10-1-1997

Letters to the Editor

Mark Schumack

John Franklin

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Available at: http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol12/iss1/11
Editor:

Your latest issue on educating the “whole” student was thought-provoking. If nothing else, it has encouraged me to be more personal in my approach to students, to reach out instead of waiting for them to come to me.

One issue that needs to be approached more aggressively, however, is the definition of values. Thomas Buckley asserts in his piece that a Catholic university should “reflect the values of a Catholic intellectual and moral tradition.” Just what are these values? By proposing that we “recruit specifically for values” without defining what they are seems to me to be putting the cart before the horse. Without definition, the discussion just goes on and on and on. (Of course, that may be what we academicians want—to spend our lives defining a problem.)

In this era it is unpopular to state a doctrine or propose a value system based on a particular foundation. To do so is often viewed as being intolerant or narrow-minded. To avoid doing so, however, is dangerous. A short walk through your student union with your eyes and ears open will alert you to the negative consequences of secularization. As I contemplate the fuzziness of the idea of a “Jesuit education,” a statement made by a Jesuit colleague about contemporary students rings through my mind: “I don’t care who they pray to, as long as they pray.” Until we settle on a basis for our beliefs, the secularization of our religious institutions and the moral decay of our students will continue.

Sincerely,
Mark Schumack
Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering
University of Detroit Mercy
Detroit, Michigan

My compliments to all who contributed to the fine Spring 1997 issue devoted to the education of the whole student.

I agree with Father Joe Hayden that the binge and occasional drinking students are frequently not alcohol dependent, but still in need of intervention and alternative direction. For the past eight years at the University of Detroit Mercy a one-credit, tuition-free, academic course entitled Alcohol/Drug Awareness has been offered to the students. In it they are presented with basic pharmacology and encouraged to explore their relationship with mood-altering chemicals, as well as that of their friends and loved ones, through the use of popular films and group discussion. The text, which presents strategies for altering drinking and using behavior, was authored by the two faculty members who initiated the program. For student athletes the course is required; for all others it is voluntary. This year we taught six sections enrolling 150 students. It is whole-person education.

Sincerely,
John Franklin
Professor of Addiction Studies and Counseling
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