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Not Filling A Bucket, But Lighting A Fire

By Jayson Joyce

Who am I—in academia three years—to lay judgment upon the professors whom I have encountered, some of whom the best in their field? That said, I cannot shirk from this unique opportunity. I will try to focus on the four expectations that students should have of a Jesuit university, supported with anecdotal evidence.

First, the implementation of new technologies into a curriculum can change the entire nature of a course. Economics has never been my strong suit, and I struggled in a class taught conventionally. I switched sections in the next semester and found that an e-book, which updated itself to relate the fundamental principles that we were learning to the current global economic crisis, made the class come alive. My international relations course uses Google Earth to bring us to refugee camps a world away. In a political science course, interactive graphs made global demographics easier to conceptualize.

Second, to teach at a Jesuit institution does not require one to be Catholic, but it does set one's strategy of teaching within a particular paradigm. I expect that the professor has some concept of *cura personalis*. I had a philosophy professor who refused to even attempt to learn our names and strongly discouraged attending of office hours because it could give some students an "unfair advantage." This stands in direct contrast to Wallada Sarraf, my former professor who meets with me twice a week in her own time to ensure I do not forget the Arabic she taught me when I took her course in my first three years.



I do not view Jesuit tradition as the mere dissemination of facts. A computer can do that. William Butler Yeats once said that "education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire."

My next two expectations from professors appear to contradict each other. Perhaps the idea is undeveloped. Nonetheless:

Perhaps more than any generation in history, we have been subject to intense commercialization. Nothing irritates me more than when students from the business school force some product on us at the behest of their marketing professor. Indeed, that the corporatization of the university seems to be the most dire threat to authentic education should beget critical thinking. This warrants separate attention in a different piece.

What is worse than having a product forced on us, however, is having an ideology. Nothing offends me so much as the notion that I am not being educated, but rather *sold* something. It is cheap and it is a violation of the implicit trust that students place in professors. When I take an economics class, I do not want the subjective policy preferences of my professor mixed in with my notes on fundamental theories. If opinion need enter the discussion, let it at the very least be clearly delineated.

Furthermore—and I am a decidedly liberal and partisan—nothing is less appealing than a cheap joke at the expense of our previous president. I'm proud to volunteer on President Obama's reelection campaign, but leaving a class where a liberal professor uses his pretense of objectivity to mix fact and opinion makes me a less ardent supporter, not more. I do not want your ideology.

And now, the contradiction. When I entered an institution founded in the Ignatian tradition, I entered into a covenant. I do not expect to be fed stale facts in my four precious years at BC, not even as tools for my future career. I remember a state representative who came to Bishop Feehan, my high school, and talked about the difference between Catholic and public schools: the fourth R. All schools teach reading, (w)riting, and 'rithmetic. Catholic schools do so as well, but all in the context of the fourth R: responsibility. Jesuit schools inculcate core values into their students: solidarity, social justice, contemplation

in action, and so many more. My fellow students and I want to be changed by these values after four years. If our schools can do that, then you can forget the technology and the personal attention and the politics. If you can do that, we've all succeeded. ■

Jayson Joyce is a senior majoring in international relations with a minor in philosophy and is the president of Americans for an Informed Democracy.