

Third-Party Comment Form

HOW TO FILE A THIRD-PARTY COMMENT WITH WSCUC

1. Carefully read the ‘Submitting and Processing Third-Party Comments’ section of the WSCUC [Complaints and Third-Party Comments Policy](#) (pages 6-7).
2. Use the attached Third-Party Comment Form to submit a comment. You must complete all applicable sections of the form before the comment will be reviewed.
3. You may attach additional sheets of paper if you need more space. Include with the form any copies of documents and supporting materials that pertain to your comment. (50 page limit).
4. Mail or email your Third-Party Comment Form and any additional documentation or supporting materials to the address below.

Third-party identification

Please take careful note of the information in the Complaints and Third-Party Comments Policy regarding the declaration of identity on this form.

THIRD PARTY COMMENT REVIEW PROCESS

1. Third-party comments are reviewed by Commission staff after receiving the Third-Party Comment Form and supporting documents. Normally, no response is made to the commenter. If appropriate, staff may contact the commenter for clarification or additional information.
2. Commission staff will determine the appropriate course of review and action on the comment which may include, but is not limited to: sending the information to the institution, with or without the commenter’s name for its information or follow up; referring the information or a summary of issues to a future review team; holding the information in a file for future reference, or disregarding the information and taking no action.

If you have further questions, please contact:

WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)
985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100
Alameda CA 94501
Phone: 510-748-9001 x 300
Web: www.wscuc.org
Email: wscuc@wscuc.org

COMMENTER INFORMATION:

- I wish to remain anonymous
- I am identifying myself to WSCUC but do not wish to share my identity with the institution in question
- You may share my identity with the institution in question

Third-Party Commenter Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

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INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

University or college named in the complaint:

Complainant's relationship to the university or college named above:

- Student Faculty Staff
- Other (please state): _____

Current status of relationship with university or college:

- Enrolled Graduated Withdrawn On Leave
- Resigned Terminated Employed
- Other (please state): _____

What is the basis of your comment?

Please provide any comment about the institution's quality or effectiveness.

Date: _____

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/18/harvey-mudd-cancels-classes-after-student-protests-over-issues-race-workload-and>

Ground to a Halt

Harvey Mudd College canceled classes for two days after sit-in and protests over issues of race, workload and a leaked report in which faculty appeared to be insulting students.

By

[Jeremy Bauer-Wolf](#)

April 18, 2017

The circumstances that led to protests and a two-day shutdown of classes at Harvey Mudd College have been brewing for years -- long bottled-up tensions about workload, race issues and a new and painful student mistrust of the faculty.

Monday and Tuesday this week, the California college will not hold classes, the cancellation following a student sit-in last week at the campus, where minority students issued demands to administration -- among them to funnel more money into counseling services, specifically geared toward students of color, and to prioritize minority student groups with funding and other perks.

Students didn't ask for a cancellation, but rather the college did so to allow students and faculty members time either to consider some of the persisting issues on campus or to recuperate after a tense few weeks, Maria Klawe, the college's president, said in a phone interview.

The move is highly unusual. Even as many campuses face tensions on race and other issues, it is rare to shut down for even a day as a result.

The elite science and engineering-centric institution has suffered a string of misfortunes with the deaths of three students since last July, prompting fresh grief among the campus community every time, Klawe said. The latest, a beloved campus leader with a sunny disposition, was found dead in his room from undetermined causes. The other two students died in separate car accidents. Harvey Mudd enrolls about 800 students, and such deaths affect the tight-knit community deeply, Klawe said.

Last month, too, a controversial report regarding student workload and faculty opinion of students leaked to the student newspaper, *The Student Life*. A committee examining the college's classroom environment commissioned a study from the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College in Indiana. Two representatives from the center visited campus and conducted focus groups with students and faculty members.

Their findings: students expressed distress over their assignments, some reporting they fretted their showers were too lengthy because they needed more time to work, or they dreaded the prospect of getting sick, because they'd fall behind.

Harvey Mudd eight years ago revised its core curriculum, cutting it back from four semesters of courses to three and allowing for more elective classes. It was a measure that faculty and administrators believed would reduce student workload and stresses, and they were frustrated to learn it was not successful after many months of planning, Klawe said.

Some faculty members, meanwhile, told the interviewers that students were not prepared for their classes, and that they'd observed deterioration in the quality of students accepted to Harvey Mudd over the years. They described students as wed to their phones and not committed to the sciences.

Klawe said that the center didn't capture a proper sample of either students or faculty members. The report focused on people with complaints to assure they wouldn't be missed, but the final report lacked balance and presented it as representative of all faculty members' opinions -- which was not the case, she said.

Faculty viewed the report, but it was withheld from the students to avoid the hurt feelings that would come from the faculty's comments -- all were anonymous, Klawe said.

Still, someone provided it to the student newspaper, and a story on the so-called Wabash report was published two weeks ago, the same day that a memorial service for one of the students was being held on campus.

Students read the story, and later some of them printed out jumbo-size versions of the more stinging remarks from professors included in the report and plastered them to the president's house and faculty members' offices.

Later that week, students organized a march around campus and presented administrators with their demands. They want five new counselors for the coming academic year, with three of them being people of color, "to reflect the increasing need of health and wellness initiatives at Mudd to reflect and serve its diversifying student body," the students [wrote on a website](#) detailing their requests.

Funding for mental health services should be boosted every year by 25 percent, they wrote, until the 2021-22 academic year. They called for a release of the student affairs office's budget, and additional money -- \$3,000 each -- for six student groups that represent minority interests on campus.

The administration also should carve out dedicated spaces in the college's new academic building for each of these six groups, they wrote.

When administrators didn't respond to the demands, Klawe said, the students staged the sit-in April 12.

Students who staged the sit-in did not respond to interview requests. FEMUnion at Harvey Mudd, a student group that advocates for women in science, technology, mathematics and

engineering fields, wrote in a Facebook message to *Inside Higher Ed* that the student organizers “were tired” and did not wish to be interviewed.

Klawe compromised on some of the student requests at the sit-in.

She will provide \$1,500 to each of the six minority student groups, a one-time allocation, with the administrators willing to consider it in future years depending on how the money is used. This comes in addition to the money student groups affiliated with the college already receive.

The student affairs budget will be sent to students by the end of the week, once the college figures out how to shield the salaries of the employees of the division.

The college will also formulate a proposal for increasing mental health services this week, and establishing a space for the student groups elsewhere on campus, though not necessarily a separate place for each one, Klawe said.

Klawe described the significant shifts that have occurred on campus in the past decade -- white men have historically dominated at the college -- until it attempted to diversify the campus, a campaign that has seen relative success.

While leadership there has recruited more women -- to the point where they comprise nearly 50 percent of the student body -- gains in the numbers of Hispanic and black students were sluggish until recent years, Klawe said. As a college recognized for its sciences, Harvey Mudd competes with institutions like Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both with higher profiles.

With this diversity comes growing pains, and practices that benefited what was the traditional Harvey Mudd student still linger, but are being identified.

Students pointed out a couple years ago that all lecturers in a campus speaker series were white men, Klawe said. In a required, basic course for engineering majors, women performed poorly until the college tweaked how it was taught, bringing in a hands-on component in which students built mini robots that could function underwater. The same mathematics concepts were being taught, but in a way that would appeal and allow women to thrive, Klawe said.

Like with many institutions nationwide, the results of the presidential election upset the campus population, according to Klawe, and so, in a largely positive step, conversations on campus have become more “radicalized” and have centered more than ever on social justice reforms.

Some faculty spent Monday afternoon in a training learning more about sensitivity toward minority groups and women.

“We’re trying very hard to listen,” Klawe said.

Read more by [Jeremy Bauer-Wolf](#)



Students at Harvey Mudd

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/even-harvey-mudd-a-math-and-science-college-has-surrendered-to-the-social-justice-movement>

Even Harvey Mudd, a Math and Science College, Has Surrendered to the Social Justice Movement

by [Alice B. Lloyd, Staff Writer](#)

April 20, 2017 10:35 AM

"The odds are good, but the goods are odd," an embarrassed daughter's dad noted of Harvey Mudd as the Claremont tour guide walked us past the science-and-engineering-focused campus of the five-college consortium. Harvey Mudd, in those days, was still mostly male. Single ladies at Scripps, Claremont's women's college, would have their pick of the poindexters—as would young women at coed colleges Pitzer, Pomona, and Claremont McKenna who'd tired of competing for better-sunned boyfriends.

In the 10 years since then, everything's changed: Women made up 55 percent of Harvey Mudd's most recent graduating class in computer science, whereas in the approximate era of that aforementioned dad joke women comprised a meager 10 percent of the [discipline](#). (If you're inclined to weep for the past, take heart that Emma Willard girls are, to the best of knowledge, received as goddesses at the still 69-percent-male Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute—although, come to think of it, that was 10 years ago, too.) A corresponding push to recruit more minority students has also changed the makeup of the historically male, historically pale Harvey Mudd—resulting in dramatic demographic shifts over the last half [decade](#). The protest that shut down HMC, leading president Maria Klawe to cancel classes Monday and Tuesday of this week was, evidently, a long time coming.

Demographic overhaul, racial grievance, and disagreements about a burdensome workload boiled over when the student paper published a leaked internal report on March 24—a [two-year-old self-study](#) the college commissioned from the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College in Indiana to survey attitudes about student work. In focus groups that contributed to the so-called Wabash Report, some faculty members complained, anonymously, of students' diminishing capacity for hard work—while students complained of an "oppressive curriculum."

According to [Insider Higher Ed](#): "Students read the story, and later some of them printed out jumbo-size versions of the more stinging remarks from professors included in the report and plastered them to the president's house and faculty members' offices."

On April 12, a student-led sit-in—backed by [demands](#) that the administration ramp up mental health counseling, particularly for minority students—won on two counts. President Klawe will provide additional funding to six student affinity groups: BLAM, SPLS, APISPAM, THEY/THEM, PRISM, and FEMunion (no, [really](#)). The college also plans to add to mental health services, the crux of students' grievances being a disregard for students', particularly minority students', mental and emotional needs. So deep is this disregard on the college's part that they've pushed students to protest, at the expense of their studies: "The college perpetuates mental health issues by making it necessary for marginalized students to expend time and energy

into crafting statements, holding acts of protest, and demanding increased institutional support at the expense of time and energy being devoted towards the college's rigorous academic curriculum," according to the students' list of [grievances](#).

Harvey Mudd, like Cal Tech, Carnegie Mellon, and MIT, has a more competitive admissions rate for men (10 percent) than women (23 percent); of the four, Mudd boasts the broadest [gap](#). The student body as whole is now 46 percent female, up from 31 percent in [2005](#). An ambitious curricular redesign eight years ago aimed to allow students more time for electives, to make more room for academic and extracurricular exploration—and to entice the feminine mindset into masculine disciplines (h/t [Larry Summers](#)). Emphases on group projects made a required introductory course in computer science, key to Mudd's rigorous Core, a more attractive gateway to the discipline. The same course, formerly so dry that professors drew straws for it per the *Los Angeles Times* January write-up on Mudd's gender revolution, was altered to incorporate engaging projects and group work: "In the revamped curriculum, instead of having computer science students write arcane code, professors started giving them fun group puzzles and 3-D graphics to create their own games," and, "they used algorithms to solve evolution questions and analyze DNA sequences."

There are those who thrill at the thought of Harvey Mudd's tripping over itself in a rush to diversify the student body, noting that the original model, made "for white men," worked just fine for a happy half century—until it had to be altered, to accommodate the unqualified. But to mourn the patriarchy is to overlook an even more modern catalyst for students' current freakout than the overdue fallout from counting by race and sex. In the leaked report, professors complain of "coddled" students not impelled by a passion for science, but staring out dead-eyed awaiting instruction. One said, "There's a question about ability vs. motivation. The demographics of our students have changed over time. I feel like our students are not as sold on a discipline in college. They come here and say, 'I'll do what they tell me.' They're not interested in science body and soul, and they don't want to immerse themselves." Math and science for math and science's sake do not grip them as they once did: These kids need a higher, socially-engaged reason to conduct whatever project.

Are they overworked—or uninspired? Either way, per some professors, they're over-sensitive and easily cowed under pressure. One noted that, "I spend a lot more time and energy trying to make it interesting for students." While another said, "Students are different today. They don't know how to fail; they're coddled." Students, for their part, reported callous comments from faculty, typical of the gruff mathematician who is "emotionally unintelligent" per the modern parlance. One said, of a particular department, "They provide negative motivation to learn."

However the whole mess shakes out, the pale and reliably dateless—the emotionally unintelligent champion mathlete who won't think twice before asking, "Didn't you learn this in high school?"—still has a home at Harvey Mudd, it seems. The faculty, unlike the student body, is still 62 percent male. The public-facing, prettier tech world is also working on its "EQ"—that's the irritating shorthand for "emotional intelligence" (here's looking at you, [Zuckerberg](#))—and worrying, but never [enough](#), about gender parity. It's only natural, really, that an increasingly, ahem, feminine Harvey Mudd would halt for two days in April to talk, oh so uncomfortably, about its feelings.

January 1, 2018

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/debra-mashek/>

Debra Mashek, Executive Director

Debra has spent two decades studying how people form relationships with each other. She earned a BS in psychology/biology in 1997 from Nebraska Wesleyan University. She received both an MA (1999) and PhD (2002) in social/health psychology with an emphasis in quantitative methods from Stony Brook University. After completing a three-year postdoctoral fellowship at George Mason University, she moved to the Claremont Colleges, where she served 13 years as a Professor of Psychology in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts at Harvey Mudd College (HMC). She has published over 30 academic articles and chapters, and has edited two academic books. She has won multiple awards at both local and national levels for her teaching; her favorite courses to teach are *Psychology of Collaboration*, *Intellectual Virtues*, and *I'm Right; You're Wrong*.

In addition to her strengths in research and teaching, Mashek has broad experience in university administration and systems change. After receiving tenure in 2011, Mashek served three years as HMC's Associate Dean for Faculty Development. Later, at the behest of the Deans of the seven Claremont Colleges, she directed grant-funded efforts to better leverage the colleges' collective potential on the academic front. Based on the successes of that project, Mashek was charged with launching the new Office of Consortial Academic Collaboration, which serves five undergraduate colleges and two graduate institutions. As the principal of Cogit8 Consulting, she works with clients to cultivate the collaborative capacity of individuals, teams, and organizations. She is an experienced administrator who practices shared leadership to ensure team members are able and eager to contribute their talents and expertise to their work.

Mashek describes herself as a heterodox enthusiast who values, seeks out, and creates open inquiry and viewpoint diversity both professionally and personally. Although she was reluctant to leave her tenured professorship at a top liberal arts school, Mashek is powerfully drawn to the mission of Heterodox Academy. The polarization on campuses leaves her worried about the very foundations of the academic enterprise. [She became the first Executive Director of Heterodox Academy in January 2018.](#)

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/why-im-leaving-the-academy-to-help-save-it/>

Debra Mashek is Heterodox Academy's Executive Director. She has a PhD in Social Health and Psychology (with a concentration in Quantitative Methods) from State University of New York at Stony Brook and served as a Professor in Psychology at Harvey Mudd College.

Dear Members of Heterodox Academy,

I landed my dream job in 2005. For the past 13 years I have been on the faculty at Harvey Mudd College, an elite liberal arts school with an intense focus on the STEM disciplines. Every single day I get to work alongside incredible students and colleagues—faculty, staff, and administrators—who inspire and impress in thought, deed, and spirit. And, now, I'm stepping away from the campus, community, and career I cherish.

Why? Because, as one who loves the academy, values inclusivity, and celebrates the ideals of a liberal arts education, I worry that the lack of ideological diversity on American college campuses (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) has undermined their core academic mission. I am heading to Heterodox Academy to be part of the solution.

I am cautious here of sounding alarmist: students still learn and grow on America's college campuses, professors still do great research. But, it is also true that more and more of us feel we cannot engage as freely or publicly with ideas as we did just a few years ago. Faculty members are walking on eggshells. After a faculty meeting in which I encouraged administrators to include viewpoint diversity in a forthcoming grants program to support diversity on campus, I received comments from a handful of colleagues applauding the ask while also acknowledging their own hesitation to support it publicly. Colleagues drop by every few weeks for closed door conversations about how they, too, are looking for ways to improve campus climate by opening discourse. Two different professor friends reported that other members of their faculties labeled them as fascist and racists, respectively, for asking questions in public spheres. And members of two hiring committees (two different disciplines on two different campuses) wondered whether the political leanings of candidates were unduly shading hiring discussions.

Perhaps as a function of my position at a science-focused school, my mind often returns to the idea of systems. Roughly defined, a system responds to stimuli to produce some output. The thermostat is a very basic example: sensors detect temperature and tell the AC to blow cool air if the temperature exceeds a preset value.

Today, the campus climate system is broken. There are a lot of assumptions within higher education about what qualifies as acceptable stimulus and what sets off alarms. A small range of socio-political views are communally endorsed as reasonable and valid. All views that fall outside that restricted range are either vilified or ignored. Ideas that stand in contrast to orthodoxies are not explored with the curiosity, openness, and care that would enable students to engage meaningfully with the ideas.

Rather than doing the challenging work of thinking through how a novel position might contain a piece of the truth, difference is coded as offense. Rather than asking each other, “How do you see it?,” the impulse is to assert, “Here’s how you should see it.”

The notion of proportionality seems to have all but evaporated. Even trace amounts of ideological difference in a classroom or on a campus can exceed somebody’s [threat threshold](#) and get labeled as bigoted or fascist. In this context, there’s no such thing as a false positive: if someone [feels that a violation has occurred](#) and makes an accusation, the accused is therefore guilty and [few will come to his or her defense](#).

We need to give each other the benefit of the doubt more often. We can’t know with such certainty what sort of “offenses” should be coded as threat, bad, wrong, unreasonable, or unjust. We need to do be slower to judge for many reasons, including credibility (the boy who cried wolf), sustainability ([daily outrage isn’t healthy](#)), and de-escalation (I genuinely worry what choices will present themselves as the new Level 10 response in the wake of offense).

I am worried about the academy I love. It is not a happy or healthy place. Threats are coming from all sides. Trust between students, faculty, and administrators is decreasing. For these reasons I am leaving a tenured professorship and stepping in to lead Heterodox Academy as its inaugural Executive Director.

Heterodox Academy is a non-partisan, non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of research and education in universities by increasing viewpoint diversity, mutual understanding, and constructive disagreement. Its membership consists of over 1,500 professors, all of whom have affirmed a commitment to support viewpoint diversity in their academic fields, at their institutions, and in their classrooms.

Why does viewpoint diversity matter to the core academic missions of colleges? Many college mission statements talk about the desire to make a positive impact on society. We want our students to go out and change the world. Yet, we will surely fall short as educators if we don’t develop in our students the habits of heart and mind necessary to understand diverse viewpoints, to consider (and reconsider) their own viewpoints, and to engage constructively with others.

All of us—both within the academy and beyond— need deep, authentic exposure to perspectives that differ from our own. We need to try to understand those perspectives, even when we find them perplexing and troubling. We need practice changing our views in response to challenge and critique. We need experience challenging others’ views—civilly, constructively—and pulling them into conversation. We need to fail sometimes in our efforts to do so in order to learn the limits of evidence and reason. And then sometimes we need to succeed, so as to learn what approaches actually work when talking with real human beings who are just as flawed as we are.

In response to rising ideological polarization and tribalism in the academy and beyond, calls have intensified for ways to depolarize communities and to foster cultures of mutual understanding across differences. At Heterodox Academy, we have developed tools to do just that. As the first Executive Director of Heterodox Academy, I am eager to partner with professors and administrators from across the country who want to equip their institution to

thrive in this age of outrage, and who want to prepare their students to become strong and productive citizens in the polarized democracy that awaits them after graduation.

This year Heterodox Academy will cultivate vibrant networks of engaged scholars and teachers who are interested in advancing knowledge and practice around viewpoint diversity, develop tools that professors and administrators can adapt to support viewpoint diversity within their local contexts, and engage in the broader social discourse about viewpoint diversity, mutual understanding, and constructive disagreement. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate with members of Heterodox Academy who wish to contribute their time and talents to our critical mission. Stay tuned for information about opportunities to get involved.

Warmly,

Deb Mashek

February 6, 2017

Dan ~

Given how long I waited for your response to my queries (and in large part, I am still waiting), I hope that you will be understanding of the fact that I have also taken some time to get back to you.

I credit my ability to parse and decompose your message to my Harvey Mudd education ~ the math, physics, and engineering staff taught me to think analytically (chemistry was **NOT** my strong suit), and Professor Wickes taught me to read critically.

In reading through your e-mail (which, I contend, was **NOT** a response to my questions), I was struck by two dominating thoughts:

- a) it read to me like something that had been written by someone who has for too long been comfortably cloistered in a campus context (Prof Wickes also taught me alliteration), away from the realities for which you claim to be preparing your students; and
- b) I was reminded of two pieces of literature from the mid-20th Century (indicating that these communication issues are not really new). However, I suspect that you are unfamiliar with both of them.

The first is the quite famous book, Foundation, written by Isaac Asimov (who was a scientist in his own right, a professor of biochemistry at Boston University), copyright 1951. This book is divided into five "Parts," each of which consists of a number of sections. In Part II, "The Encyclopedists," section 5, there is a fascinating discussion of the application of symbolic logic ~ a particular academic and professional specialty of mine ~ to written (and, for that matter, spoken) language. As I read your message, and applied logic and generalized semantics to it, I was also reminded of a statement made by a former colleague of mine, a retired USAF Colonel and former test pilot: *There's no "there" there!*

What you wrote (duplicated at the end of this message) was simply not responsive to the specifics of what I asked. Lots of words, but more obfuscating than clarifying. After my prolonged patience, I was hoping for more substance.

The second, and probably much-less-known piece of literature that your message brought to my mind is a longish short-story (novella?) called "Metamorphosite," by Eric Frank Russell, copyright 1946. This piece of speculative fiction is set in mankind's far distant future, and, especially considering the copyright date, it is amazingly prescient. Here is a small portion that is quite pertinent to how I read your message:

Helman's lean face went a shade darker. His long, slender hands clenched and unclenched while his disciplined mind exerted itself to suppress the retort which his emotions strove to voice.

Then he said, "Citizens of the Empire don't run away from it. Those who do run don't get very far."

"A denial and an affirmative," commented Harold amusedly. "All in one breath. You can't have it both ways. Either they run or they don't."

"You know perfectly well what I meant." Helman, speaking slowly and evenly, wasn't going to let this specimen bait him. "The desire to flee is as remote as the uselessness of it is complete."

"The former being due to the latter?"

"Not at all!" said Helman sharply.

"You damn your ramshackle Empire with every remark you make," Harold informed. "I reckon I know it better than you do."

"And how do you presume to know our Empire?" inquired Helman. His brows arched in sarcastic interrogation. "On what basis do you consider yourself competent to judge it?"

"On the basis of history," Harold told him. ...

I found several examples of denial / affirmation in your message, and that should worry you, and the rest of the HMC administration, as it is *prima facie* evidence of a poorly-thought-through, and possibly unsupportable position.

As a more contemporary insight, I will refer you to the formal farewell speech that President Barack Obama gave on January 10, 2017, in which he reiterated a theme that he had previously brought up during several of his "farewell tour" speeches:

None of this is easy. For too many of us, it's become safer to retreat into our own bubbles, whether in our neighborhoods or college campuses or places of worship or our social media feeds, surrounded by people who look like us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. The rise of naked partisanship, increasing economic and regional stratification, the splintering of our media into a channel for every taste – all this makes this great sorting seem natural, even inevitable. And increasingly, we become so secure in our bubbles that we accept only information, whether true or not, that fits our opinions, instead of basing our opinions on the evidence that's out there.

This trend represents a third threat to our democracy. Politics is a battle of ideas; in the course of a healthy debate, we'll prioritize different goals, and the different means of reaching them. But without some common baseline of facts; without a willingness to admit new information, and concede that your opponent is making a fair point, and that science and reason matter, we'll keep talking past each other, making common ground and compromise impossible.

Although I have not been a supporter of this president, these two paragraphs merit multiple rereading and serious thought, considering different verbal emphases.

You may claim to be working against the divisions, but in an example of denial / affirmation, you allow, even support and enable people to self-segregate into bubbles where their ideas are not challenged (and you might want to review some of H. L. Mencken's comments on education and politics). Not that you are alone in supporting this self-segregation; every group that identifies social, ethnic, religious, etc., differences (e.g., whatever-Americans, XYZ-community members) also does so. But, by your own admission ~ "a small, but growing, number of student organizations that represent the increasing diversity of our student body" and "our identity-specific student organizations" ~ **YOU ARE CULPABLE IN THE DIVISIVENESS.**

So, in line with President Obama's statements, I am hereby challenging your assumptions and offering you some different perspectives.

I contend that Harvey Mudd College, through these "safe zone" (and related) activities,

- a) is adding to the fears and the divisions that are rending this country so terribly and so detrimentally,
- b) is feeding into and reinforcing these "bubbles" that only serve to widen the gaps in understanding and appreciation that you claim (illogically, to me) somehow to be helping,
- c) is contributing to a false sense of accomplishment, progress, and future security, while in fact it is really adding to the problem, and
- d) is **VIOLATING** many of the basic principles of science and sociology in that you are experimenting with human populations (bad enough in itself), and you are not (for obvious reasons) doing it according to the "scientific method," which would include control groups, identified metrics of performance, and repeatability.

History is replete with examples that demonstrate this principle: *PEOPLE ARE NOT BROUGHT TOGETHER BY IDENTIFYING AND EMPHASIZING THEIR DIFFERENCES, AND THEY DO NOT LEARN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES BY LIVING IN THEIR "BUBBLES"!*

If HMC *REALLY* wants to bring people together in a sense of common acceptance and, to use a phrase, collegiality, it should work to establish a mindset in which the entire campus is a “safe zone.” But that is *NOT* what I see reflected in your message.

I would further contend that this collegial mindset was, in fact, the manner in which the Class of 1969 was initiated into becoming members of the Harvey Mudd community ~ and we were a community, warts and all ~ when we were told that we had to live up to the precepts of behavior in the HMC student “Honor Code” (Do you even have that anymore?), and to avoid behaviors that would be found to be “conduct unbecoming of a Harvey Mudd student.” We had to agree to this before we signed The Book at the end of orientation week, we were expected to comply with the rules and standards, and we were held accountable and faced consequences if we violated the standards.

And perhaps that’s where the breakdown has really occurred. Perhaps HMC, like so many other academic institutions, no longer *HAS, IMPOSES, EXPECTS, OR ENFORCES* the rules and standards that knit a bunch of adolescent strangers into a community.

Do you hold the students accountable academically, but *NOT* sociologically or ethically?

What kinds of engineers would you be producing if they were not aware of, and if they did not comply with and adhere to, standards? In engineering, accountability is both essential and unavoidable.

Of course, there were those who did not want to be in that community as their social unit ~ some left HMC, and some just self-isolated ~ and that was also OK. But as is evident at every reunion, many of us did feel bonded, to the school and to each other.

Obviously, you cannot impose attitudes, inclinations, or beliefs, but you *CAN* establish an acknowledged and verbalized expectation of behaviors, and you *CAN* impose and enforce ethical standards of how those young people who are privileged to attend HMC interact with each other and with students from the other Claremont campuses. If you set expectations, and insist on them for the time that the students are under your sway, you *WILL* influence how they behave after they have departed.

Of course, this holistic approach is much more difficult than chopping things up into bite-sized pieces. But since Biblical times, it has been recognized that the body is made up of disparate parts (1st Corinthians 12:12-31), which have distinct roles that must work together for the common good.

STOP CHOPPING UP THE STUDENT BODY. Even Victor Frankenstein could not successfully put the pieces back together.

So what if it’s harder to do it in a way that has greater promise (based on history) of being effective? Sure it’s easier and more comfortable to just go along with the

prevailing “cultural trance,” but is *THAT* what Harvey Mudd College wants to be known for? I suggest that you consider the line spoken by Tom Hanks, as manager Jimmy Dugan in the movie, A League of Their Own: ***It’s supposed to be hard! If it wasn’t hard, everyone would do it. The “hard” is what makes it GREAT!***

If Harvey Mudd College wants to be seen as great, especially over time, and for more than just producing excellent technical personnel (once part of the vision of the school), perhaps it should tackle the hard stuff in a manner that can be effective.

OK, if you have read this far, I offer you my congratulations. I am sure that much of what I have written has not been the happiest of reading for you. But all these thoughts are sincere and based on significant thought and consideration, and considerable experience.

If you (individually or corporately) would like to continue or extend or dispute any of this with me, I would certainly be available to do so.

In addition, since all of this was originally initiated by a solicitation for funds, I must also add that I am still unwilling to pledge or provide any additional funding to Harvey Mudd until such time as you (again, individually or corporately) either satisfactorily respond to the questions I posed back in November 2016, or demonstrate objectively that the approach that you are espousing does not do the various disservices that I have alluded to in this (and previous) messages.

Regards,

Andy ~ HMC’69

Andrew M. Kaye

Chantilly, VA

703-401-537 (cell)

Copy of the nonresponsive e-mail that I received on the evening of Saturday, 31 December, 2016, from Daniel Macaluso, with Christine Harrison on the cc line.

Hello, Andy.

Thank you for your messages inquiring what HMC is doing in regards to the national trend of having safe spaces on campus and seeking clarification about the purpose of such spaces. Please allow me to offer the following response in hopes of answering many of your questions. I have chosen to reply in narrative, rather than going point by point; this seems the best way to keep things in context and should touch on most of your questions.

Toward the end of your email, you make an important statement, “So, please consider, in the context of ‘safe zones,’ whether you are working toward bringing us together in common acceptance, or adding to the rampant divisions that have done so much destruction to our country in the past several decades.”

I think this is a good distinction, and want to assure you that Mudd is approaching diversity and inclusion in a similar fashion to how we have approached STEM education for more than 60 years. That is, we are working toward building community, not creating division. After all, we don’t separate chemists from biologists or engineers from mathematicians, but we educate across all disciplines so students have a broad understanding and appreciation for each of the scientific disciplines, regardless of the specific major they ultimately choose. A similar philosophy applies to our approach to diversity and inclusion.

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) works closely with Academic Affairs to develop programs and programming, with a focus on the entire student body, to help produce ethical, socially aware, and competent leaders; these are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent goals. While there are some places specifically seen as “safe spaces”, it’s important to remember that Mudd’s strong sense of overall community drives us to continually work to ensure that all programs—curricular and co-curricular—and support groups provide a safe environment that encourages dialogue—whether in favor or contrary to the subject at hand—among all members of the HMC community.

We are proud that HMC is home to a small, but growing, number of student organizations that represent the increasing diversity of our student body. These student organizations serve two primary purposes: first, to create welcoming spaces of support and community-building for those who identify as part of a specific community, and second, to build bridges and engage with fellow students and student organizations in a learning-oriented manner. All of our identity-specific student organizations are instrumental in helping all Mudders learn and grow in our increasingly diverse world, and are designed to support students—Latino, Black, Asian, first generation, LGBT+, and more—as they navigate the rigor and stress of Mudd, while also developing healthy identities.

The Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) supports many of these student organizations and also serves as a primary vehicle for social justice education on campus, through weekly workshops, dialogue programs, and trainings. The OID Center is a “safe space”, which we define as a space in which we have set the necessary preconditions for caring engagement (e.g. dialogue that takes into account peoples' identities and lived experiences). All students, faculty, and staff are welcome in our OID Center and to all OID events and programs, and OID's weekly workshops are incredibly well attended by students, faculty, and staff, representing a variety of backgrounds and interests.

Another example of a “safe space” on campus is the College’s first living-learning community (LLC) that was created within the new Wayne and Julie Drinkward Residence Hall. Students have dedicated this first LLC to exploring issues of social justice, diversity and inclusion. Its first residents are 24 students—from a variety of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds—who live together in a portion of the second floor. By sharing a living space, the residents have ongoing opportunity to engage in a shared theme outside the classroom. LLC student founders have already generated many conversations, discussions and educational opportunities on issues pertinent to HMC and to society.

In consideration of the Harvey Mudd mission statement, student founders have developed the following mission statement for the LLC:

Harvey Mudd’s Living-Learning Community seeks to maintain a safe space created by students, for all students, especially those that may feel marginalized on our campus; to foster open, passionate and intelligent discussions about social justice issues; to encourage students to become leaders in challenging these issues; and to vitalize Harvey Mudd College’s mission to inspire students to understand the impact of their work on society.

What I hope you will see in my response is that Mudd’s approach to building an inclusive environment is different from many of the other examples you have seen and heard about. Our approach is a direct charge coming from the second half of our mission statement: “...so that they may assume leadership in their fields with a clear understanding of the impact of their work on society.”

Please let me know if you have any additional questions relating to the information I have provided. In the meantime, I wish you a very Happy New Year.

Best...Dan

Dan Macaluso | Vice President for Advancement

Harvey Mudd College | 301 Platt Blvd, Claremont, CA 91711

Office: 909.607.7069 | Cell: 404.432.4566

Below is the text of a letter that I sent to “annual_giving@hmc.edu” with a cc to “alumni@hmc.edu” on 29 November 2016, and which I then *RE-SENT* to “development@hmc.edu,” “treasurer@hmc.edu,” and “communications@hmc.edu” when I received an auto-reply that the alumni e-mail address ~ which was the source of the original solicitation ~ would not accept my response.

Wayne, et al ~

Being situated, as I am, across the continent from HMC, I do not always have as clear a view of what is going on at the campus as I did when I lived in Southern California, but some of what I have been hearing on the local (and, incidentally, that “local” is also the US Capitol) news, I have begun to have some serious concerns about my *alma mater*.

Especially in light of the pending call for increased fund-raising (¶5 in your message), I hope that you (collectively) can provide me with clarification that will either confirm or allay those concerns.

Specifically, Harvey Mudd was identified in recent news reports coming out of Washington, DC, as having participated in establishing “safe zones” within the Claremont Colleges, including “safe zones” to protect against, e.g., excessive masculinity (or something very close to that phrasing) ~ but the reports were not detailed, and may have been muddled (pun intended) to some degree.

So, please enlighten me (and perhaps the entire alumni cadre) on the following points:

- a) Is HMC expending **RESOURCES** (financial, temporal, or infrastructural) to establish these “safe zones”?
- b) What **CONSTITUTES** a “safe zone”? Cute enough term, but obviously ambiguous!
- c) How many different **KINDS** of “safe zones” are there, and what are the discriminators and boundaries by which one is distinguished from another?
- d) What are the express / explicit **PURPOSES** of such “safe zones”?
- e) What are the minimal **THRESHOLD METRICS** by which the validity of the need for such a “safe zone” is established? Does anybody who wants one get it, or are there some who would be denied their desire for one?
- f) Who is **PERMITTED** to enter such a “safe zone,” who is **PROHIBITED** from doing so, how and by whom (i.e., by what authority, especially with respect to exclusions) are these permissions / prohibitions established and **ENFORCED**?
- g) To what degree, and in what manner, do such “safe zones” prepare and equip HMC students to **COPE WITH AND SUCCEED IN** the real world?

- h) To what degree, and in what manner, do such “safe zones” help to **BRING THE STUDENTS TOGETHER**? It seems to me that, by establishing yet another set of discriminators by which to separate us, they would serve more to highlight differences than to engender a feeling of oneness and camaraderie ~ that is, they become a sanctioned form of **AUTO-DISCRIMINATION AND SELF-SEGREGATION** (which are antithetical to diversity and inclusion).
- i) To what degree, and in what manner, did you query the **ALUMNI** ~ to whom you do make fund-raising appeals ~ regarding these matters, or did you constrain yourselves to the campus-cloistered community, with its somewhat worldly-inexperienced and horizon-limited perspectives? Students are inherently inexperienced, and instructors and administrators who have been within the campus community for more than a year or so do not have the same perspectives as those who are out in the professional working world. This is not to say that the personal experiences about which you heard were invalid or unimportant ~ but I would remind you that “the plural of anecdote is not data”!

When I entered HMC in the fall of 1965, we had only three females in our class, and all three of them graduated (although one was delayed by a year due to family issues); their 100% graduation rate was better than the guys did, and was accomplished without many of the “advantages” that today’s female students have. And I would add that, by succeeding **WITH** us, they became objects of admiration and inspiration to many of us.

Professionally, I have supervised, worked for, and worked with women who were both qualified and unqualified for their various positions, women both older than and younger than I was at the time. The qualified ones earned their positions by being good at what they did, and, by-and-large, did well; the unqualified ones were (predominantly) advanced into their positions **BECAUSE OF**, not in spite of, their gender, and only fed and nurtured the unfortunate stereotypes through their lack of ability and competency.

One of the values that I was brought up with, and which was reinforced at HMC back in the late 1960’s, was that **COMPETENCY IS MORE IMPORTANT** than age, gender, ethnicity, and so on down the “modern” list of discriminators. Is HMC moving, consciously or unconsciously, away from that fundamental standard? Shouldn’t HMC be a leader ~ perhaps even **THE** leader ~ in an effort to place **COMPETENCY** ahead of all these other factors?

As to the LGBT “community” that has emerged since I was at HMC, while I have no interest in participating in that “community,” I am not completely inured to it, either, having several members in my extended family. In fact, the best friend I have ever had is buried in Congressional Cemetery, on Capitol Hill, having died at an all-too-young age due to lifestyle-induced AIDS. And yes, he remained my friend, and yes, I have stayed at the apartment that he and his “partner” shared, so please do not consider

dumping me into a basket of homophobic deplorables. But establishing that group as a separate “community” only highlights the differences, and **DOES NOT** work to make us one common people, with an emphasis on what we have in common, rather than what makes us different.

So, please consider, in the context of “safe zones,” whether you are working toward bringing us together in common acceptance, or adding to the rampant divisions that have done so much destruction to our country in the past several decades.

Please feel free to share this with the HMC administration (President, Dean, Board members, etc.), and with whomever else you deem it appropriate (perhaps even students); I have cc'ed several of my classmates, whose insights and opinions I value (and whose e-mail addresses I have).

I look forward to your responses.

Andy Kaye, HMC'69
Chantilly, VA
703-401-5837 (cell)

College Community:

The Harvey Mudd College Board of Trustees conducted its Saddle Rock retreat Nov. 4-6. The focus for our retreat was the third pillar of the College's Strategic Vision: Unsurpassed Excellence and Diversity at All Levels. We began our dialogue with a presentation by Sumi Pendakur, chief diversity officer for the College, of both the historical and more recent events impacting diversity and inclusion on college campuses. Following the presentation, trustees held a discussion session around strategies to increase the diversity of the board across multiple dimensions.

On Saturday morning, several of our students shared their own personal stories and provided their thoughts and suggestions. These students were from a variety of communities underrepresented at both Harvey Mudd and within the STEM disciplines. Their stories were incredibly powerful and at times, very painful. Many of them are courageous path makers at our College, some choosing to attend despite being among only a handful of students like them on our campus when they enrolled. On behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank the students for their courage and to tell them that their concerns and suggestions were heard.

Trustees received updates on the development of pedagogy and curricular changes as well as co-curricular improvements that foster greater excellence for all students. Harvey Mudd has received a great deal of positive media attention for its efforts to develop more inclusive pedagogical practices, and we are seeing good results across the academic departments.

A panel of faculty, staff, students and trustees shared more on co-curricular changes and additional support services that have been made through the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and across The Claremont Colleges. Over the last several years, the College has added staff in DSA, including bringing the number of staff who live on campus from one to five, expanded the proctors and mentors program and embedded intentional training around diversity and inclusion, expanded health and wellness staff and programming, added peer academic liaisons in the dorms, and increased space and resources for the Office of Institutional Diversity. These improvements better support all of our students and help them both to thrive academically and to develop as whole people.

We ask the President's Cabinet to take up the suggestions made about additional fundraising to support student travel to professional meetings and conferences for greater networking opportunities. We also briefly heard from faculty about the upcoming external review of the Core Curriculum and ask that concerns raised by both students and faculty around workload and balance be shared as the faculty thinks about how those issues intersect. We look forward to hearing more about the external review after its completion in the 2017-2018 academic year.

In closing, the trustees are proud of the work the College community has done toward achieving this shared vision for Harvey Mudd, but we know there is more work ahead. As a group, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to unsurpassed excellence and diversity at all levels. It is clear from our conversations that academic excellence and diversity are interdependent. Given all that we have collectively achieved as an institution, now is the time for us to continue pushing forward to ensure that all our outstanding students can succeed and reach their full potential.

Thank you,



Wayne Drinkward '73
Chair, Harvey Mudd College Board of Trustees

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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American Mind September 10, 2021

Burying Standards

Harvey Mudd College has acceded to the worst impulses of the diversicrats.

[Christopher Sanfilippo](#)



Harvey Mudd College, in Claremont, California, ranks among America’s best STEM schools. Like most other elite academic institutions, the school has committed itself to diversity and social justice. It’s a commitment that has had questionable results.

In 2017, the College capitulated to student [demands](#) “to funnel more money into counseling services, specifically geared toward students of color, and to prioritize minority student groups with funding and other perks.” Last summer, angry students [forced](#) President Maria Klawe to release an official [statement](#) in which she affirmed that “*Black Lives Matter*” and that HMC must combat systemic racism with “anti-racism.”

An obsession with “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI) initiatives grips American universities. These initiatives aim to make universities more diverse and more accessible to the less privileged, but this obsession—and the worldview behind it—undermines education in both the classical and everyday senses of the term. It allows radical politics to stifle dissent, encourages activism over learning, and lowers standards. Harvey Mudd College has embraced the illiberal and anti-intellectual dogmas that dominate today’s left. Recent events exemplify this trend.

Anup [Gampa](#), hired last year as a professor of Psychology, [describes](#) himself as a “Marxist-queer-feminist...interested in understanding and dismantling systems of oppression.” He [stands](#) “in full solidarity [with calls to] entirely abolish the police.” Gampa’s radical politics mandate him to turn the classroom into a venue for activism. The “last thing,” Gampa proclaims, “I want to do [in the classroom] is talk about this stuff but not help students fight an actively racist, sexist, misogynistic society.” Rather than teach, he indoctrinates.

Brian Shuve, who has taught physics at Harvey Mudd since 2016, co-authored the “Particles for Justice” [statement](#) that called on academics to fight “white supremacy” in academia and claimed that black Americans do not have the “right to survive.” He privileges diversity over merit to [support](#) race and sex quotas in physics admissions and hiring policies. Shuve perversely insists that “to maximize objectivity while studying such a universal field...the physics community should reflect the demographics of our society.” Scientific standards of “objectivity” are explicitly subordinated to politics. The physics department [celebrates](#) Shuve’s activism.

Every job [posting](#) for new faculty contains the line, “your written materials should address your interests, experiences, and future plans with diversity, equity and inclusion.” The College will only hire scholars who have accepted these leftist dogmas.

DEI now affects virtually [every](#) aspect of the College. New students will be greeted with “anti-racism” sessions during orientation. Applicants are no longer required to submit SAT subject tests—“a policy change that is expected to remove a barrier to applying to the College and help further diversify its student body.” President Klawe [discourages](#) the enthusiasm, or “macho behavior,” of white male students so that others feel safe.

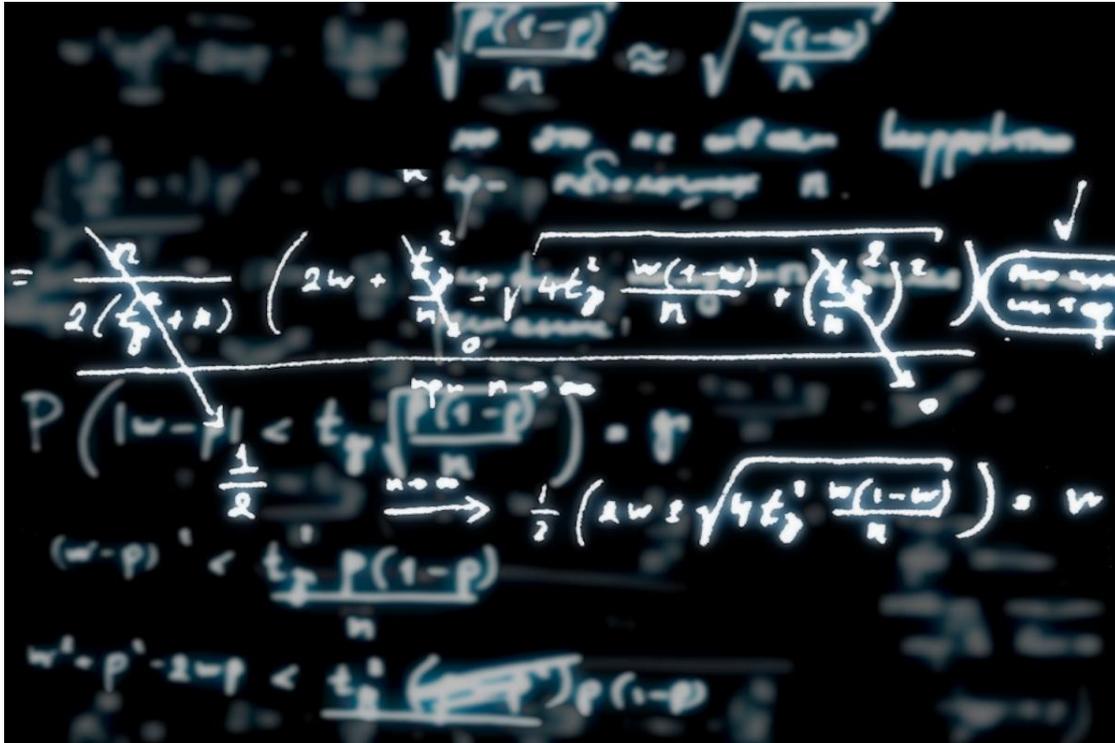
Klawe [prioritizes](#) diversity above all. “I was surprised,” she said in 2017, “to find out the meme around Harvey Mudd was that we are a merit-based institution and bringing in more women or people of color would mean lowering our standards.” But then, last semester, a new Core curriculum was adopted which significantly eased requirements. To “reduce student stress,” the new Core [drops](#) Electricity and Magnetism (still [required](#) at peer institutions like MIT) and Differential Equations—an essential course for all STEM disciplines. In addition, the new Core will add an “Impact Course...which will address the intersection of STEM and society”; this new course will surely have a strong social justice orientation. Klawe maintains that the new curriculum is unrelated to diversity-focused recruitment efforts, but it’s widely understood to be the motivation.

Klawe and her administration seem more concerned with student comfort than excellence, more concerned about the diversity of graduates than their achievements. She denies that diversity and merit are at odds, yet the evidence suggests otherwise.

The case of Harvey Mudd College aligns with the national trend toward an obsession with DEI at the expense of rigorous education. This obsession inevitably leads to lower standards and a confused blend of activism and education. The actions of the administration implicitly condone the radical activity and beliefs of the faculty. The College portrays itself as a vehicle for social justice; following its lead, the professors promote activism in the classroom.

The students of Harvey Mudd College must resist the encroachment of DEI on their education. They should speak out about professors who use their authority to politicize the classroom and demand that the administration not lower standards of education. Current faculty must fight the dilution of standards for tenure and the imposition of quotas for new hires. Alumni should refrain from donating to the college as long as its focus remains on social engineering rather than educational rigor. Otherwise there is no hope for the future of Harvey Mudd College as a standard of excellence, nor for the future of standards generally.

Quillette



As US Schools Prioritize Diversity Over Merit, China Is Becoming the World's STEM Leader



Percy Deift, Svetlana Jitomirskaya, and Sergiu Klainerman

19 Aug 2021

Percy Deift, Svetlana Jitomirskaya, and Sergiu Klainerman are professors of mathematics at, respectively, New York University, Georgia Institute of Technology and University of California Irvine, and Princeton University.

All three of us are mathematicians who came to the United States as young immigrants, having been attracted by the unmatched quality and openness of American universities. We came, as many others before and after, with nothing more than a good education and a strong desire to succeed. As David Hilbert famously said, “Mathematics knows no races or geographic boundaries; for mathematics, the cultural world is one country.” Having built our careers in US academia, we are proud to call ourselves American mathematicians.

The United States has been dominant in the mathematical sciences since the mass exodus of European scientists in the 1930s. Because mathematics is the basis of science—as well as virtually all major technological advances, including scientific computing, climate modelling, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and robotics—US leadership in math has supplied our country with an enormous strategic advantage. But for various reasons, three of which we set out below, the United States is now at risk of losing that dominant position.

First, and most obvious, is the deplorable state of our K-12 math education system. Far too few American public-school children are prepared for careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This leaves us increasingly dependent on a constant inflow of foreign talent, especially from mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and India. In a 2015 [survey](#) conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools and the Graduate Record Examinations Board, about 55 percent of all participating graduate students in mathematics, computer sciences, and engineering at US schools were found to be foreign nationals. In 2017, the National Foundation for American Policy [estimated](#) that international students accounted for 81 percent of full-time graduate students in electrical engineering at U.S. universities; and 79 percent of full-time graduate students in computer science.

That report also concluded that many programs in these fields couldn’t even be maintained without international students. In our field, mathematics, we find that at most top departments in the United States, at least two-thirds of the faculty are foreign born. (And even among those faculty born in the United States, a large portion are first-generation Americans.) Similar patterns may be observed in other STEM disciplines.

The second reason for concern is that the nationwide effort to reduce racial disparities, however well-intentioned, has had the unfortunate effect of weakening the connection between merit and scholastic admission. It also has served (sometimes indirectly) to discriminate against certain groups—mainly Asian Americans. The social-justice rhetoric used to justify these diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs is often completely at odds with the reality one observes on campuses. The concept of fighting “white supremacy,” in particular, doesn’t apply to the math field, since American-born scholars of all races now collectively represent a small (and diminishing) minority of the country’s academic STEM specialists.

Third, other countries are now competing aggressively with the United States to recruit top talent, using the same policies that worked well for us in the past. Most notably, China, America’s main economic and strategic competitor, is in the midst of an extraordinary, mostly successful, effort to improve its universities and research institutions. As a result, it is now able to retain some of the best Chinese scientists and engineers, as well as attract elite recruits from the United States, Europe, and beyond.

In a 2018 report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), China ranked [first](#) in mathematical proficiency among 15-year-olds, while the United States was in 25th place. And a recent large-scale [study](#) of adults’ cognitive abilities, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, found that many Americans lack the basic skills in math and reading required for successful participation in the economy. This poor performance can’t be explained by budgetary factors:

When it comes to education spending per pupil, the United States ranks [fifth](#) among 37 developed OECD nations.

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There are numerous underlying factors that help explain these failures—including some that, as mathematicians, we feel competent to address. One obvious problem lies in the way teachers are trained. The vast majority of K-12 math teachers in the United States are graduates of programs that teach little in the way of substantive mathematics beyond so-called [math methods](#) courses (which focus on such topics as “understanding the complexities of diverse, multiple-ability classrooms”). This has been true for some time. But the trend has become more noticeable in recent years, as curricula increasingly shift from actual mathematics knowledge to [courses](#) about [social justice](#) and identity politics.

At the same time, math majors—who can arrive in the classroom pre-equipped with substantive mathematics knowledge—must go through the process of teacher certification before they can teach math in most public schools, a costly and time-consuming prerequisite. The policy justification for this is that all teachers need pedagogical training to perform effectively. But to our knowledge, this claim isn’t supported by the experience of other advanced countries. Moreover, in those US schools where certification isn’t required, such as in many charter and private schools, math majors and PhDs are in great demand, and the quality of math instruction they provide is often superior.

Even if some pedagogical training is desirable, particularly for elementary-school teachers, it is easier for a math specialist to pick up teaching skills on the job than it is for a trained teacher to acquire fundamental math knowledge. Based on our own experience, the best high school teachers are typically those who have solid mathematics backgrounds and enjoy teaching math.

An even bigger problem, in our view, is that the educational establishment has an almost complete lock on the content taught in our schools, with little input from the university math community. This unusual feature of American policymaking has led to a constant stream of ill-advised and dumbed-down “reforms,” which have served to degrade the teaching of mathematics to such an extent that it has become difficult to distinguish a student who is capable from one who is not.

Those who find that last assertion difficult to accept should peruse the revised [Mathematics Framework](#) proposed by California’s Department of Education. If implemented, the California framework would do away with any tracking or differentiation of students up to the 11th grade. In order to achieve what the authors call “equity” in math education, the framework would [effectively close](#) the main pathway to calculus in high school to all students except those who take extra math outside school—which, in practice, means students from families that can afford enrichment programs (or those going to charter and private schools). California is just one state, of course. But as has been widely noted, when it comes to policymaking, what happens in California today often will come to other states tomorrow.

The framework proposed for California’s [10,588 public schools](#) and their six-million-plus students promotes “data science” as a preferred pathway, touting it as the mathematics of the 21st century. While this might sound like a promising idea, the actual “data-science” pathway described in the framework minimizes algebraic training to such an extent that it leaves students completely unprepared for most STEM undergraduate degrees. Algebra is essential to modern mathematics; and there is hardly any application of mathematics (including *real* data science) that is not based to a large extent on either algebra or calculus (with the latter being impossible to explain or implement without the former).

The authors [write](#) that “a fundamental aim of this framework is to respond to issues of inequity in mathematics learning”; that “we reject ideas of natural gifts and talents [and the] cult of the genius”; and

that “active efforts in mathematics teaching are required in order to counter the cultural forces that have led to and continue to perpetuate current inequities.” And yet the research they cite to justify these claims has been [demonstrated](#) to be shallow, misleadingly applied, vigorously disputed, or just plainly wrong. Even the specific model lessons offered in the proposed framework [fail to withstand basic mathematical scrutiny](#), as they muddle basic logic, present problems that can’t be solved by techniques described as being available to students, or list solutions without discussing the need for a proof (thus developing a false understanding of what it means to “solve” a problem—a misconception that university educators such as ourselves must struggle to undo).

The low quality of public K-12 math education in the United States has affected all demographic groups. But it has had a particularly strong negative effect on non-immigrant blacks and Hispanics, as well as young women of all races. This has led to a disappointing level of representation for these groups in STEM disciplines, which in turn has provoked understandable concern. We applaud efforts to address this problem, insofar as they help remove remaining obstacles and prejudices, and encourage more women and underrepresented minorities to choose careers in mathematics and other STEM disciplines.

Indeed, partly as a result of such steps, the representation of women in our profession has increased dramatically over the last 50 years.

But what started as a well-meaning and sometimes beneficial effort has, over time, transformed into a [bureaucratic](#) machine whose goal has gone well beyond fighting discrimination. The new goal is to eliminate disparities in representation by any means possible. This is why education officials in some school boards and cities—and even entire states, such as California and [Virginia](#)—are moving to scrap academic tracking and various K-12 [gifted programs](#), which they deem “inequitable.” Operating on the same motivations, many universities are abandoning the use of standardized tests such as the [SAT](#) and [GRE](#) in admissions.

This trend, which reaches across many fields, is especially self-defeating in mathematics, because declining standards in K-12 math education are now feeding into a vicious cycle that threatens to affect all STEM disciplines. As already noted, low-quality K-12 public-school education produces students who exhibit sub-par math skills, with underprivileged minorities suffering the most. This in turn leads to large disparities in admissions at universities, graduate programs, faculty, and STEM industry positions. Those disparities are then, in turn, condemned as manifestations of systemic racism—which results in administrative measures aimed at lowering evaluation criteria. This lowering of standards leads to even worse outcomes and larger disparities, thus pushing the vicious cycle through another loop.

The short-term fix is a quota system. But when applied to any supposedly merit-based selection process, quotas are usually counterproductive. Various [studies](#), which accord with our own experience in academia, show that placing talented students from underrepresented groups in math programs that are too advanced for their level of preparedness can lead to discouragement, and often even abandonment of the field. Typically, these students would be better served by slightly less competitive, more nurturing programs that accord with their objectively exhibited levels of performance.

Unfortunately, the trend is pointing in the opposite direction. In fact, at many of our leading academic and research institutions, including the [National Academies of Sciences](#), the [American Academy of Arts and Sciences](#), the [National Science Foundation](#), and the [National Institutes of Health](#), scientific excellence is being supplanted by diversity as the determining factor for eligibility in regard to prizes and other distinctions. And some universities, following the example of the [University of California](#), are now implementing measures to evaluate candidates for faculty positions and promotions based not only on the quality of their research, teaching, and service, but also on their specifically articulated

commitment to diversity metrics. Various institutions have even introduced [pathways](#) to tenure based on diversity activities alone. The potential damage such measures can bring to academic standards in STEM is immense. And the history of science is full of examples that show how performative adherence to a politically favored ideology, easily faked by opportunistic and mediocre scientists, can lead to the [devaluation](#) of entire academic fields.

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Needless to say, China pursues none of the equity programs that are sweeping the United States. Quite the contrary: It is building on the kind of accelerated, explicitly merit-based programs, centered on gifted students, that are being repudiated by American educators. Having learned its lesson from the Cultural Revolution, when science and merit-based education were all but obliterated in favor of ideological indoctrination, China is pursuing a far-sighted, long-term strategy to create a world-leading corps of elite STEM experts. In some strategically important fields, such as [quantum computing](#), the country is arguably already ahead of the United States.

As part of this effort, China is identifying and nurturing talented math students as early as middle school. At the university entrance level, China relies on a hierarchical, layered system based on a highly competitive, fairly administered, national exam. STEM disciplines are encouraged: According to the World Economic Forum, China has the highest number of [STEM grads](#) in the world—at least 4.7 million in 2016. (By comparison, the United States came in third at 569,000. And as noted previously, a large portion of these graduates are foreign nationals.) China also has vastly increased the quality of its top universities, with [six now ranked among the best 100 in the world](#). Tsinghua and Peking (ranked 17th and 18th respectively) now narrowly outrank Columbia, Princeton, and Cornell. As visitors to these Chinese universities (including ourselves) can attest, the average math undergraduate is now performing at a much higher level than his or her counterpart at comparable US institutions.

One reason for this is the work of scientists such as Shing-Tung Yau, a prominent Harvard mathematician who has spent decades helping to build up research mathematics in China. A key feature of the selective and consequential [undergraduate competitions](#) he's developed over the last 10 years is that students are encouraged to focus their studies precisely on the content they will need as research mathematicians. High placement in these competitions virtually guarantees a student a spot at a top graduate school, and the program thereby helps systematically attract talented people to mathematics.

More recently, another group of prominent mathematicians (including some based in the United States), acting with the help of the Alibaba technology conglomerate and the China Association for Science and Technology, have created a [global undergraduate mathematics competition](#) with similar features. High schoolers who excel in annual math olympiads also are fast-tracked into top university programs.

While China already produces [almost twice as many](#) STEM PhDs as the United States, its universities still lag their US counterparts with respect to the quality of their graduate education programs. This is why many talented Chinese scholars continue to enroll in US programs. But this talent flow will likely soon ebb, or even dry up completely, as Chinese universities are now actively attracting senior Chinese, US, and European scientists to their faculty. (And unlike their American institutional counterparts, they recruit on the merit principle, unhampered by ideologically dictated diversity mandates.) In some cases, we are seeing prominent mathematicians at good or even top US schools moving to Peking and Tsinghua Universities after long and successful US careers. Many of these scholars are Chinese, but some are not.

We do not wish to gloss over China's status as an authoritarian country that exhibits little concern for personal freedoms. But acknowledging this fact only serves to emphasize the significance of the shift we are describing: The drawbacks of American education policies are so pronounced that US schools are

now losing their ability to attract elite scholars *despite* the fact that the United States offers these academics a freer and more democratic environment.

Moreover, even America's vaunted reputation as a welcoming land for immigrants has taken a hit thanks to the recent, highly-publicized wave of anti-Asian crimes—which, though small in scale, is scaring off some Chinese students and their parents. Of greater significance are the thinly disguised anti-Asian policies (masquerading as anti-racism mandates) that are implemented by top US schools as a means to [exclude Asian students](#).

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Reversing America's slide in STEM education will require many policy changes, not all of which fall within our expertise as mathematicians and academics. But at the very least, we recommend that American education authorities prioritize the development of comprehensive STEM curricula, at both basic and advanced levels, and allow outstanding mathematicians and other scientists to assist public servants in their design. Highly successful precedents such as the [BASIS Charter School Curriculum](#) and the [Math for America](#) teacher-development program supply examples of how such curricula might be developed. This should be coupled with a nationwide effort to identify and develop students who exhibit exceptional math talent.

American policymakers must also address the misplaced priorities of the education schools that train teachers. At the very least, math majors should be allowed to teach without following a full slate of accreditation procedures. And people who teach middle and high-school math should themselves be required to receive rigorous instruction in that subject.

Schools in urban areas and inner-city neighborhoods should be improved by following the most promising [models](#). Such programs demonstrate that children benefit if they are challenged by high standards and a nurturing environment. Ideally, schools should operate in a manner that allows them to avoid year-to-year dependence on the vagaries of local funding and bureaucratic mandates.

More broadly, American educators must return to a process of recruitment and promotion based on merit, at all levels of education and research—a step that will require a policy U-turn at the federal, state, and local levels (not to mention at universities, and at tech corporations that have sought to reinvent themselves as social-justice organizations). Instead of implementing divisive policies based on the premise of rooting out invisible forms of racism, or seeking to deconstruct the idea of merit in spurious ways, organizations should redirect their (by now substantial) DEI budgets toward more constructive goals, such as funding outreach programs, and even starting innovative new charter schools for underprivileged K-12 students. Elite private universities, in particular, are well positioned to direct portions of their huge endowments and vast professional expertise in this regard. By doing so, they could demonstrate that it's possible to help minority students succeed without sacrificing excellence.

The proposals we are describing here may sound highly ambitious—not to mention being at cross-currents with today's ideological climate. But we also believe there will soon be an opportunity for change, as the rapid rise of China in strategically important STEM fields may help shock the American policymaking community into action—much like the so-called Sputnik crisis of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when it was Russia's soaring level of technical expertise that became a subject of public concern. Then, as now, the only path to global technological leadership was one based on a rigorous, merit-based approach to excellence in mathematics, science, and engineering.