

Dear Friends,.

I've read with great interest recent classmate comments on the state of our alma mater. For forty years I, too, was a proud Harvey Mudd College graduate. Not so much anymore. It feels like the school we attended no longer exists.

With your patience and indulgence, I would also like to share my two+ cents worth.

Sadly, I believe the College has lost its way and fear its best days may not lie ahead. It seems HMC has adopted the racial-preference and social justice regime prevalent in higher education today - at the expense of its students, its faculty, and its alumni. The "Breaking the Mudd Bubble" initiative, begun in 2006, is now complete.

I began following HMC more closely in 2017, prompted by two events: (1) the January college News Brief article "Members of Faculty Affirm Shared Values" honoring MLK Day, and (2) a national media headline reading "Even Harvey Mudd, a Math and Science College, Has Surrendered to the Social Justice Movement" (Ref 1).

While the Faculty Executive Committee MLK Day statement ostensibly reaffirmed "the shared values of the (HMC) community", it was in truth a divisive and overtly political screed. I shared that concern with College and Board of Trustees leadership, receiving no response.

The second event was the March-April campus protests and fallout from the release of the HMC-commissioned "Wabash Report" (Ref 2) that provided an outside look at several campus issues, including increasing Honor Code violations, student growth/satisfaction, and curriculum rigor.

These events, and the College's weak response to them, suggested that it was changing in ways I hadn't noticed before.

Since Spring 2017, it seems HMC has more openly embraced the transformation of its mission, culture, and character. I don't believe social engineering and social justice activism were ever envisioned or intended by the Founders; it's disheartening that so much at HMC today is seen through a prism of progressive politics.

YMMV on what follows, yet it appears HMC did not "surrender" to the social justice movement in 2017; rather, it seems a plan to institutionalize the movement may actually have begun quietly ten years prior. An unsigned/undated document (Ref 3, "Breaking the Mudd Bubble") from the college website circa 2006 appears to be the roadmap that transformed HMC into what it is today. The goal of this "HMC 2020 Society" was to re-make HMC into "a gathering ground for individuals passionate about both science *and* social justice".

What follows are my personal observations and opinions. It's admittedly a long read, so I've grouped by topic:

- Today's Harvey Mudd College: Part 1
- Internal game plan ("Breaking the Mudd Bubble") for remaking HMC into a college of science, engineering, **and** social justice
- Process and problems in creating one of "the most racially diverse colleges in the country", as told by Maria Klawe in 2012-2019 media interviews

- The outsized role of the Office of Institutional Diversity in driving HMC's outsized priority on social justice and identity politics
- Banishing viewpoint diversity
- Indoctrination vs education
- Today's Harvey Mudd College: Part 2
- Hope: The Board of Trustees, The Alumni Association

Today's Harvey Mudd College: Part 1

Is HMC today really what the Board of Trustees envisioned in 2007, when it approved a new strategic vision and direction for the College?

- Harvey Mudd College, for several years now, is the #1 most expensive college or university in the nation. Why?
- Academic standards and the rigor of the Core curriculum continue to be watered down, increasingly lowering the college's expectations of its students. Why?
- Faculty/Staff hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions are openly influenced by diversity and commitment to social activism ... which in turn drives the curriculum. Absent is diversity of thought or viewpoint. Why?
- The College also discriminates in student admissions according to race, gender, ethnicity, and national origin. Gone are the days when incoming classes were characterized by *individual* academic, intellectual, and extracurricular accomplishments; instead, entering classes are now recognized by *groupings* based on gender and skin color - characteristics irrelevant to intellectual achievement and capacity. Why?

(As an aside, if the latest HMC admissions template were applied to our 1965 entering class of 81 students, we would have had approximately 12 white males.)

- The number of Deans, Assoc/Asst Deans, VPs, Asst VPs, Directors, Assoc/Asst Directors, and Managers in the Dept of Student Affairs is greater than the number of professors in five of the seven academic departments. The Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts (HSA) is larger than at least half of the STEM departments. Why?

"HMC 2020" vs "Breaking the Mudd Bubble"

Sometime in 2006 there was an unsigned document (Ref 3) written and posted on the HMC website that advocated amending the college's mission statement to explicitly commit to social responsibility and activism; the theme was "Breaking the Mudd Bubble". Changing the mission statement was seen as "a serious and powerful way to influence the college".

Even an amended mission statement should be kept vague, it was argued, so as "to allow degrees of discretion in their implementation". The Founders' phrase "understanding of the impact of their work on society" should be reinterpreted to explicitly address "environmental

impacts”, “importance of non-destructive work”, “the global human condition” - and all should inform and influence research and course work at the college. And time was of the essence.

It’s not clear whether this “HMC 2020 Society” tract was written before, or after, Maria Klawe’s arrival in 2006; yet in 2007 she issued a “Strategic Planning Vision” document (Ref 4, “HMC 2020, Envisioning the Future”) that added “Global engagement and informed contributions to society” and “diversity at all levels”. This 20-page strategic vision, which we all saw and maybe read or skimmed at the time, embraced noble ideas and goals and had been vetted by committees and workshops of faculty, administrators, trustees, alumni, and students.

Now, fast forward to the Spring 2020 “Harvey Mudd College magazine” (Ref 5) which devotes eight pages to a “Strategic Vision Progress Report 2006-2020”. Again, all laudable milestones and accomplishments. Progress has been made in each of the six themes identified 14 years earlier. Understandably, there was no mention of either the 2017 troubles and protests (a “horrible” year according to Maria Klawe), or of the continuing downward revisions of the Core curriculum.

So why does this image of the college seem so different from my simplistic characterization of “HMC Today”?

Again, YMMV on some or all of this, yet I believe the answer may be found in part in the “roadmap” described in the unsigned/undated 2006 “Breaking the Mudd Bubble” document (Ref 3). The “Clear Picture of a Renewed HMC” identified “practical changes Harvey Mudd could make to bring about the desired change”:

- *Faculty & research* - hire professors supporting global activism, with research interests in related fields
- *Courses* - curriculum changes would follow new faculty hirings, eventually offering students courses which would “further technical knowledge in areas they feel passionately about” (i.e., global activism and social justice)
- *Clinic* - reduce defense industry-funded projects, increase “Engineers Without Borders” sponsorships, focus more on high-impact social problems
- *Admissions* - make HMC a beacon for students “passionate about both science *and* social justice”
- *Funding for service projects* - increase annual funding for social projects, making “active involvement in such projects ... the norm for HMC students”
- *Lecture Series funding* - focus on speakers who “could inform students and inspire them to engage the great humanitarian problems of today”

Look at these suggested changes: seems all have been implemented. Look in particular at HSA faculty hirings since 2006: almost all have some research interests in social-change activism, race/multiraciality/ethnicity, colonialism/post colonial theory, militarism, gender and science, masculinities/feminist theories, critical race and queer theories, and the like. And a quick look at today’s HSA course offerings suggest that the curriculum indeed followed.

Several other statements in this 2006 “Breaking the Mudd Bubble” tract are also interesting. It ostensibly rejected “the concept of a politically or religiously affiliated HMC”. Religiously affiliated? It also affirmed that “no actions should be taken to *coerce currently apathetic*

students to act on the ideals of social responsibility and global engagement”. So much for viewpoint diversity. So much for students thinking for themselves.

In fairness, Klawe apparently brought in outside diversity/social justice experts and advocates to help make her case with trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni - in the end earning support for her policies and priorities.

And yet, what if other experts with other viewpoints on these sometimes politically charged social issues had also been invited to participate in the discussions, workshops, and retreats? For example, it would have been interesting if someone like Heather Mac Donald of the Manhattan Institute had been invited to discuss other viewpoints as the transformation of HMC was being considered (see her article “How Identity Politics is Harming the Sciences”, Ref 6).

HMC in the Media: Klawe Interviews, 2012-2019

In the first years after adopting the new “HMC 2020” strategic vision, Maria Klawe’s media interviews (e.g., Refs 7 & 8) seemed mainly focused on HMC’s success in increasing the number of women in computer science, with occasional references to diversity in general, but with less emphasis on social justice writ large. That appeared to change in 2017, after the Wabash Report troubles.

In a 2012 Inc interview (Ref 9), Klawe said, “I don’t think when Harvey Mudd hired me they really understood how committed I was to diversity ... I was surprised to find out the meme around Harvey Mudd was that we are a merit-based institution and bringing in more women or people of color would mean lowering our standards”. (Yet isn’t that what happened - twice so far?) In another interview she asserted that in its early years, HMC *capped* female admissions at 11 percent. Really?

(In Dr. Platt’s history of the College’s first twenty years [Ref 9.5], he describes deliberations by the Founders on the admission of women beginning with the Founding Class of 1961. The Chairman of the Board, Mrs. Mudd, appointed a trustee subcommittee to recommend a policy, Dr Platt recommended the admission of women, the subcommittee supported his recommendation, “and the board voted to admit women”. No mention is made of any cap or quota. The students the college hoped for were described simply as “academically able students really excited about broad technical careers”.)

In an August 2017 NPR interview (Ref 10), Klawe was asked about her diversity initiatives and how the Wabash report had “backfired” on HMC. She explained how the school had “become one of the most racially diverse colleges in the country”: “We used to recruit from the top high schools. But we’ve made a move to say, that’s not right”. She added that one result was “students are coming in with less preparation ... and find it hard to keep up, and faculty are unhappy”.

(Contrast this with Caltech [Ref 10.5]: “Applicants to Caltech are clearly seen as representing only themselves and their own individual merit and achievement, not their race or their ethnic group ... ‘We try, like our competitors, very, very hard to find, recruit, and nurture underrepresented minorities but we won’t bend our standards’”.)

So how did HMC adjust? By “(making) changes to our Core” and hiring more faculty. The result? “We thought it was going to improve things, and it didn’t, it just made them worse”.

And then? “We changed the (Core) requirements, changed from four to three semesters, added more electives” ... and instead of taking “more relaxing courses, students moved ahead in their major, which made it even more stressful ...”.

(In the 28 March 2017 “Letter from the Faculty Executive Committee to HMC Students”, after the Wabash protests, the College “reject(ed) claims of any ‘lowering of standards’” before acknowledging that “teaching a more gender and ethnically diverse student body requires reflection and re-examination of our pedagogy, course materials, and syllabi ... and we will continue ... work in ... these areas.” The letter also stated that revisions in some engineering, computer science, and chemistry courses reflected student feedback and were in “direct response to increased diversity on our campus”).

So, standards weren’t lowered, but Core requirements and individual courses were revised?

But why did the Wabash Report backfire? Because, she said, “Harvey Mudd faculty deliberately arranged to overrepresent the voices of students who were struggling, and faculty who felt challenged”. The Faculty did it?

Maria Klawe made other interesting comments in further media interviews. In one with Forbes (Ref 11), she stated that “Mudd is my test kitchen”. *Her* test kitchen? In another (Ref 12), she was asked about still having more work to do on diversity and inclusion. Her response? “We have come so far in the last 12 years, and I would say ... everybody takes it for granted that women are everywhere ... But we’re in a society that has enormous amounts of racism, still”. She then adds, “Once my board chair asked, ‘This diversity inclusion thing, do we ever get there?’ And I said, ‘absolutely not.’ This is something that we’re going to be working on forever ...”.

So Harvey Mudd “test kitchen” experiments seemingly sequed seamlessly from gender equality to redressing America’s racist past.

What problem exactly is HMC “going to be working on forever”? It can’t objectively define the goal or end state of “diversity”, and now it’s going to go after “systemic racism, personal racism, and other forms of injustice”? What does that even mean? And the time and resources that this will require, by faculty, staff, and students?

No wonder HMC is the most expensive school in the nation. No wonder academic requirements continue to be relaxed. What truly STEM-serious high school senior would want to attend a college like this?

Office of Institutional Diversity: “Re-education Campus”, “Social vs Actual Engineering”

My impression of HMC’s Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) is that has wielded inordinate power in implementing the administration’s diversity and social justice strategy. Photos on the college’s website several years ago even had - I think - OID leadership leading the faculty/student procession into the graduation ceremony.

A 2018 “City Journal” article (Ref 13, “Reeducation Campus”) commented on how “these professionals (university diversity offices in general, not specifically referring to HMC) seem to lean even further left than the faculty, and in some ways they have more influence”.

“You may have come to study computer science or literature or biochemistry, but first you’ll have to learn about social justice, environmental sustainability, gender pronouns,

and microaggressions. You may have been planning to succeed by hard work, but first you'll have to acknowledge your privilege or discover your victimhood. If you arrived at college hoping to broaden your intellectual horizons, you'll quickly be instructed which ideas are off-limits."

Personalizing this to HMC, consider the following:

The OID goal is to "empower the campus community to take action on issues that matter to them, guided by a social justice framework".

OID plays a lead role in the HMC Summer Institute program that "targets students who are underrepresented in science, math, and engineering".

In 2016, OID launched its "Social Justice League, a leadership team to help facilitate and lead workshops *within the dorms* on a variety of subjects. OID was able to successfully recruit 22 leaders who have been trained to create and run workshops that empower the HMC community to be agents of change". (Ref 14)

Fall semester of 2016, OID "provided 18 diversity, social justice, and inclusion workshops, seminars, and presentations; and served 1,016 students, faculty, and staff". More than 93 percent of "participants shared that they are willing to educate others ...". (Ref 14)

Do the student organizations advised by OID (apislam, blam, epaic, FEMunion, prism, sacnas, spills) also foster, either individually or collectively, uniting the entire student body in the end as "Harvey Mudd students and classmates"?

OID believes the HMC community "must recognize that discrimination and underrepresentation have plagued higher education for decades ... and must act in ways to acknowledge these problems and help fix them ...". Look at this in the context of the New York Times editor Bari Weiss' recent criticism of her employer (Ref 14.5): "truth isn't a process of collective discovery, but an orthodoxy already known to an enlightened few whose job is to inform everyone else."

In 2017, the OID homepage on the HMC website featured a chart at what appeared to be a sponsored class or activity. The photo on the chart was a collage of mujahideen-looking men; the text on the chart read "US/NATO are supporting the most brutal and infamous fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan, who are sworn enemies of women's rights and justice." As both an alum and a veteran, and in the absence of any mitigating context, I found this assertion offensive and not representative (hopefully) of "the shared values of the greater HMC community" as is so often invoked by the college.

Most recently, and doubling down on the above, it seems OID will play a lead role in HMC support of Black Lives Matter (have they done due diligence on BLM?) by initiating an "Intergroup Dialogue Program on Race and Ethnicity", "recruit faculty/students/staff to be trained facilitators for an 8-week module in ... building an equitable and socially just society", hosting "a series of Equity Scorecard Sessions in fall and spring semesters", and adding "specific anti-racism sessions as part of the 2020 New Student Orientation and sponsor book clubs on anti-racism throughout the academic year". And such efforts "will continue to be a priority for our work as a Cabinet". (Ref 15)

Again, YMMV on the above, yet how is this not insulting to both faculty and students, not to mention just being a bit creepy? Where's the line between education and indoctrination? Why is HMC teaching *what* to think, rather than *how* to think? Is HMC saying *it* has a racism problem?

Is the administration's objective that all in the "Harvey Mudd community" have a single politically correct perspective on racism and race relations? What if some faculty/students don't believe that either the college or the country suffers from "systemic racism"? Would these be "the currently apathetic" members of the community referred to in the 2006 "Breaking the Mudd Bubble" declaration? What "anti-Black institutional policies and practices and other forms of injustice *within our own community*" need "uprooting" (Ref 16)? Will arguable notions about race, such as systemic racism and white privilege, be open to debate? Will black-on-black violence be explored? Will the "book clubs" include contemporary authors such as Thomas Sowell and Shelby Steele?

In comparison and contrast to these recent Klawe and Faculty Executive Committee declarations, see Ref 16.5 ("A Declaration of Independence by a Princeton Professor"). It shows the courage of one faculty member to challenge the "dizzying array of changes" proposed by the university in response to ongoing BLM/racial issues "that, if implemented, would lead to civil war on campus and erode even further public confidence in how elite institutions of higher education operate". Will any HMC faculty members have the courage to dissent?

Our issues of the day were civil rights and the Vietnam war. How would we have reacted if college administrators and faculty were telling us what to think and what to read on those topics, much less requiring us to devote time to mandatory single-viewpoint political instruction?

"Diverting time and resources from actual STEM research into gender (and racial, etc) politics is reckless when China is becoming increasingly competitive with the US in technology". (Ref 17)

So, it seems OID is effectively the Department of Social Engineering and Social Justice. This is too much to comment casually upon, so will simply offer quotes from several publications.

From the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, "Engineering Education: Social Engineering Rather Than Actual Engineering", August 2017 (Ref 18):

"... engineering (and the sciences generally) should be, like the scales of justice, blind. Engineering does not care about your color, sexual orientation, or your personal and private attributes. All it takes to succeed is to do the work well."

"... the soft underbelly of engineering, where such phrases as 'diversity' and 'different perspectives' and 'racial gaps' and 'unequal outcomes' make up the daily vocabulary. Instead of calculating engine horsepower or microchip power/size ratios or aerodynamic lift and drag, the engineering educationists focus on group representation, hurt feelings, and 'microaggressions' in the profession."

"... basic assumption is that engineering will be improved if the profession is crafted to be more diverse, but that is completely untested."

From the Wall Street Journal in January 2019 (re India's differing university admission standards as a function of social class):

“Less tangibly, quotas bolster an every-tribe-for-itself cynicism. They shred the ideal of a society where anyone able can succeed regardless of background. Instead of embracing quotas, India should have built an education system that provided good schooling for all children. Successful countries care more about equality of opportunity, and less about jerry-rigging equality of outcomes.”

From the National Review, January 2019 (Ref 19, “Social Justice Is Unjust”):

“Casual observers can be forgiven for thinking that ‘social justice’ is an unobjectionable catch-all prescribing racial and cultural awareness, self-actualization, and the rectification of historical wrongs. But as social justice’s advocates reveal, it is a malleable philosophy that encourages racial hierarchies and social stratification. For its advocates, achieving social equality requires social leveling. And to secure that equality, institutions must treat individuals unequally. There is no justice in that.”

From the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, November 2018 (Ref 20, “The Rise of Engineering’s Social Justice Warriors”):

“Because engineering is a technical field, politicization manifests itself differently than in the humanities. Politicization manifests itself in how ethical codes are written and how engineering ethics is taught. The future of engineering depends upon on whether the profession chooses to embrace a broad concept of the good, or they choose to embrace a narrow one that excludes those not on the political left.”

Viewpoint Diversity: Prof Debra Mashek, Harvey Mudd’s Loss

A tenured professor of psychology and former Assoc Dean of Faculty Development, Debra Mashek, chose to leave HMC less than a year after the Wabash Report troubles. The college’s Feb 2018 announcement of Prof Mashek’s departure cited the “significant increase in political polarization ... on college campuses” as “an opportune time (for her) to address this divide” as the inaugural director of Heterodox Academy, a nonpartisan nonprofit founded on the premise that research and teaching suffer when college campuses lack diverse viewpoints.

For all of HMC’s emphasis and initiatives on diversity, it does not include thought or viewpoint diversity. To the contrary. HMC appears to willfully exclude viewpoint diversity in faculty/staff hirings, student admissions, curriculum, and extracurricular activities.

In early 2018, Prof Mashek was the subject of an interview article (Ref 21, “A New Leader in the Push for Diversity of Thought on Campus”) published in “The Atlantic”. In the interview she doesn’t specifically mention HMC, though cites her experiences in the classroom and with students and faculty. Several of her comments resonate:

“I worry that we’re undermining our ability to do the best research and cultivate the best minds to go out and solve the ... problems the world faces. I think about what it takes to engage with ideas from across the spectrum. It takes fluency with those ideas. And fluency requires exposure in the classroom.”

“I have seen an increase in the small tensions in my classrooms ... I hear requests to avoid all gender binaries ... and a student asked me why I didn’t give a trigger warning on that chapter.”

“... much more worrisome examples come from the faculty - closed-door conversations where my colleagues say they are afraid to speak up, reports of faculty members labeling colleagues as racist, of members of hiring committees wondering if political leanings of candidates were unduly informing discussions.”

“A lot of college mission statements hint at their orientation, as do their curricula. My dream is that students go to places that value viewpoint diversity so that their own perspectives can be challenged and refined.”

“While an institution could be set up intentionally to limit exposure to other ideas, that isn’t a college where I’d want to send my kid ... I’d never say that such colleges shouldn’t be allowed to exist, but I’m not going to support them with my tuition dollars. I’d rather support the colleges that welcome and celebrate viewpoint diversity.”

“College should help better prepare students for constructive engagement beyond the academy - as citizens, as employees, and even as a Facebook friends.”

In June 2019 Prof Mashek co-authored an article (Ref 22, “10 Colleges Where You Won’t Have to Walk on Eggshells”) on reason.com that identified ten schools “seriously committed to civil and diverse debate”. Harvey Mudd did not make the list.

In the article, six questions are suggested to help characterize the “expression climate” on a campus. I believe HMC fails on the first four, with the last two problematic in my mind only because of limited insight.

1. Does your student orientation discuss civility, viewpoint diversity, or academic freedom?
2. Does the college have a speaker series featuring people with diverse views?
3. How many speakers have been disrupted by protests in recent years?
4. How often do student groups of differing political orientation host events together?
5. Are the professors open to differing opinions?
6. Are students welcome to share their perspectives in class if most others disagree?

It’s truly a shame that HMC lost someone like Prof Mashek at such an important juncture in its history - and its future.

“Think for yourself”

Under the banner of Princeton’s James Madison Program, a number of scholars/teachers from Princeton, Harvard, and Yale (hardly bastions of conservatism) signed a letter in summer 2017 entitled “Some Thoughts and Advice for Our Students and All Students” (Ref 23). Here are some excerpts:

“Our advice can be distilled to three words: *Think for yourself.*”

“In today’s climate, it’s all too easy to allow your views and outlook to be shaped by dominant opinion on your campus ... The danger today is falling into the vice of conformism, yielding to groupthink.”

“Since no one wants to be thought of as a bigot or a crank, the easy, lazy way to proceed is simply by falling into line with campus orthodoxies. *Don’t do that. Think for yourself.*”

“The love of truth and the desire to attain it should motivate you to think for yourself. The central point of a college education is to seek truth and to learn the skills and acquire the virtues necessary to be a lifelong truth-seeker. Open-mindedness, critical thinking, and debate are essential to discovering the truth. Moreover, they are our best antidotes to bigotry.”

“... don’t be tyrannized by public opinion. Don’t get trapped in an echo chamber ... make sure you decide where you stand by critically assessing the arguments for the competing positions”.

“Think for yourself. Good luck to you in college!”

This philosophy of welcoming new students seems 180 degrees out from what has been institutionalized at Harvey Mudd. Just look at its Fall 2020 plan to address BLM/racial unrest.

Today’s Harvey Mudd College: Part 2

What exactly is the purpose of today’s Harvey Mudd?

The Founders’ vision was “to attract the nation’s brightest students and offer them a rigorous scientific and technological education coupled with a strong curricular emphasis in the humanities and social sciences.” That vision was expanded in 2007 to include “global engagement” and “diversity at all levels”.

Yet Maria Klawe’s 24 June 2020 letter to the Harvey Mudd Community (“Addressing Systemic Racism”), and the 3 June 2020 “Statement of Solidarity” from the Faculty Executive Committee, beg the question of balance between providing a rigorous STEM (+ HSA) education, and inculcating students with an equal passion for social justice.

Klawe’s letter begins with an emphatic “*Black Lives Matter*”, and then states that HMC will take the following steps to help “stop” racial injustice and “support our Black students, faculty and staff”:

- Become an “institutional member of the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity” (<https://www.facultydiversity.org/>)
- Work with the 5Cs to address systemic racism
- The DSA “will begin an Intergroup Program on Race and Ethnicity ... (and) recruit faculty, students and staff to be trained facilitators for an 8-week module” to encourage reflection upon “personal and social responsibility for building an equitable and socially just society”

- The OID will host a series of “Equity Scorecard Sessions” (<https://cue.usc.edu/files/2016/01/Introduction-to-the-EqS.pdf>, <https://cue.usc.edu/tools/the-equity-scorecard/>)
- The DSA will conduct “anti-racism sessions as part of the 2020 New Student Orientation”
- The Office of Advancement will work toward “develop(ing) curriculum that addresses systemic racism”

I don’t understand what these steps mean, what the time/cost/resource implications are, or what the desired impact/outcome expectations are. But a goal of educating students and faculty to be equipped to help stop racial injustice and end systemic racism seems a heavy and politically fraught undertaking for a small college with the unique mission of providing a rigorous scientific and technological education. Can it do both? Should it try to do both?

As food for thought, the New York Times has a timely article entitled “‘White Fragility’ Is Everywhere, But Does Antiracism Training Work?” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/magazine/white-fragility-robin-diangelo.html>). It’s a long piece, yet it illustrates the complex and controversial nature of anti-racism training, as well as revealing “some of the worrisome underlying values they (the trainers) share”. And this, Klawe says in her letter, is something that “will continue to be a priority for our work as a Cabinet”.

Regardless of your beliefs and feelings on these issues, should this really be a *priority* for our alma mater?

The college announced in May a new Core curriculum that will “*reduce student stress due to context-switching and increase joy of learning, reflection, mastery, and retention by allowing students to take a four-course load in the first four semesters ...*”.

Now, only two months later, new training programs/modules on race and ethnicity are being added; new student orientation will focus on anti-racism; and the administration and FEC will be adding to the curriculum additional courses that “address systemic racism” and “engage students in grappling with topics of race, equity, or other forms of justice”. What could possibly go wrong?

Is HMC really mutating into a college of social justice with electives in the sciences and engineering?

No wonder HMC is the most expensive school in the nation. No wonder academic requirements continue to be relaxed. What truly STEM-serious high school senior would want to attend a college like this?

Wrap

It may be that I was just late to the game in realizing that HMC was changing so fundamentally. Perhaps the Board of Trustees, Alumni Association, parents, or even some of you, saw all along what was happening, and how the mission, character, and culture of our alma mater was evolving into something very different from what we experienced.

It’s perplexing that the Founders’ mission of understanding societal impact was hijacked to transform the college into an institution that’s becoming more part of the problem than leading the solution. Talk of “settled science”, and unproven race and diversity hypotheses, “undermine public confidence in universities and research itself ... because it indicates today’s

science is not driven by truth-seeking but by ideology” (Ref 24). I fear this experiment in politicizing Harvey Mudd’s mission puts its future at risk.

I know there are diverse opinions, research, and studies on the topics of diversity and social justice. I know compelling and well-meant arguments can be made on all sides of these issues. But my point is that it’s wrong if the repurposing of our alma mater happened without open and free debate of all viewpoints. Perhaps the debate was there, and I simply failed to notice such discussions being reported in College communications and Board updates.

In any event, the college’s full-throated, social justice response to the recent racial unrest in our country just further entrenches the image and purpose of today’s Harvey Mudd College. As I said at the start, it feels like the college we attended no longer exists.

With thanks, I think, to Mr Saltman, the quote below from the “Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam”, as translated by Edward Fitzgerald, seems to sum it up.

“The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on. Neither all your piety, nor all your wit, can lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it.”

Unless ... when the Board of Trustees chooses the *sixth* president of Harvey Mudd College, it charges the new administration with openly and objectively assessing “HMC 2020” in the context of the College’s founding vision, mission, and values. From that, might an updated vision, a new strategic plan, and a renewed, apolitical, non-ideological “HMC 2035” emerge?

I do not know how the Board works with the administration, faculty, and AABOG in governing the College. I do not know the extent of the Board’s insight into HMC’s transformations over the last 15 years. But I do know the following quotes (Refs 25 & 26) resonate.

“Academia is a troubled institution ... Especially concerning is its politicization; it increasingly sows racial discord, advocates for anti-American and anti-Western perspectives ... At times, it even rejects its most important value - the pursuit of truth - for a distorted vision of social justice.”

“Studies of faculty voter registrations reveal a constant movement toward the political left ... And voter registrations hardly scratch the surface of the extreme degree of radicalization that is occurring. Somebody at a higher level of authority must step in and say ‘enough’; that can only be the boards.”

“Administrations have natural possession of the most minute information on their campuses. Board members [and also parents and alumni] ... are naturally removed. As a result, administrators are able to manipulate board decision-making through their control of information; interrupting their monopoly over information is paramount to good governance.”

If you’ve read this far, thanks for listening. My wife, my daughter, and my dog have long encouraged me to let it go.

Stay safe, stay well.

With fond memories from Claremont in 1965-1969, all the best to all of you - Bob

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