

In these pages last year, I described how Colgate's students were right to distrust their teachers after realizing that, without Trustee guidance or warrant and wholly without student or Alumni input, the faculty had decided to transform the school that they had chosen to attend. We now know that these suspicions were not misplaced. Among the most active faculty, there continues to be little disagreement concerning the end to be reached: the destruction of the fraternities, the eradication of a campus social life centered around the consumption of alcohol, the reduction of boisterous behavior readily associated with alcohol and fraternity life and, for many, the conversion of our current athletic program from one associated, in the striking words of Nigel Bolland, with a dangerous hyper-masculinity to one more appropriate for the "New Colgate." And in the past year in which much has seemingly changed, all that has changed on this front is the faculty's and administration's new unwillingness to declare openly their goals. For those in doubt, I would urge them to consult the minutes from the first faculty meeting of this year. In short, activist faculty have become more careful as they construct a stealthy campaign to transform Colgate.

But why have the faculty chosen to transform this successful and flourishing college? As I noted in my remarks last year, the answer begins with the changing gender make-up of the faculty and an elite culture less and less accepting of masculinity, particularly youthful masculinity. And I continue to hold that the most encompassing explanation of the increasingly hostile and arrogant attitude of the active faculty is the increased (non-traditional) feminization of Colgate and a corresponding decrease in (traditional) masculinity. (This is not to suggest, though, that there are no other additional causal factors, nor that hostility to masculinity explains the motivation of all faculty hoping to transform Colgate.) If true, the particular emanation of this broader cultural transformation on campus must not be surprising. Indeed, it seems to be occurring at all levels of American education and most particularly among the liberal-arts colleges that are having

more and more difficulty attracting and keeping male students. Males, sensing that they are unwillingly serving in an experiment in radical social engineering, have been wisely seeking less hostile environments.

More apposite than the motivation guiding faculty in their quest, though, is whether Colgate's faculty and administration are acting in well thought-out ways. Put differently, are their actions morally, financially, and pedagogically well considered? Do they know what the long-term consequences will be from the changes already affected and those sought? Have the appropriate empirical and market studies been conducted that could provide a reasonable foundation for the decision making of the Board of Trustees? And do such practical concerns even matter to those driven by an ideological

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commitment to a world of transformed masculinity? To both sets of questions, I believe, the answer is no.

Viewed morally, we must treat with considerable suspicion the actions of Colgate's faculty. To begin with, it is not clear that they have the moral authority to transform the essence of a corporate body with a well recognized identity of which they are, in effect, its employees. Without that authority, their activities border on a usurpation of power normally associated with the overthrow of legitimate authority. Until the Board of Trustees chooses to transfer this responsibility to the faculty, the faculty's wishes must be treated with considerable reserve. This is particularly true concerning the faculty's hope to shape the outcome of the current presidential search. The faculty's self-serving aspirations to transform Colgate in their own image must be weighed against the long-term health and interests of the corporation that must come first.

Financial concerns are closely related but, unlike moral ones, these

issues can be explored through marketing research. For example, will Colgate be more successful in selling itself as an imitation of Williams than it has as a distinct entity with its own traditions and well defined market niche? Will Colgate continue to attract students on a national basis once it no longer has Division-One athletics? (We might ask our neighbors at Hamilton College just how difficult it is to obtain national name recognition. Too often, they simply must describe themselves as the college nearest to Colgate.) Do we know who makes decisions concerning which schools students choose to attend: is it them or their parents? (I must admit that I would love for my

daughter to attend the equivalent of a convent, but my sense is that she will likely oppose my wishes in this like so many other matters.) If responsibility for making such decisions rests with future students, will they continue to choose Colgate once they learn that two-thirds of what had made it most desirable (scholarship, athletics, and social life) has been eliminated? Should we, then, ignore those

graduating seniors who last year claimed that they will never recommend to younger siblings or others that they come to Colgate? And why should they come here rather than two dozen other liberal arts colleges, many with more cultural amenities, a more politicized culture, and better weather? Thus, even if the faculty does have the right to transform Colgate, with little guidance from the Board of Trustees and Alumni, there are numerous practical issues that must be resolved before the administration is allowed to continue on its present path.

Pedagogically as well, there are numerous unanswered questions that should have been addressed before the activist faculty committed itself to transforming Colgate. Most immediately, did they consider the costs of having Colgate's students view the faculty with distrust, if not disdain? (Of course, some faculty accept this as a short-term cost to be endured in affecting long-term

change. As one eminently honest colleague remarked, "in five or six years no one will remember what kind of students used to attend Colgate.") Additionally, upon what studies do the faculty base their hope that without fraternities Colgate students will consume less alcohol, will "hook-up" less and with greater care, will achieve more academically, and will be more committed to the life of the mind? If such studies have been conducted, they need to be more broadly disseminated. In addition, do we know that schools without fraternities all have academically better students than Colgate? If only some, then, what are the reasons that explain the higher and lower performances at other schools? And is there a reasonable probability, after transforming Colgate, that the more academically directed students will come here rather than going elsewhere? And, if such confidence is lacking, then why experiment with a college with excellent students, a national reputation, and a long history of providing a rich education to talented youth who, under different circumstances, might have chosen to go to another school where their intellectual prowess might have been less developed?

This is not to claim that the needs of the most intellectually gifted students at Colgate, particularly those outside the sciences, should be neglected. Indeed, the high transfer rate among such students indicates that Colgate has not been doing enough to meet their needs. But providing adequate intellectual stimulation for such students does not demand wholesale changes at Colgate. Rather, Colgate must consider a two-track approach to campus cultural issues in which the administration makes few if any changes in the broader Colgate intellectual and social life, while simultaneously working to improve the academic and social life of those whose particular needs are not currently being met. Is there any reason that Colgate can't meet the needs of all of its students without demeaning and dismissing the needs of its traditional student body?

If we stop to think, it should be clear to most unbiased observers that there is no campus crisis that is not of the faculty's making and, thus, there is plenty of time for students, Alumni, and

the Board of Trustees to explore Colgate's corporate identity and to decide on the direction they would like to see Colgate head in the future. Colgate has the time to conduct the needed studies that might persuade the relevant audiences that the faculty's goals will (or will not) do serious damage to Colgate. But along with increased discussion and various studies, most immediately, the Board of Trustees must resist the siren calls of the faculty and appoint a new president who will serve them and their understanding of Colgate's interests, not the ideologically-driven goals of the activist faculty.

In a number of discrete ways, though, Colgate should consider making incremental changes. For example, the administration is right to encourage the funding of a number of social outlets

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that allow those students who prefer not to frequent the bars or the fraternities, to do so. In this regard, the faculty should enthusiastically support the maintenance of a pool hall and game room, a 24-hour diner, and a dance club. But for the majority of Colgate's stu-

dents wishing to return to a more stable world of alcohol-based fraternity parties, with the inherent limits that queuing places on consumption, the administration should explore various means of facilitating fraternity socializing within the limits of what is reasonable legal liability. Quite possibly, "reasonable deniability," might be the appropriate administrative stance. Yes, without deforming Colgate, faculty can serve the needs of a diverse student body. This means, though, that the Colgate of rigorous academics, high-level Division-One athletics, socially adept students, richly arrayed extra-curricular activities, and a healthy fraternity-based social life can be maintained without slighting the needs of minority students or those who prefer a range of experiences more in keeping with the sensibilities of the faculty.

Let me suggest, then, that the administration place limits on the faculty's self-interested aspirations. All administrative "stealthy" initiatives by which the faculty hopes to transform Colgate incrementally and irreversibly without Board cognizance, should be

immediately suspended. This means that many of the aggressive moves made against the fraternity system during the past couple of years should be reconsidered until active Alumni and Board support can be obtained. In an isolated and often snowy village in upstate New York, Colgate's faculty is not going to transform human beings and nearly a thousand years of history in which Western higher education has demonstrated a constant association between students and high levels of alcohol consumption, be the students future priests or corporate leaders. As well, the admissions office must be relieved of a widely reported mission of recruiting a different kind of Colgate student. Indeed, Colgate should take pride in itself and boldly market itself, in opposition to the Oberlin's and Antioch's of the world, as a college where the kind of well-rounded students Colgate has traditionally attracted can thrive. As well, the Board of Trustees should seriously consider, in opposition to faculty wishes, a move to merit-based aid for athletes so that Colgate can remain competitive in Division-One sports while continuing to improve the academic qualifications of its fine student athletes. Finally, in the shadow of the events of September 11 and the heroic men, on United Flight #93 and those entombed in the remains of the World Trade Center, who demonstrated that many men are still needed for civilized life, Colgate's Board of Trustees should immediately move to re-introduce ROTC training and CIA recruitment on the Colgate campus. Colgate's faculty and administration owes the nation and its students as much; indeed, something beyond candle-light vigils is called for.

It is time for the "crisis" on campus to come to an end and for Colgate's otherwise talented faculty to abandon their war on masculinity and their social experimentation. But, if they refuse to abandon their attempt to reconstruct Colgate in their own image and the Board of Trustees is slow to act, then, it is up to the students and Alumni to defend Colgate and to remind the Board that it is their duty to protect Colgate from those who might do it, even inadvertently, irreparable harm. P