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Our University - Lying, Cheating, and Stealing

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Our University - Lying, Cheating, and Stealing

Students in classes at all universities are lied to, cheated and stolen from every day through grade inflation. Recently at Louisiana State University, a faculty member who refused to lie, cheat or steal was removed from her class of biology students during the semester and grades of her students were summarily raised according to news reports.

The classroom is an intellectual sanctuary for faculty and student alike.

If a teacher of economics is promoting communism, aside from the historical stupidity of it, and the students are soaking it up, aside from the fundamental naïveté of it, and earning A's in nodding approval, aside from the mindlessness of it, it is OK in the intellectual free market.

Likewise, if a faculty member in a history class articulates the impact of the Christian ethic on American republicanism (not Republicanism) and declares it as central, powerful and important, it is OK in the intellectual free market.

What is bothersome is that, evidently, Dominique Homberger, professor of biology at LSU, required that students read biology every day. She would quiz them at the beginning of every class and record grades. For the heinous act of setting and demonstrating intellectual standards, she was relieved of her teaching duties.

That is stealing.

I may have only part of the story. What if the tests were unnecessarily complex or stupefying in detail? It is still an intellectual free market. Write a letter to the president, dean or the local newspaper and tell the story. "The teacher made me read and be responsible and this is unfair," the complaining student may say. He may have even completed English Composition and probably "earned" an "A".

Even more worrisome in this case is that Kevin Carman, Dean of the College of Basic Sciences, reports that "*Professor Homberger is not being penalized in any way; her salary has not been decreased nor has any aspect of her appointment been changed*". Her professionalism is questioned because she expected excellence. This is not a penalty? The University is protecting students from intellectual standards.

That is cheating.

A university accepts students who, by all reasonable measures, may not successfully perform. These well-intended or self-serving institutions (pick your poison) knowingly lie to students. As average entering ACT scores sink and grades rise, something is awry. The record is clear, locally and nationally.

If the football coach likewise lied, i.e., gave the starting running back position to a 185-pounder who ran a 40 in 5.8 seconds, he would be castigated, then fired. In the academic arena, faculty members are rewarded, or at least in the case of LSU not punished, for making students believe they can do what they can't.

That is lying.

Students know the game. They quit school after a few years, with debt, without a degree, with anxiety, and with a bad taste for the opportunity that a university was supposed to provide. Instead, deceit was delivered.

I tell students that I can lie to them by regarding their work as better than it is. This prevarication might be welcome for a season, but eventually somebody will tell them the truth and they will remember me as a hypocrite.

I can also lie to them by suggesting that their work is not as good as it really is. This form of misrepresentation devalues the fruit of student intellect and labor.

A famous road paved with good intentions is bounded by these deceptive ditches.

In *Grades Gone Wild*, in the Christian Science Monitor on March 24, 2009, Stuart Rojstaczer, a former professor of geophysics at Duke University, cataloged the cause and the cure of grade inflation in a concise fashion.

"Our college classrooms are filled with students who do not prepare for class. Many study less than 10 hours a week – that's less than half the hours they spent studying 40 years ago. Paradoxically, students are spending more and more money for an education that seems to deliver less and less content".

Due to the incalculable cost of lying, cheating, and stealing borne by all, great universities tell the truth, even when painful.