

NEWS

Humanities Needs Emphasis

by Phil Galewitz
Daily Collegian Writer

Editors' Note: This article reprinted from the Daily Collegian.

The teaching of the humanities may need some drastic changes to enhance a university student's broad and liberal education, the staff director of the National Endowment for the Humanities study group said.

Dan Schecter said students must be brought face to face with the basic questions the humanities try to answer.

Humanities departments must take the lead in reshaping the teaching of humanities. Parents and students must also be immediately involved, Schecter said.

Universities' administrations and faculties must agree on what an education is and what it should mean, Schecter said.

Jim Martin, associate professor of psychology, said humanities help people to understand themselves better and also help in learning about the world in which

we live. Getting involved in the political process and participating in government are two examples of ways an education in the humanities can help a person.

"We must be more than technicians in helping to find the meaning of life and other complex philosophical questions which need to be answered," Martin said.

Many large technical firms look for people with a humanities background which helps to teach students to think in addition to only solving problems, Martin said.

Carl Wolgemuth, associate dean of engineering, agrees that a student with a broad and liberal education is more appealing to large technical companies. Students are taking humanities classes not because of a University prerequisite but because the accrediting agencies in the field say so.

Beverly Harris-Schenz, a member of the National Endowment for the Humanities study group, said by taking humanities classes students will become aware that many problems which appear unique really are not when compared with history. Also people

will learn that human beings share a lot in common with each other throughout history.

In many respects the expectations of university students has lessened by broadening their learning experience, Harris-Schenz said.

Theodore Kiffer, director of general education program in humanities and social sciences, said it is a tragedy that students can receive a baccalaureate degree without even reading a poem or a great piece of literature.

Kiffer would like to see students take a series of related classes sharing a given theme to build coherence in learning. Giving a large smorgasbord of classes and having students pick them has not worked in higher education. More restrictions are needed to make sure students take the right courses.

The purpose of a liberal education is to broaden one's perspective on life, and ideas like having all students take two years of liberal arts would help, Kiffer said.

A key aspect of a broadly based education must include several quality courses involving psychology, philosophy and

religious studies, for example.

Because of the lack of interest in the humanities, students are very present minded and are not concerned about philosophical questions, Schecter said.

"The place to begin rebuilding human values is with higher education," Schecter said.

College is one of the few times in life a person has to think about life in a philosophical manner and to take away this opportunity does harm to one's education, Martin said.

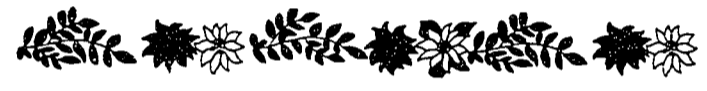
Daniel Walden, professor of American Studies, said in the long run students are missing a true liberal education if classes in humanities are skipped. In addition, two things must be accomplished to increase the quality of an education including humanities, he added.

First the teaching of humanities

has to be fostered and encouraged by every college and every discipline in the University. Second, the University owes it to the student to refine the current humanities courses and bring them together, Walden said.

The report, delivered by the National Endowment for the Humanities for the group, listed many elements which humanities core courses need, Schecter said.

- These elements included:
- understanding of development of western culture
 - reading of masterworks of American, English and European writers
 - demonstrating a proficiency in a foreign language
 - understanding the significant ideas and debates in philosophy
 - becoming familiar with a non-western culture including history of science and technology.



Gerow to Succeed Johns

by Michael Kitchen
Collegian Contributing Writer

Douglas Gerow will succeed Dann Johns as President of the Student Government Association next semester.

Gerow (Fifth Semester, Business Economics) is the current vice-president of SGA. He also served two semesters as a commuter senator.

"I just want to continue with the tradition of the SGA," said Gerow, "to provide student opinions, views, and concerns to the faculty, administration and the University at large, by developing working relationships with key people and then working with them."

Gerow said he considers John's presidency this semester "a success." "He redirected the focus of SGA, opening up the government, making it a more open forum," he said, "And Dann has done a lot for promoting the acceptance of student government by the faculty and administration."

"The most important thing though, which Dann started was bringing up discussion of an honor code at Behrend College," said Gerow. "The fact that the faculty and administration are talking about it shows what sort of influence SGA can have."

"Another important issue

brought up is that of the alternative grading policy, proposed by the Student Caucus of the University Faculty Senate as a 12-point system of grading," said Gerow.

"I also think Dann handled quite well the newly conceived concept of standing committees," stated Gerow. "He used these very effectively, especially the ICC with Greg Goldsmith, for promoting the goals of student government."

"Another issue student government dealt with which was extremely important to all students is the activities fee," said Gerow. This is a fee added to student tuition, used for increased funding of student activities at Behrend, and throughout the university.

Looking toward his own administration, Gerow sees several issues as "central goals" on his agenda.

"We'll pursue the honor code, ultimately to implementation," he said. "We'll follow the grading policy, hopefully to implementation," he added, "and we'll continue to press diligently for an activities fee."

Gerow said his first goal will be "to try to guarantee that Behrend College will have a student with voting rights on the University Faculty Senate, a right which has

been denied."

Another priority of Gerow will be to somehow increase attendance at SGA meetings. "This is something we need desperately," he said. "We deal with issues involving money, grades, and honesty. These have a direct impact upon students."

Analyzing the Student Senate of Behrend, Gerow believes the Senate has done a good job representing the views of their constituents. "They've been effective in representing student interests and effective in questioning the givens and traditions of the student government, which has been beneficial," said Gerow. "This makes us really look at ourselves and see where we need to be changing."

"Still," added Gerow, "there are very few senate members directly involved with day-to-day operations. They need to have this familiarity, to completely understand how student government operates."

Gerow said he's "very much looking forward to serving as SGA president next semester. I'm proud to be a Behrend student," he said. "This is great place to learn and to grow. Great universities are made great by great faculty, great friends, and by great students," he added. "Behrend has all three."

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