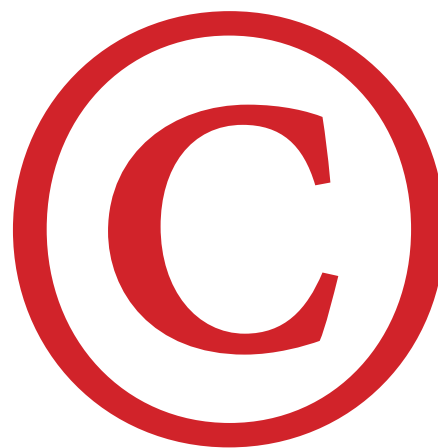


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UVSC is not shifting to the left

Date June 28, 2005

David Keller

Norman Nielsen's contention that UVSC has exhibited during the last year a "disturbing drift to the left" (Daily Herald, June 6) is flatly false and dangerously misleading for at least four reasons.

Presumably Nielsen is referring to Michael Moore, "The Vagina Monologues," and a course taught on gay literature. Nielsen fails to mention that UVSC also recently has hosted LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, Sens. Robert Bennett and Orrin Hatch, Rep. Chris Cannon, Stephen R. Covey, Gayle Ruzicka, Alan Keyes, Barbara Bush, and Sean Hannity -- speakers who can hardly be described as "liberals."

Thus, taken in context, a smattering of events not endorsed by Nielsen hardly constitute some tectonic shift "to the left."

Each of the events which have apparently galled Nielsen are timely and relevant. Moore questions the competency of our presidential leadership, which is germane given the increasing public sense that spending \$1.5 billion per week on a seemingly optional war is neither fiscally nor politically responsible, a concern that even some Republican lawmakers are now expressing.

"The Vagina Monologues" is about feminine identity, and gay literature, which was erroneously assumed by many to be advocating homosexuality, is a common course taught at the University of Utah and Utah State University without uproar.

Second, Nielsen fallaciously claims "that the accreditation requirements for public and private institutions are exactly the same" with the tacit implication that UVSC should be a sort of publicly-funded BYU. This exhibits an egregious misunderstanding of the fundamental differences in the missions of private and public schools.

BYU's central mission, as a private ecclesiastical institution, is the exploration of reason within the framework of faith. As such, BYU has the right, and exercises it, to model its curriculum and hire its faculty consonant with LDS doctrine. That is why Marxism, feminism, and moral relativism are not hot topics in Provo.

Conversely, UVSC's central mission, as a public institution, is the exploration of faith, if applicable, within the framework of reason. It is true that UVSC serves the local community, but, contrary to Nielsen's proclamation, in order to be credible, UVSC must adhere to national standards. As a public institution of higher education, UVSC derives its authority from the larger academic community, which transcends Utah County.

Third, Nielson recommends that UVSC invite David Horowitz, president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, to campus because "Horowitz's views are gaining traction across America."



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Horowitz argues that academe is dominated by liberals at the exclusion of conservatives.

Horowitz's enterprise is almost categorically derided as asinine by the intelligentsia as a ploy to populate campuses with laissez-faire, industrial-military complex, anti-diversity, imperialistically-hegemonic ideologues.

In truth, reputable colleges and universities have policies which forbid questioning job candidates on religious, moral and political orientation. To this end, UVSC hiring policy states that "neither discrimination nor harassment will be permitted in any area, activity or instructional program of the college."

Hence it is just plain silly, as Horowitz explicitly asserts and Nielsen implicitly affirms, that there is some conspiracy against hiring conservative faculty. Faculty are hired according to professional credentials, not worldview, making Horowitz's argument baseless. Nielsen's exhortation to "restore sanity to academic freedom" is in fact a euphemism for the termination of academic freedom.

Fourth, Nielson rightly asserts that UVSC "students are entitled to an education free of political bias, politically-correct grading and intimidation." But in writing that there needs to be a grievance process "for students who believe they are being politically indoctrinated, discriminated against or unfairly graded because their political position differs from their instructor" implies that "conservative" students are being abused.

This is a serious charge, yet Nielsen provides no evidence. My own experience at UVSC leads me to conclude this is nothing more than vacuous hyperbole. Learning cannot take place in a hostile atmosphere, and President Sederburg has unequivocally stated that respect is central to UVSC's protocol.

Therefore, in direct contradiction to what Nielsen contends, by fostering civic dialogue and the critical thinking skills necessary for democracy, the events of the last year demonstrate that UVSC is in fact more "conservative" than ever.

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