IS THE ACADEMY A LIBERAL HEGEMONY?
THE POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF PROFESSORS

JOHN F. ZIPP
RUDY FENWICK

Abstract In the last several years, conservatives have argued that an overwhelmingly Left and liberal faculty has taken over American colleges and universities. In particular, two main claims have been advanced: (1) a disproportionate percentage of the faculty is liberal; and (2) these liberal faculty are pushing their values on students and colleagues, skewing the educational process. However, data to support these contentions come from unrepresentative institutions and/or disciplines and mistakenly equate party identification with political ideology. In contrast, we use two nationally representative surveys done by the Carnegie Foundation (in 1989 and 1997) to address these concerns. We have several key findings: (1) although left-of-center faculty increased slightly, the best overall description of these trends suggests increased movement to the center, toward a more moderate faculty, between 1989 and 1997; (2) there are sizable differences across disciplines and institutional types, with conservatives being the plurality in some fields and in two-year colleges; (3) changes in age and gender have offsetting effects on changes in liberalism; and (4) there are significant differences in educational values between liberal and conservative professors.

In the last several years, right-wing activists and scholars, especially David Horowitz and the Center for the Study of Popular Culture (CSPC) and the National Association of Scholars, have claimed that an overwhelmingly Left and liberal faculty has taken over universities, imposing political correctness and suppressing dissent (e.g., Tierney 2004; Wall Street Journal 2004; Wisse 2004). The “thought police,” the argument goes, have made conservative views unwelcome on campus, and college students are being exposed only to liberal and leftist perspectives.

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Although hunting for subversives in the academy has been a favorite sport of conservatives for at least a century (Hamilton and Hargens 1993; Ladd and Lipset 1975), this recent effort has begun to have serious consequences for higher education. A 2004 survey sponsored by the Chronicle of Higher Education found that 51 percent of Americans believed that faculty “improperly introduce a liberal bias in what they teach” (Bauerlein 2004). Perhaps more important, numerous states have introduced a version of the CSPC’s “Academic Bill of Rights,” legislation at correcting the alleged liberal monopoly of the ivory tower, with Colorado university officials adopting the provisions of the bill in order to ward off legislative action and Pennsylvania holding hearings on accusations of political bias in the classroom (Jacobsen 2005).

It is important to note that two related, but somewhat different, claims are being advanced: (1) a disproportionate percentage of the faculty is liberal; and (2) these liberal faculty are pushing their values on students and colleagues, skewing the educational process. Although these claims have gained a great deal of public attention and political currency, there have been very few systematic, scholarly analyses of the topic. The last was published in 1993, using the most recent data then available from 1984 (Hamilton and Hargens 1993). The purpose of this article, then, is to update the analysis done by Hamilton and Hargens by addressing two main questions: (1) Have faculty become increasingly liberal? and (2) Are these liberal faculty pushing their agendas on their students?

These questions strike at the very heart of higher education. Universities earn the public trust to the degree that they welcome all points of view. If they are the exclusive enclave of leftists and places where faculty use classrooms to push their ideology, public trust would dissipate, and universities would lose their moral authority.

The Liberal Professoriate?

The contention that faculty are overwhelmingly liberal is based on several data sources. In 2002, the CSPC studied the voter registration of faculty members in economics, history, English, political science, sociology, and philosophy in 32 elite colleges and universities, finding that registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans by a ratio of 10 to 1 (Horowitz and Lehrer 2002). Klein and Western (2004) tried to check the accuracy of the CSPC study by analyzing the voter registration records of University of California–Berkeley and Stanford faculty; finding that Democrats outnumbered Republicans 10:1 at Berkeley and 7.6:1 at Stanford, they conclude that Republicans were an “endangered species” on these campuses. Recognizing the limitations of these sorts of analyses of selective colleges and universities, Klein and Stern (2004) surveyed anthropologists, sociologists, economists, historians, philosophers, and political scientists, asking them about which party they primarily voted
for in the last decades, and discovered that there were at least seven Democrats for every Republican in these departments.

These data are surely not representative of American colleges and universities. The voter registration analyses draw on some of the most selective institutions, ones that attract an extremely narrow range of students. The department surveys also do not span much of the disciplinary breadth. Notably missing are science, business, and engineering faculty, all of whom tend to be much more conservative than those in the social sciences and humanities (Hamilton and Hargens 1993; Ladd and Lipset 1975). In addition, these studies treat party identification or voting behavior as equivalent to political ideology, and although these two are clearly related and getting more so over time (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998), they are not the same. Moreover, as Fiorina (2005) points out in his recent book, *Culture War?*, partisan and voting choices are more polarized than ideological differences among nonelites.

Second, these contentions have ignored much better data and research. The most comprehensive study of the political leanings of professors is Ladd and Lipset’s (1975) *The Divided Academy*, which uses data from the 1969 Carnegie survey as well as a smaller follow-up survey done in 1972. Hamilton and Hargens (1993) updated and extended Ladd and Lipset’s work by analyzing similar Carnegie surveys done in 1969, 1975, and 1984. Another source of data on faculty political attitudes comes from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), which has conducted triennial surveys of faculty attitudes since 1989 (Lindbolm et al. 2005). Several conclusions can be drawn from these works, all of which measure political orientations via questions about ideological placement along a liberal to conservative scale. First, although the proportions have varied over time, faculty are more likely to be left of center than right of center. The ratio of Left and liberal faculty to moderately conservative and conservative faculty has varied from 2:1 in 1969 (Ladd and Lipset 1975), to 1.2:1 in 1984 (Hamilton and Hargens 1993), to 2.6:1 in the 2004–05 UCLA survey (Lindblom et al. 2005). Although there are more liberal than conservative faculty, there certainly are not seven to ten liberals for every conservative on campus.

The scholarly analyses of Ladd and Lipset (1975) and Hamilton and Hargens (1993) offer other key points. Ladd and Lipset note that liberalism varied appreciably by discipline—the social sciences were the most liberal, while engineering and business were dominated by conservatives—and by university quality—surprisingly, the most prestigious universities were the most liberal. Although Hamilton and Hargens also note differences by discipline and prestige, overall they found declining liberalism and increasing conservatism among faculty between 1969 and 1984.¹

¹. One difference is that they found that liberal arts colleges were now the most liberal.
Thus, they conclude that the “public discussions of a growing and influential left in the universities and colleges appear to be seriously misleading” (1993, p. 621).

A second key claim by conservative critics of higher education is that liberal faculty are exceedingly narrow and doctrinaire in their outlooks, not very tolerant of dissenting views, thus restricting academic freedom and discussion on campus. Stephen Balch, president of the conservative National Association of Scholars, has written that liberals so dominate departments that they “grind down [their] opponents” (2004). Conservative columnist George Will opines that universities “cultivate diversity . . . in everything but thought” (2004, p. B7). Mark Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory and research director at the National Endowment for the Arts, has remarked that “liberal orthodoxy is not just a political outlook; it’s a professional one” (2004).

These are serious charges, as they refer not just to the political leanings of faculty but, more importantly, to how faculty members interact with each other, their values, and their goals. Again, the evidence for these claims is rather spotty. Much of it can be described mainly as evidence by argument: the emphasis on multiculturalism, pushes for affirmative action, the introduction of speech codes, the ascendancy of postmodernist thought—all are cited by definition as evidence of liberal biases (D’Souza 1991; Kimball 1990). Anecdotal accounts by faculty and students also appear to play far too central a role in this conservative campaign. For instance, the CSPC’s “Students for Academic Freedom” group is supposed to publicize incidents of alleged liberal bias at colleges (Dubner 2005). Similarly, stories of conservative faculty being denied jobs, having trouble getting tenure, or being social outcasts have appeared in various places, including the Chronicle of Higher Education (Jacobsen 2004).

Despite little evidence for an overwhelmingly liberal faculty pushing its values on campus, the clamor continues to ring out regarding liberal control over U.S. colleges and universities. Although much of this outcry surely is based more on partisan politics than on dispassionate scholarly inquiry, it is also quite possible that there has been a change in the last two decades. For one, it may be that the anecdotal reports of left-wing bias (e.g., Jacobsen 2004) are the warning signs of a real problem. Or it may be that as colleges students have grown more conservative over time (Chronicle of Higher Education 2004), liberal faculty stand out more. More generally, generational replacement has meant that baby boomers, the cohorts that helped shape the movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, are now the modal group of faculty members on most campuses. With public opinion being swayed and hearings being held in legislative chambers, it is important to determine if indeed our campuses are overwhelmingly liberal and if, as some conservatives charge, those former 1960s radicals are pushing their values and restricting academic freedom on campus.
Data

Data used for the following analyses are drawn from the 1989 and 1997 National Surveys of Faculty, conducted under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Both surveys employed a two-stage, stratified random sampling design. Universities and colleges were selected in the first stage, with questionnaires distributed by mail to faculty members in the second stage. Response rates of slightly more than 50 percent were achieved in each survey (5,450 questionnaires were returned in 1989; and 5,151, in 1997). Responses in each survey were weighted to match the national representation of faculty by Carnegie Classification category. Both the 1989 and 1997 surveys included measures of the political attitudes and educational values of faculty, along with a series of questions that tap basic demographic information.

Changes in Political Orientations, 1989–97

Our first key question was to understand changes in the political orientations of faculty between 1989 and 1997. We will assess this using a single question that asks: “How would you characterize yourself politically at the present time? Liberal, moderately liberal, middle-of-the-road, moderately conservative, or conservative.” These data are listed in table 1, and there are several interesting findings. To begin with, there was a statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 33.684; p = .005$) change in political orientations across the 1990s. The biggest changes were in the ideological center: faculty seeing themselves as “moderately conservative” declined by 3.5 percentage points, while “middle-of-the-road” identifiers increased 3.1 percent, and “moderately liberal” faculty grew 1.6 percent. There was less movement at the ends of the ideological spectrum, as the number of faculty seeing themselves as “liberals”—the furthest left choice—declined by 1.3 percentage points, while self-identified “conservatives” held constant across these years. Overall, however, although left-of-center faculty (liberals and moderate liberals combined) outnumbered right-of-center faculty (conservatives and moderate conservatives) in both years, this ratio only increased slightly (from 2:1 to 2.3:1) between 1989 and 1997. Thus, the
best overall description of these trends is an increased movement to the center, toward a more moderate faculty, between 1989 and 1997.

Even though these are small changes, it is worth probing them in more detail. Previous research has found notable differences by academic discipline; not surprisingly, we find similar differences in our data (table 2). Because only 7 percent of faculty saw themselves as conservative, in the remainder of the analyses we treat moderate conservatives and conservatives as “conservative.” As can be seen in table 2, fine arts, humanities, and social sciences were the most liberal departments, while business, engineering, physical education, and vocational fields were the most conservative. Thus, although there were four liberals (including moderate liberals) for every conservative (including moderate conservatives) in social science departments, this is far lower than the ratios found by Klein and the CSPC. Also interesting along these lines are findings for departments not covered in their analyses. As indicated in table 2, almost half the faculty in business and technical/vocational fields were conservatives, with conservatives also outnumbering liberals (again, this includes moderate conservatives) in engineering and computer science and approximately equal to them in physical education and allied health fields. Thus, although more faculty members clearly were liberal, there were substantial conservative enclaves and even dominance in important scholarly fields.

Perhaps more interesting, however, again are the trends. Through the 1990s, the percentage of both liberals and conservatives declined in most academic disciplines. This was especially true for conservatives, who witnessed growth only among biologists and, interestingly enough, social scientists. Much of the decline in liberalism was associated with the shift from “liberal” to “moderate liberal” (e.g., seven fields saw decreases in liberals and increases in moderate liberals). At the same time, centrists increased in every field except for fine arts, social sciences, and “other.” For social sciences, however, this shift was not toward liberalism but toward conservatism. There are two conclusions based on disciplinary trends: (1) liberals dominated in some fields (e.g., fine arts, the humanities, and social sciences), while conservatives did so

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Ideology</th>
<th>1989 (%)</th>
<th>1997 (%)</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>–1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately liberal</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of the road</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately conservative</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>–3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>5,323</td>
<td>4,944</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allied health fields</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>−14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological sciences</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>−6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>−5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/ information science</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>−4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>−2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine arts</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/ statistics</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>−3.6</td>
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<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>−5.3</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>−2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>−1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/vocational</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>−3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health professions</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>−2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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in others (e.g., business, vocational/technical areas); and (2) the clear trend over time for most disciplines was toward the center.

We also analyzed changes in political leanings over time by the quality of the institution, using the Carnegie Classifications to rank institutions (table 3). There are several key findings. First, “conservatives” declined and “centrists” increased in every institutional type. “Liberals” declined at Research I and Comprehensive universities and two-year colleges, while “moderate liberals” were down at Doctoral I and II and Comprehensive II schools. Second, there were sizable differences in political orientation across the different types of colleges and universities. “Liberals” were dominant at the elite liberal arts colleges, while “conservatives” were more common at two-year colleges and Comprehensive II universities. This latter finding is especially significant given some of the previous research and the relative number of students in each type of institution. Recall that the oft-cited CSPC study that found ten Democrats for every Republican drew only from elite liberal arts colleges, colleges that we have shown are the most liberal institutions. But in 1994 only 5.8 percent of all students were in these “liberal” elite liberal arts colleges, while 42.3 percent attended two-year colleges—the most conservative type of institution (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 1994). In other words, the most conservative faculty teach where the greatest number of students are.

Both Ladd and Lipset (1975) and Hamilton and Hargens (1993) used cohort differences in political orientations to shed light on past and likely future trends. In table 4, we have presented these results in terms of ten-year birth cohorts. Although the sample sizes are too small in the earliest and most recent cohorts to compare changes over time, we can do so for those born in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. There are several findings of note. First, echoing Hamilton and Hargens, the changes over time were rather small and a bit contradictory. If anything, there are no clear trends.

A bit of probing, however, leads to a second set of interpretations: over time, faculty in each of these cohorts grew less liberal and less conservative and more centrist in their political orientations. The rate of decline in liberalism has increased over birth cohorts, being larger for the more recent cohorts than for the earlier ones, while the retreat from conservatism has slowed. Although there were too few in the youngest cohort, those born in 1960 and

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6. At the time of these surveys, the Carnegie Classification grouped colleges and universities into these categories. Research I and II universities both award 50 or more doctorates annually, but Research I universities receive more than $40 million in federal research support, while Research II obtain between $15.5 and $40 million annually. Doctoral I universities annually award at least 40 doctorates in at least five disciplines, while Doctoral II award at least ten in three or more disciplines or 20 in one or more disciplines. Comprehensive or Master’s universities offer the full range of baccalaureate programs; Comprehensive I grant 40 or more M.A.s in at least five disciplines, while Comprehensive II award at least 20 in one or more disciplines. Liberal Arts I colleges have selective admissions criteria and award at least 40 percent of their baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts; Liberal Arts II are less selective and award less than 40 percent of their baccalaureate degrees in the liberal arts.
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<td>Research I</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>-6.4</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>941/1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research II</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
<td>298/246</td>
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<td>Doctorate I</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>-5.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>299/212</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>232/175</td>
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<td>Comprehensive I</td>
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<td>25.7</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>-4.9</td>
<td>1,159/1,051</td>
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<td>Comprehensive II</td>
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<td>15.7</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>165/102</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>-8.9</td>
<td>136/147</td>
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<td>16.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<td>33.4</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>-8.7</td>
<td>217/314</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Year</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>1,877/1,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>1904–29</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>-6.7</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
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<td>841/154</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930–39</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>-8.3</td>
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<td>25.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>32.8</td>
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<td>-0.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
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<td>1950–59</td>
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<td>25.6</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
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<td>14.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>885/1,377</td>
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<td>1960–73</td>
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<td>26.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>28/484</td>
</tr>
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</table>
later, to analyze in 1989, their results for 1997 are intriguing. As indicated in table 4, there is some evidence of a shift toward the center and Right: as compared to earlier cohorts, there are substantially fewer moderate liberals (though slightly more liberals) and solid increases in centrists and conservatives. The combination of these trends suggests that generational replacement may make universities more centrist and conservative and less liberal.

There has been a sizable increase in the number of women faculty, and this may have had an important impact on the political leanings of faculty (table 5). Two interesting points emerge from table 5: women faculty were more liberal than their male counterparts in both 1989 and 1997, and the genders were moving in opposite directions. Women were becoming increasingly identified as moderately liberal and less conservative, while men were becoming less liberal and less conservative but more centrist over time. For each of the four political orientations, the gender gap was larger in 1997 than in 1989. This is especially true for moderate liberals (women versus men: +0.6 in 1989 to +7.2 in 1997) and conservatives (women versus men: –4.2 in 1989 to –8.7 in 1997). If these trends continue and if more women enter academe, this would suggest an increasingly liberal faculty over time.7

We can draw several conclusions: (1) although left-of-center faculty increased slightly, the best overall description of these trends suggests increased movement toward a more moderate faculty between 1989 and 1997; (2) there are sizable differences across disciplines and institutional types, with conservatives being the plurality in some fields and in two-year colleges; and (3) age and gender might have contradictory effects on future orientations, as more liberal cohorts are being replaced by younger, less liberal ones, while the ideological gap between women and men may liberalize the faculty. Overall, however, our results clearly indicate that it is misleading to claim that faculty at American colleges and universities are overwhelmingly and increasingly liberal.

An interesting aside, however, is how we can reconcile these conclusions with the results of conservative critics who have found an overwhelming share of Democrats within the academy. In addition to methodological differences noted previously (in data, the coverage of academic fields, etc.), the disparities in our results also hinge on the differences between relying on party identification versus political ideology.

7. We also used regression standardization (Duncan 1969; Iams and Thorton 1975) to examine the degree to which changes in political ideology depend on compositional changes in the professorate. We ran separate regression equations for 1989 and 1997, each time regressing political ideology on a series of dummy variables representing age, gender, discipline, and institutional type, and then conducted the decomposition analysis. These results, available on request, show that the only compositional effect of any magnitude is related to age: as suggested above, the replacement of older, more liberal cohorts by younger, less liberal ones has helped to produce a less liberal faculty. Compositional changes in gender, discipline, and institutional type had relatively trivial effects on overall differences in political ideology across the 1990s. It is worth noting, however, that the slope or regression effect of gender grew stronger across the decade, indicating that the gap in ideology between male and female faculty increased appreciably.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Moderately Liberal</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Center</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>–2.6</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>–0.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>–1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>612</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,106</td>
<td>897</td>
<td></td>
<td>607</td>
<td>660</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>–6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>540</td>
<td></td>
<td>542</td>
<td>717</td>
<td></td>
<td>267</td>
<td>307</td>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>369</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because the Carnegie surveys did not ask about party identification, we cannot assess this directly with our data. We can, however, shed some light on this by drawing on four different years of the General Social Survey (GSS): 1988, 1990, 1996, and 1998. The initial two years bracket the first of our Carnegie surveys (1989), while the latter two years bracket the 1997 Carnegie data. The GSS is perhaps the best-known and highest-quality omnibus survey done in the United States and is readily available online (http://sda.berkeley.edu) for anyone to use. In each of these surveys, the GSS asked questions on both party identification and political views, and the relationship between political ideology and party identification has interesting implications for the claims about faculty liberalism. Democratic identifiers are drawn broadly from across the ideological spectrum. In 1988–90, only 22.3 percent of Democrats (“Democrat” and “Not Strong Democrat”) were liberals (“extreme liberals” and “liberals”), while 11.0 percent were conservatives (“extreme conservatives” and “conservatives”); these percentages were virtually unchanged by 1996–98—23.4 percent and 10.7 percent, respectively. Thus, in both sets of years, there were only slightly more than two liberals for every conservative in the Democratic Party. On the other hand, however, there was a substantial shift in the makeup of the Republican Party across the 1990s. In 1988–90, the ratio of conservatives (27.5 percent of the party) to liberals (7.2 percent) among Republicans was 3.8:1; by 1996–98, conservatives (37.5 percent) outnumbered liberals (4.1 percent) by more than 9:1.

Taking these two together suggests that (1) it is very misleading to equate Democratic identification with liberalism; (2) conservatives and extreme conservatives make up an increasingly large share of the Republican Party; and (3) as there are relatively few conservatives in the academy, the large number of Democratic identifiers found in previous studies may say less about the political orientations of faculty and more about the growing conservatism of the Republican Party. Academics may look more liberal to Republicans, but that is not because academics’ political ideology has moved to the Left but, rather, because the Republican Party has moved appreciably to the Right.

Liberalism and Educational Values

A second contention by conservatives is that liberal faculty have increasingly pushed their values on students and colleagues, imposed political litmus tests

8. The exact question on party identification was: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?” Response choices were strong democrat; not strong democrat; independent, near democrat; independent; independent, near republican; not strong republican; strong republican; and other party. The exact question on political views was: “We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I’m going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?” The intervening response categories were liberal, slightly liberal, moderate, slightly conservative, and conservative.
Is the Academy a Liberal Hegemony?

of what constitutes good scholarship, and stifled academic freedom—hence
the need for universities to adopt an “Academic Bill of Rights.” Perhaps not
surprisingly, there is little evidence, other than anecdotal (e.g., Jacobsen
2004), that bears on any of these claims. Fortunately, however, the Carnegie
surveys contain seven items that shed some light on these claims. First, there
is a series of questions that tap what faculty see as the goals of undergraduate
education. Faculty were asked to rate the importance for them on a scale of
1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important) for each of the following: (1) pre-
pare students for a career, (2) provide an appreciation of literature and the arts,
(3) enhance creative thinking, and (4) shape students’ values. Two of these
items focus on how faculty view the mission of higher education—the lofty,
traditional goals of providing an appreciation of arts and literature and
enhancing creative thinking—while the remaining items focus on a narrow
careerist orientation and on a key charge that conservatives level at liberals:
that liberals are on a mission to guide students toward left-wing values.

Also included in both years of the Carnegie data are several items that mea-
sure intellectual freedom and disciplinary standards of scholarship. Each of
these was rated on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly
agree): “(5) Faculty members should be free to present in class any idea that
they consider relevant, however much I may disagree with their views”; “(6) In my discipline, most faculty agree on the standards of good scholar-
ship”; and “(7) The abolition of faculty tenure would, on the whole, improve
the quality of American higher education.” These latter questions are central
to claims about the narrowing of political discussion in the academy (items 5
and 6) and to academic freedom itself, as tenure is a primary defense for aca-
demic freedom (item 7).

Taken together these seven items represent a reasonable test for at least
some of the claims advanced by conservatives. Some of the measures are
rather straightforward—preparing students for a career, appreciation of litera-
ture and arts, and enhancing creative thinking. Others, particularly shaping
students’ values and the abolition of tenure, may be more open to alternative
interpretations. For instance, both liberals and conservatives may want to
shape students’ values; the key, of course, is what those values are. In a simi-
lar vein, both liberals and conservatives may see abolishing tenure not in
terms of a threat to academic freedom but as a way to remove unproductive
faculty, opening positions for more qualified ones, or as a way to allow market
forces to operate more freely in the academy (e.g., Kahn and Huberman
1988). Although it is impossible to determine how respondents interpreted
these questions, these measurement shortcomings will attenuate the relation-
ships between political ideology and these items, thus making it more difficult
to detect any interaction.

To test if political leanings shape goals for undergraduate education and
views on academic freedom, we ran a series of regression equations. In each
model, we have included dummy variables for political beliefs (liberal,
moderately liberal, and middle of the road, with the omitted category being conservative); the time of the survey (0 = 1989, 1 = 1997); and control variables assessing the faculty member’s age, gender, discipline, and type of university (Carnegie Classification). Also, to see if there were any changes over time in the impact of political beliefs we included interaction terms of political leanings by survey year. To conserve space, we only report the coefficients for political beliefs and the year of the survey. Complete results are available from us.

The regression results are contained in table 6. Because conservatives are the reference category, the coefficients for liberal, moderately liberal, and middle of the road represent deviations from the views of conservatives. Taking the results as a whole, there are several significant findings. First, there are substantial and widespread differences by political ideology. Conservatives were significantly different from liberals on all seven items, from moderate liberals on five questions, and from centrists on four measures. In this sense, the conservative critics of higher education may be correct: conservative and liberal academics have remarkably different educational values.

The second set of key findings sheds light on the nature of these differences, for both the goals of undergraduate education (columns 1–4) and support for academic freedom (columns 5–7). Conservatives were more likely than all other faculty to value preparing students for a career. However, all faculty, regardless of political orientation, were more committed to this goal in 1997 than in 1989. At the same time, conservatives were also more committed than liberals or moderate liberals to the importance of shaping students’ values. On the flip side, conservatives were less committed to the appreciation of arts and literature than were other faculty. And conservatives were moving in the opposite directions from other faculty. Between 1989 and 1997, conservatives were becoming more committed to shaping values, while all others were becoming less committed. Conservatives were also becoming less committed to creative thinking as an educational goal, whereas all other faculty were becoming more committed.

Columns 5–7 contain the results for the impact that political leanings have on issues of academic freedom and standards, and once again, conservative faculty stand apart. Conservatives were less likely than all others to think that faculty should be able to present any idea in class and more likely to believe that the abolition of tenure would improve universities. Similarly, liberals were less given to thinking that most faculty agree on standards of what constitutes good scholarship in their disciplines.

9. Although the main effects for liberals on creative thinking and for centrists on shaping values are not significant, in each case the respective interaction term with survey year is statistically significant.
10. Once again we considered the alternative explanation that these changes may in part be related to compositional changes between 1989 and 1997. To address this, we conducted a regression standardization analysis for six of these dependent variables (there were no differences across surveys in “discipline standards” of scholarship). Similar to our results for political ideology, compositional changes had little impact; in fact, in none of the models did compositional effects play anything more than a trivial role in accounting for changes over time in these educational goals and values.
Table 6. The Impact of Political Orientations on Educational Goals and Academic Freedom (Unstandardized Regression Coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Educational Goals</th>
<th>Academic Freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for Career</td>
<td>Arts and Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>-0.596*</td>
<td>0.289*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Liberal</td>
<td>-0.364*</td>
<td>0.137*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist</td>
<td>-0.127*</td>
<td>0.159*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Year</td>
<td>0.241*</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal \times Year</td>
<td>0.310*</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Liberal \times Year</td>
<td>0.210*</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrist \times Year</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE.**—Educational goals: importance (1 = very unimportant, 5 = very important) of “prepare students for a career,” “provide an appreciation of literature and arts,” “shape students’ values,” and “enhance creative thinking.” Academic freedom: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with any idea—“Faculty members should be free to present in class any idea that they consider relevant, however much I may disagree with their views”; discipline standards—“In my discipline, most faculty agree on the standards of good scholarship”; and abolition of tenure—“The abolition of faculty tenure would, on the whole, improve the quality of American higher education.”

* * p < .05.
Taking our findings together suggests the following picture: conservative faculty were more interested in preparing students for careers and in shaping their values and less interested in teaching creative thinking or an appreciation of literature and the arts. Conservatives also appear less committed to academic freedom, as they were less supportive of both tenure and the free exchange of ideas in the classroom.

The juxtaposition of conservatives being less interested in teaching an appreciation of literature and the arts, more interested in shaping values, and less supportive of academic freedom is quite ironic given recent claims by conservative critics. A common lament among conservatives has been that liberal faculty (in the humanities in particular) have substituted politically correct literature for the great books of Western culture, thereby depriving students of a true appreciation of the important contributions to human thought. Also, conservatives have criticized liberals for using their classrooms to push their values on vulnerable undergraduates—yet it is conservatives who were the ones most given to thinking that shaping students’ values is an important goal of higher education. Finally, conservative faculty were less supportive (and becoming even less so over time) of important components of academic freedom—the free exchange of ideas in the classroom and in tenure.

Discussion

We began this article by asking two questions: Have faculty become increasingly liberal? And are these liberal faculty pushing their agendas on their students? Based on our analysis of these Carnegie surveys, we have reasonably clear answers to both of these questions. First, the American academy has not become a liberal hegemony; if anything, there has been a slight trend to moderation—from both ends of the political spectrum toward the center. Second, there is little evidence that liberal faculty see pushing their agendas as an important aspect of their jobs. Indeed, liberal faculty are more committed to what can best be described as the traditional goals of higher education: an appreciation of literature and the arts, creative thinking, and the free exchange of ideas.

Before accepting these data as settling all questions regarding the political attitudes and behavior of faculty, however, we need to acknowledge that we cannot use them to contend that all is well within the academy. With more than 4,000 colleges and universities, 1.1 million faculty, and almost 16 million students (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2004, p. 168), there surely have been and will continue to be instances of faculty, both liberal and conservative, using the classroom in ways that those with other political orientations might not like. Based on our findings, however, there appears to be little danger that these sorts of problems exist because an increasingly liberal faculty has taken over universities and that this liberal faculty is concerned more with using its position of power to advance its own views rather than supporting traditional educational values.
Although we are comfortable with these conclusions, there is some evidence, partly from our data and also in the work of others, that indicates the presence of a growing shift in higher education away from its traditional goals. Recall that the one educational goal in which there was increasing consensus among faculty is perhaps the least “traditional” academic value: the growing importance that faculty attached to preparing their students for careers. Overall, faculty seeing preparing students for a career as a “very important” goal in undergraduate education increased from 31.7 percent in 1989 to 45.2 percent in 1997. This becomes even more interesting when considering that those seeing “shaping students’ values” as very important also increased from 40.9 percent to 45.0 percent; meanwhile, the importance of providing an appreciation of literature and the arts held constant at roughly 50 percent, but the importance of enhancing creative thinking fell precipitously, from 70.8 percent to 48.1 percent.

For many this may be alarming in itself, but another way to see this is that in 1989 there was a clear hierarchy of educational goals: seven out of ten faculty felt that the traditional aims of creative thinking were very important, five out of ten felt so about an appreciation of literature and the arts, and three to four out of ten emphasized career preparation and shaping students’ values. Yet, by 1997, all four goals essentially were seen as equally important among faculty (45–50 percent of faculty held them to be very important).

This is a tremendous swing in less than a decade, away from education’s traditional goals and especially away from enhancing creative thinking and toward career preparation. Even though this shift from education to training is much more pronounced than the supposed rise of liberalism and may signify one of the most important changes in the academy in the last two decades, it has been all but ignored by conservatives as they hunt for “liberals” in the faculty. Quite ironically, in contrast to conservative laments about liberals narrowing political discourse and debate, the real change may instead be the move away from the importance of the critical appraisal of ideas and toward the teaching of job-related skills. Thus, the traditional mission of higher education may be in jeopardy of being compromised, but not in the ways that conservative commentators have described.

Appendix: Exact Wording of Questions

1989 Survey

Gender (’89-Q53)

“53. Your gender:

1. Male
2. Female”
Age (Birth Year; ’89-Q50)
“50. What is your year of birth? 19 — —”

Carnegie Classification (’89-CARNEGIE)
The code for each respondent’s school was printed on the top of the back page of each survey.

Academic Discipline (’89-Q11)
“11. From the following list, circle the department of your teaching appointment. Where your discipline does not appear, circle the most similar discipline.
Agriculture/Forestry/Natural Resources
Allied Health (Medical Technologies)
Architecture/Environmental Design
Area/Ethnic Studies
Biological/Life Sciences
Business/Management
Communications/Journalism
Computer/Information Science
Economics
Education (including Administration and Counseling)
Engineering
Fine Arts (Art, Drama, Music)
Foreign Languages
Geography
Health Professions (Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Veterinary)
Home Economics
Humanities (Literature, History, Philosophy, Religion, Theology, Rhetoric)
Industrial Arts
Law
Library Science
Mathematics/Statistics
Military Science/Technologies
Physical and Health Education
Physical Sciences
Psychology
Public Affairs
Social Sciences (Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Social Work)
Vocational/Technical Training
Other Discipline”

Political Ideology (’89-Q51)
“51. How would you characterize yourself politically at the present time?
Liberal
Moderately liberal
Middle-of-the-road
Moderately conservative
Conservative”
Abolish Tenure ('89-Q23c), Standards of Scholarship ('89-Q22i), Free to Express Ideas in Class ('89-Q22d)

“23. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. A ‘neutral’ response is provided.
Strongly agree
Agree with reservations
Neutral
Disagree with reservations
Strongly Disagree
The abolition of tenure would, on the whole, improve the quality of American higher education.
In my discipline, most faculty agree on the standards of good scholarship.
Faculty members should be free to present in class any idea that they consider relevant, however much I may disagree with their views”

Goal of Undergraduate Education: Shape Student Values ('89-Q32b), Enhance Creative Thinking ('89-Q32c), Appreciate Literature and the Arts ('89-Q32a), Prepare for a Career ('89-Q32f)

32. Many goals have been proposed for undergraduate education. Please indicate the importance of each of the following goals. To . . .
Very important
Fairly important
Fairly unimportant
Very unimportant
No opinion
Shape student values
Enhance creative thinking
Provide an appreciation of literature and the arts
Prepare students for a career”

1997 Survey

Gender ('97-q65)

“65. Your sex: (Please circle appropriate number)
Male
Female”

Age (Birth Year; '97-q66)

“66. Year of birth: 19 — —”

Carnegie Classification ('97-CC94)

The code for respondents’ schools were printed on the bottom right-hand corner of p. 12 of each survey.
Academic Discipline ('97-q8)

“8. In which discipline would you classify the primary department or unit in which you are employed? (Please circle appropriate number)

- Allied Health Fields
- Biological Sciences
- Business
- Communications
- Computer & Information Science
- Dentistry
- Education
- Engineering
- Fine Arts
- Humanities
- Law
- Mathematics/Statistics
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Physical Education
- Physical Sciences
- Psychology
- Social Sciences
- Technical/Vocational

Other: _________”

Political Ideology ('97-q68)

“68. How would you characterize yourself politically at the present time? (Please circle appropriate number)

- Liberal
- Moderately liberal
- Middle of the road
- Moderately conservative
- Conservative”

Abolish Tenure ('97-q49e), Standards of Scholarship ('97-q49b), Free to Express Ideas in Class ('97-q53d)

“49. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. (Fill in number)

- Strongly agree
- Agree with reservations
- Neutral
- Disagree with reservations
- Strongly Disagree

The abolition of tenure would, on the whole, improve the quality of American higher education.

In my field, most people agree on the standards of good scholarship.

Faculty members should be free to present in class any idea that they consider relevant.”
Goal of Undergraduate Education: Shape Student Values (’97-q55b),
Enhance Creative Thinking (’97-q55c), Appreciate Literature and the Arts (’97-q55a), Prepare for a Career (’97-q55d)

55. Many goals have been proposed for undergraduate education. On the following list, please indicate how important you consider each of the following possible outcomes for the undergraduate (Fill in number)

Very important
Fairly important
Not too important
Not at all important
Not applicable/Don’t know
Firm moral values
Enhanced creative capacities
Appreciation of literature and the arts
Preparation for a career”

References


