

The Editor's Corner

November 19, 2019

When this website debuted two months ago, it contained numerous articles and letters focusing on issues facing Washington and Lee and higher education generally. Most of the articles and letters on the initial web page were about the importance of ideological diversity within the faculty and the threats to that diversity in colleges and universities where politically liberal faculty dominate and where conservative voices are rarely heard or considered. In my own article at that time, I suggested that specific steps could be taken to make the W&L faculty more ideologically diverse.

In our current web postings we will be examining the question of what constitutes a quality liberal arts curriculum in the 21st century and the extent to which Washington and Lee is fulfilling the challenge of providing such a program. We are not experts on the issue of what constitutes a quality, liberal arts education, but we think this question needs to be asked, particularly in light of courses offered at W&L and elsewhere which may be driven by identity politics (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) or be of questionable value. We are not opposed to these topics being discussed, but question the value of entire courses dedicated to these subjects.

In my lead essay this time, I have suggested that a thorough knowledge of Western Civilization and Culture should be the "core" basis of a quality liberal arts education. Such an emphasis does not exclude the study of other civilizations and cultures but, instead, provides a base line for other studies. During my own academic career, I have studied four languages, two modern and two ancient, and have taken a number of courses in the study of various civilizations and cultures. I have also taught the history of various cultures and civilizations. I certainly appreciate all of them, but derive my appreciation of these other cultures from my grounding in Western Civilization and culture.

There are other articles and letters on the current website which focus on curricular and co-curricular matters. One of these is my earlier essay on "Dumbing Down the Curriculum" at Washington and Lee, which lists a number of courses of questionable value which have been or are currently being taught. Another of these has to do with an article published in September, 2018 by three Washington and Lee History professors on Confederate monuments and a response by W&L alum, Jim Greene, class of 1960. It is hoped that this conversation and other articles and letters which we have posted will lead to feedback to our website. All that one need do is hit the "Contact Us" button and provide your input. We encourage people of all points of view to contact us. From time to time, we will publish some of the responses which we receive.

We have noticed that when we initially posted our website, we received numerous "hits" and comments within the first week or so. After that, the hits and comments slowed down a good bit.

We encourage folks to look at the website at least every month or so to see what is new on the site. Indeed, since our initial posting, we have added another feature entitled "Recent News". By clicking on this tab, you will discover information about recent developments at the university and/or in the broader world of higher education and how The Generals Redoubt has responded to these developments. Whenever the "Recent News" section is revised, there will be a new "Editor's Corner" which will guide you to new developments. The "Editor's Corner" will also provide you a guide to new articles and letters on the website.

As far as recent news, we have some "bad news" and some "good news". The bad news, as far as we are concerned, is a petition by a number of law students to have the option of removing the portraits of George Washington and Robert E. Lee removed from their diplomas. The Generals Redoubt is unalterably opposed to providing such an option. Read the full petition and TGR's response under "Recent News".

The good news is that we are circulating our opposition to the law petition to all elements of the Washington and Lee community. We believe this issue may be a galvanizing one for all those who wish to preserve the history, values, and traditions of W&L.

Another piece of good news is that Heather MacDonald, noted speaker and author, has agreed to come to the university in March to present a talk on current issues in higher education. We will provide more details in the near future.

The Generals Redoubt continues to seek ways to communicate with all elements of the W&L community and has had several meetings with administrators, students, and faculty to further this goal. One of our objectives is to set up a series of public, campus wide forums/discussions on current issues facing the university. We are hopeful that these can take place in the not too distant future, but so far the response from the University has been underwhelming. However, we will not give up in our effort to see that the history, values, and traditions of the university are upheld and that Washington and Lee marches proudly and boldly into the future.

Neely Young
Editor, The Generals Redoubt website