, according to documents released Monday.

The letter from a student affairs disciplinary committee to Muslim Student Union leaders said the group was guilty of disorderly conduct, obstructing university activities, furnishing false information and other violations of campus policy.

University spokeswoman Cathy Lawhon said the committee's decision will be a binding recommendation to the campus' office of student affairs if a planned appeal by the group does not succeed.

MSU attorney Reem Salahi said the committee relied on evidence that was "inadequate and problematic" but declined to outline the group's challenge in detail. She said the decision, if sustained, would leave Muslim students without an organization representing their interests.

"It really does have very lasting constitutional implications," she said. "It's a chilling effect for Muslims on campus and their right to associate."

Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren was repeatedly interrupted and called "murderer" and "war criminal" by pro-Palestinian students as he was giving a talk on the Middle East peace process in February.

Eleven students were cited on charges of disrupting a public event after they were requested to refrain from heckling but did not.

The Orange County district attorney's office did not return a phone message seeking the status of its investigation into those students.

The MSU condemned the ambassador's appearance but insisted it did not organize the protests.

The disciplinary committee, however, said a review of online message group conversations and minutes from an MSU meeting revealed that the group did engineer the protests and instructed participants to lie about its involvement.

The group's preparations allegedly included scripting statements for protesters to make during the event and instructing participants to cheer at disruptions.

"Be VERY LOUD, firm and strong ... but remain composed and under control. Do not let your emotions get the best of you. Remember that this is a planned/calculated response and not a venting session," the committee quoted organizers as telling participants in meeting minutes.

The committee also ruled that the group should be put on disciplinary probation for a year following its suspension, which ends in August 2011, and that members collectively complete 50 hours of community service.

The letter, dated May 27, was released following a Freedom of Information Act request by the Jewish Federation Orange County.

AP, June 14, 2010. □

**DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in the *SAFS Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the Society, apart from the authoritative notices of the Board of Directors.

All or portions of the *Newsletter* may be copied for further circulation. We request acknowledgement of the source and would appreciate a copy of any further publication of *Newsletter* material.

**SAFS MEMBERSHIP FORM**

To join **SAFS** or to renew your **SAFS** membership, please sign and complete this form and return to:

**SAFS**  
1673 Richmond Street, #344  
London, Ontario, Canada  
N6G 2N3

Please make your cheque payable to **SAFS**

- ◆ Annual regular - \$25.00
- ◆ Annual retirees/students - \$15.00
- ◆ Lifetime - \$150 (*available to those 60 years or older or retired*)
- ◆ Sustaining - \$100 - \$299
- ◆ Benefactor - \$300.00

"I support the Society's goals"

\_\_\_\_\_ *signature*

Renewal	Sustaining
New Member	Benefactor

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please specify preferred address for the Newsletter*

Ph (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Ph (H): \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Because **SAFS** is not a registered charity, memberships cannot be considered charitable contributions for income tax purposes.)*

VISIT SAFS WEBSITE AT WWW.SAFS.CA

**SAFS OFFICE**

1673 Richmond Street, #344, London, Ontario, Canada, N6G 2N3, e-mail: safs@safs.ca