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## The New Model Education

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GARY BELL

# The New Model Education

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He came into the room, an immaculately groomed man, confident and clearly experienced in talking to groups. He was, after all, the foremost authority on Renaissance Florence, one of the reasons that history graduate students came to UCLA. His speech was assured—and a bit like a dash of ice water to the respectful, attentive undergraduates gathered before him.

There was no name, no introduction to the class at this point, no attempt at interchange with the audience. However, to give him his due, the attendance was unusually large.

“I am here,” he told us, right at the outset, “because the state of California tells me that I must be here. In order to get paid, I must teach” (that is verbatim—its precision still rankles after all this time; from here, I paraphrase). “But you are a distraction from my real work, which is to do research on the Renaissance. I don’t enjoy teaching, and I don’t enjoy my contact with you. Therefore, while I must hold office hours, do not attempt to see me. Do not call me. If a conversation must take place, I will deal with you, briefly, at the end of class. I will give you cutting-edge lectures (although we did not use the phrase “cutting edge” in those days), you will take careful notes, you will not interfere with my presentations, you will not ask questions, and you will take the final exam which my teaching assistants will prepare. I do not want to discuss your results with you, and you will get precisely the grade that I deem you deserve. End of discussion on these matters.”

I was a graduate student, doing stem work—that is, rectifying undergraduate deficiencies in my discipline—and as I recall the situation, I figured that I could read his books and forego the immediacy of his arrogance. I also recall feeling a wave of compassion for the undergraduates with less freedom to choose their instructor. But the experience left a lasting impression. He came to represent for me all that was deplorable in the undergraduate experience at a major research institution.

Nor was our “Renaissance Man” unique. A colleague of his, this time the foremost expert in the field of twentieth-century Spain, considered it sufficient value to us, the eagerly awaiting students, to have him read his latest book to us—page after tedious page, class session after numbing class session. He read until the book was half presented and the semester quite

exhausted, but not so completely as the patience of the increasingly hostile student audience—those that still came to class.

The vivid impressions that I took away from those experiences were apparently not unique. In the 1990s, a special commission created by the Carnegie Foundation took a close look at undergraduate education at the research universities of America. In its final report, its conclusions were harsh. Essentially, they declared, the system was broken, the undergraduates were little more than exploited pawns in an uncaring enterprise, and immediate reform was imperative. As the final report (commonly referred to as the Boyer Report) declared: “Baccalaureate students are the second class citizens who are allowed to pay taxes but are barred from voting: The guests at the banquet who pay their share of the tab, but are given leftovers” (Boyer Commission, 25).

Some reform has been undertaken in various schools, but the results have been spotty and slow (Wilson). Undergraduates still pay increasingly stout tuitions at the publics as well as the privates. For their investment, they seldom get the full value that they have been implicitly or explicitly promised in recruiting brochures. “Again and again, universities are guilty of an advertising practice that they would condemn in the commercial world” (Boyer Commission, 5). They are not likely to see the big-name professors. They are not going to receive much personalized attention. Instead, they deal with teaching assistants, they are herded into mass classes, and they find the support services frustratingly inadequate.

This is where honors, I have come to believe, should and indeed must intervene. It should be the role of the honors movement in the United States to provide a new model of undergraduate education. Yes, our niche at our institutions will continue to be as facilitators of interdisciplinary education. Yes, we have an obligation to provide the type of education that especially serves the more motivated students—a typically under-served group at many of our universities. And yes, relying on the honors orthodoxy, we must continue to be creative in our curricula and innovative in our programming. Yet, like Oliver Cromwell, from whose New Model Army the “New Model” imagery is drawn, we need to be militant in our effort to promote reform in twenty-first-century higher education in this country. We need to provide a New Model. Our greatest challenge, as a relatively young movement, may well be to demonstrate for all institutions of higher education, but especially research universities, the way to provide a high-quality and meaningful educational experience for all undergraduates. For the constituency that we serve, our programs must rectify the inadequacies of undergraduate education. In the process, we will provide inspiration for educating the larger student population at our schools.

## THE DIRECTIONS IN WHICH WE SHOULD CONSIDER MOVING

We have much to learn from the Boyer Report and from our life experiences in the academy. I would first urge a reading of the Report for recommendations such as inaugurating an inquiry-based freshman year taught by experienced faculty (not teaching assistants), using a capstone experience (as many honors programs already do), providing faculty mentoring, and engaging in research-oriented undergraduate education. Following are some additional suggestions, emerging from the Boyer Report but from an honors perspective, amid a menu of so much that can be done. My suggestions are grouped in four major categories: establishing a community of scholars, practicing inclusivity, emphasizing pedagogy, and engaging in substantial innovation.

### A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS

One of the reasons that I consciously eschewed the more remunerative corporate world and pursued a life in academe was my innocent perception that professors, being officially certified as “intelligent,” were too smart to engage in petty politics and personal vendettas. No water cooler intrigue for this naïf! My first-generation status as a college student led me to a wholly unrealistic perspective. I eventually learned that academics are not unusually problematic, but they are no better, on the whole, than the larger working world from which I was seeking refuge. Academic battles may be a shade more intense (because, as the wags have it, the rewards are so low), but on the whole we find all the personality types, from saintly to malevolent, and all the attitudes, from beatific to outrageous, that are found wherever our species congregates.

Then what should unite us? At a minimum, the cardinal rule of the honors world should be, as among our M.D. colleagues, “Do No Harm.” (See Qin Zhang for an interesting account of “Teacher Misbehavior.”) However, a great many academic proclivities militate against building community. For instance, university faculty are trained to be judgmental and disputatious. This training is in many ways an asset: critical thinking is and should be a prime objective of higher education because intellectual maturity is based on seeing and understanding multiple perspectives, then making effective decisions among them. However, contentiousness for its own sake is dangerous to our objectives.

While I was in London attending seminars at the Institute of Historical Research with a number of fellow UCLA students, one of the wise old men of Tudor-Stuart history who conducted the seminar pulled me aside and asked

in a most distraught tone of voice: “What is it with your American colleagues? I have never been in an academic setting where so many students felt free to disagree with the professor, to mock other people’s work and to argue quite publicly with each other. Maybe in a union shop [for all of his dismay, he was quite a political ‘lefty’], never in the university.” Old World gentility had just collided with academically based California contentiousness.

As I reflected over the years on this London episode, I found I could not blame my peers. They had been trained to be über-critical and vocally declamatory in their perceptions. To a great degree, the same applies to many academicians. Our training has been in the art of dissent with received wisdom. In the cut and thrust of graduate classes, we were competing with each other by being vocal in our knowledge and opinions. We came of age professionally in a climate of intellectual contentiousness. We proved we were smart by always challenging authority. The problem with this pattern, however, is that it can disrupt community.

Community can also be difficult to achieve because of the nature of our work. Many of us matured toiling away in isolation on dissertations, creative works, and projects. There was not a premium on group collaboration. In fact, other members of the group were competitors. And compromise? Now there was a dirty word. Compromise meant lessening quality; it meant caving in to obscurantism, and we were having none of that. Therefore, as we today come to grips with a community-of-scholars notion, our instincts recoil. We are most comfortable with a one-on-one environment. We insist on personally prevailing despite the cost to the group that dominance may involve. As a result, building a community of scholars may be particularly challenging when so many of the scholars are untrained in the intricacies of group dynamics.

What the honors ideal must surely embrace, at its root, is a willingness to subordinate passionately held judgments to the higher good of a civil atmosphere of collegial cooperation. The ideal of fostering community has got to be our driving passion—a community in which intellectual rigor, mutual respect, and the search for educational advancement take priority over personal imperatives. What we have to achieve is so overwhelmingly important—teaching young people and thus molding the future of our society—that we need to restrain, in the interests of the common good, our own assertiveness.

The corollaries to this mandate are obvious, but often forgotten. Never, never, never draw students into one’s own personnel, administrative, or intellectual disputes. Maintain a civil demeanor with your colleagues at all times. Try to leave your personal anxieties in the car in the parking lot as you walk to your office. Bury the emotional aspects of your political or intellectual

partisanship in your honors dealings. Do not let your classroom become a bully pulpit for your own perspectives at the expense of a free interchange of ideas. Given the disparities in power, it is never appropriate to express anger or hostility to staff or to students. We all know the rules. They simply must become immutable in the honors experience.

To be sure, honest and open disagreement, not to mention debate, must exist. I am not advocating mute acceptance of the world as we find it. But even here our collegial goals must prevail; we must demonstrate to our students how sincere but opposite opinions can be discussed with civility. Academic brawls are “out”; intellectually acute debate, laced with respectful collegiality, is “in.”

Building a sense of community among all constituent elements in an honors program is a constant but crucial endeavor that we can accomplish by bringing all participants in honors, including students, into our scholarly deliberations and policy decisions. We can make sure that venues are provided where students, faculty, and staff can gather and interact socially and where they can get to know each other (Pascarella). The need to dissolve the barriers that exist between faculty and students is constantly present, and so field trips, sponsored dinners and coffees, educationally justified road trips, and discussion groups should all be a consistent part of our planning. We should be driven to search for ways students can exercise leadership through activities in the honors organization and through participation in regional and national conferences. We must secure funding that allows them to participate in a variety of professional activities. The main point is, of course, that learning is enhanced when all feel that they are part of a whole. Honors needs to promote this environment, an active community of scholars. In the process, and neither coincidentally nor undesirably, we build the environment in which we actually look forward to coming to work.

An important element in building such a community of scholars may be greater inclusivity than has been our propensity.

## INCLUSIVITY

From the outset of the honors movement and almost by its very nature and history, honors bespeaks “exclusivity.” Our programs are designed to serve a minority that we characterize as the “high-end students,” which puts the rest—the average, the “at risk,” the “less competitive” students—outside the scope of our oversight. We are fortunate to be working with the intellectually, artistically, and academically privileged; few of us would surrender this prerogative, which is the real reward of our calling. However, an ugly stain has crept into our approach and threatens, at many institutions, our very existence, namely the state of mind in honors that “We need to maintain standards for the university.”

One professor at our institution used to say, not quite reflectively enough, “Many of these students think that they could go to Harvard, and by heavens, I am going to show them what a Harvard education is all about.” This attitude led him to deliver a majority of Cs and Ds to an introductory chemistry class of honors freshmen whose quantitative and verbal SAT composite average was around 1370. Too often, as was certainly the case with this professor, this attitude leads to a punitive approach in the classroom, an approach that can also serve as a cover for bad teaching. We tend to confuse, at times, the imposition of “rigor” with an effective classroom style. (I need to note parenthetically that an in-house appeals process changed the majority of the final grades in this one class.)

Another variation on the “rigor in the classroom” theme is the determination to bar honors admission to any but a small cadre of select students. The selection criteria can be wide ranging, but typically they include exceptional standardized test scores, secondary school grades, class rank, and/or an Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or other types of specialized classes. While we need to design honors for more motivated, more accomplished students, we also need to maintain the flexibility to include a wide variety of them. We presumably would not want to overlook those with unique potential, those who matured academically a little more slowly, those whose backgrounds limited their access to educational opportunities, those whose skills lie outside standard assessment measures, and those who, genuinely wanting to achieve, have to work very, very hard with more modest results in their academic record. Honors must have participation standards—otherwise it is not honors—but we need constantly to allow ourselves to include students who have the potential to excel but lie outside our normal guidelines of admission, students who will ultimately benefit from our approach. Such students are always a gamble, of course, but the gamble is worth it.

Inclusivity might also mean including faculty and staff on campus who present a risk. At a former school, I had a non-honors colleague who complained bitterly about the terrible quality of students; not surprisingly, he was unpopular and gave every evidence of being ineffective in the classroom. He did, however, want to teach an honors class, and with great reservations I finally acceded. Happily for everyone, he flourished in honors. Finally, in his view, he was teaching the type of student that he deserved to teach. He worked hard at new presentation techniques, he cut the sarcasm in class, he started making office hours, and he generally became a valued colleague in honors class after honors class. When he retired, grateful students threw him an elaborate party. By including him, honors wrought something of a pedagogical miracle.

Including staff in the many manifestations of honors also pays dividends. If they are invested in the process and appreciated for what they offer, their contributions can be extraordinary. Perhaps they have not, for various reasons, attained the highest degrees that we hold sacred in academe. But we can draw them in, use their skills, and in the process find their contacts with honors students to be as extensive and influential as those of the faculty. Staff can be teachers in their own right and in their own areas of responsibility. Anything less than a partnership with them is an insult and a waste of resources. By investing them in our enterprise, we add to the education of our students.

Inclusivity means letting go of prejudices against certain fields of study. Honors administrators and faculty are often drawn from the traditional arts and sciences and can overlook the practical or vocationally structured disciplines on our campuses. As an engineering friend complained to me recently while acceding to my advocacy for the honors ideal of “breadth of education,” “the things occurring in mechanical engineering are just as rigorous, just as intellectually challenging, and can be just as broadening as what you see occurring educationally in history.” Touché. Let’s draw in the engineering, education, agriculture, business, and human science professors with an appreciation for what they offer to students. At the same time, we can extend some of the advantages of honors to diverse students who can benefit from our objectives as much as can liberal arts majors, advantages that include emphasis on breadth of education, critical thinking, global awareness, interdisciplinary teaching, and communication skills. We should make it a priority to establish honors experiences in all sectors of the university.

Inclusivity means outreach to the university as a whole. Nothing is more politically dangerous to an honors program, in my experience, than withdrawing into our own ivory tower within the larger ivory tower. As we move to segregate ourselves, we also raise suspicions about our intents and our posture among colleagues and administrators. The results are not pretty—lower funding, lack of cooperation, and, in some cases, disappearance of the program altogether. “Outreach” inclusivity can take a variety of forms. Draw non-honors students into your field trips and special activities, include them in your study abroad programs, stage events on campus for the student body as a whole, make sure that non-honors students feel welcome at your lunch discussions of current events, and give them assistance as they apply for prestigious national and international scholarships.

On our campus, the issue of whether to include non-honors students in honors classes has led to intense debate. Even with high GPA requirement for non-honors participants, the argument runs, honors students are more motivated, have a right to their own classes, and give professors better material to



work with. Non-honors students, the purists argue, detract from the seriousness of the class for teachers and honors students alike. The counterargument for inclusivity runs from the practical—we need to populate our classes with enough students to justify their existence—to the idealistic: what better way to proselytize the educational ideals in which we believe than to try to convert, through exposure, the non-believers to the truth of our faith? Obviously, I believe in including the unconverted, which, if nothing else, offers a wonderful recruiting tool for our programs.

Above all, honors should be a bastion of outstanding teaching, demonstrating the teaching prowess that we have an obligation to bring to and model for the rest of the campus.

## **THE BEST PEDAGOGUES ON CAMPUS**

Honors needs to re-enthroned the crucial function of teaching in many of the ways the Boyer Report recommends, and my remarks below are often influenced by that report.

We all know that, at least at research-oriented institutions, the surest way to tenure and promotion is not through effective teaching. It is not that teaching is unimportant, it is just that research, publications, and grants take so much greater precedence that teaching fades into the background as a legitimate or even viable professional activity. In some senses, universities cannot be blamed. When budgets are constrained by evaporating state support and/or limitations on tuition increases, outside funding becomes essential, and those who can secure it become critical. Yes, some professors are denied tenure because of poor teaching, and yes, we do try to work with truly awful classroom presenters, but mediocre or even poor teachers are often tolerated so long as the research, publication, and grant record is there.

A recurring conversation takes place on our campus about the possibility of a two-tiered faculty: a research-oriented faculty with fewer classes and a teaching faculty who would carry the burden of instruction. I am always intrigued by one component of these debates: the implicit assumption by both sides that the teaching faculty would be second-class citizens. Socrates, Aristotle, Galen, Abelard, Horace Mann—second-class citizens? Second-class citizens at the very institutions first conceived and now theoretically maintained primarily for instructional purposes? The idea is as ludicrous as the idea that universities have simply become farm clubs for big-time sports enterprises.

Let me advance, at this juncture, an heretical assumption: we are not here primarily to impose rigor on the classroom nor even to maintain exactly high standards. I am not even sure that we are in the classroom principally to insure mastery of the subject matter we teach. In fact, I have increasing

reservations about how much “teaching” I have accomplished in my thirty-five years of professional life. I see our most important obligation as engaging students precisely where they are in their intellectual development as they enter college and then drawing them into the tremendously exciting and significant learning enterprise in which we are involved. (Robert A. Scott and Dorothy Echols, as well as Geoffrey P. Lantos, have provided excellent insights and advice about this enterprise.)

My first premise of excellent pedagogy, then, is that we need to inspire a desire, even a passion, for learning; to encourage our students to connect with the subject matter on their own initiative; to convey to them the excitement of the learning process; and to lay the foundations for lifelong learning. From a personal perspective, I look back on a young professor who was continuously and loudly skeptical about the largely rural background of his students. He constantly complained about their lack of preparation. Only in my later years have I come to realize how arrogant I was. Instead of judging our students, we need to engage them.

My second premise is that we need to develop innovative and experimental teaching styles. We should constantly be searching for new and more effective ways of presenting the materials for which we are responsible in the classroom. Let’s call this “the Sesame Street” phenomenon. As my children were exposed to this American experience, I used to marvel at the skill of Jim Henson and his crew in making pleasurable the ancient tasks of reading, writing, and computation. We cannot all be entertainers, but we can take it as a maxim that the cardinal sin, next only to being pedagogically dishonest, is to be boring. Humans have a natural curiosity about the world around them—how tragic to thwart that curiosity and to destroy the zest to find out about everything. Let us commit to packaging our efforts so that student curiosity is stimulated, not driven underground.

Thirdly, we need to establish a personal rapport with our students. I do not necessarily mean “professor as friend,” but we should go to the extra lengths that are often customary at small liberal arts colleges, where professors invite students into their homes or make other special efforts to personalize teaching. We can arrange field trips or other extra-curricular learning enhancements, take students out for pizza, or in some way evince a personal concern and involvement with the students as individuals. The literature (see, for instance, Pascarella) tells us that a personal connection between mentor and mentee enhances the learning process; we need to make such connections.

In the fourth premise of excellent pedagogy, the research and publication thread within the tapestry of our “New Model Education” comes into play. We must be active professionally in our fields; this means reading deeply in

the literature of our area, and it usually means at least a modest contribution to our field of study. These contributions can come in conference presentations, in articles and books, in the stuff of traditional research, and it can also come in talks to lay audiences. How can we convey excitement about our subject matter to our students if we are not enthusiastic about and active in it? And how can we be enthusiastic if we are not current in the literature and contributing to the topography of our field?

As a fifth premise, we must always telegraph respect for our students as individuals regardless of how weak or strong they may be academically. This respect involves some obvious admonitions like eschewing sarcasm in the classroom, but it can also mean posting reasonable office hours and then honoring those times assiduously. Similarly, the first day of class is a crucial occasion for the professor to telegraph the importance of the work that stretches out ahead; a well prepared syllabus, a pep talk about the subject, and an engaged interaction during the entirety of the first class period are basic.

Respect for students means listening attentively when students have problems and then trying to find solutions in a reasonable and mutually satisfactory way. It means entertaining their point of view, no matter how problematic it may be, and then trying civilly to bring them to a better understanding of the material or situation. It is simply treating students as valued individuals.

As a sixth premise, we must be constantly involved in improving our teaching styles. This means participating in group sessions to discuss what we do, and it means going to conferences to acquire new insights. We learn from each other. We should never be satisfied about “where we are” when it comes to teaching skills. We need to encourage our colleagues to be similarly self-critical and oriented toward improvement.

Finally, we need to learn to measure teaching effectiveness. In this age of assessment, we should become the paragons for evaluating classroom performance and should constantly use this assessment to improve the delivery of our message.

Honors needs to re-enthronize teaching as the key function of higher education by being better at it than anybody else on campus; this teaching, along with our entire honors effort, needs to be constantly fresh, constantly experimenting with new approaches in educational delivery, and constantly adopting innovative strategies to make learning accessible.

## INNOVATION

The historical challenge to honors has been the charge of elitism, but within the last twenty years, this old bugaboo of the honors movement has tended to ebb. Universities consciously seek top students, and society has

been won over to the premise that perhaps we need to cater to the academic elite. The old Reagan shibboleth that a rising tide raises all boats has made us comfortable with the tide raisers. Recently, however, honors has been more likely to come under assault because of its sometimes innovative or non-traditional ways of viewing the university.

At our institution, the move to establish an honors faculty to cover the interdisciplinary work, to foster team teaching, and to offer new classes was initially controversial. One senior official in the provost's office, for instance, let it be known that for her there was no debate; honors programs simply do not and cannot have faculty members, end of discussion. She had the strong support of a great many people in the Faculty Senate. Happily for honors, however, a certain amount of administrative turmoil plus a supportive regent (in a very top-down management system) made the change possible, largely "under the radar." The next struggle was over tenure policy; our heavy weighting of teaching in the award of tenure was anathema. Again, as attention was focused on other—in this case athletic—matters, the new Honors College adopted a teaching-sensitive tenure policy. The lesson to be learned is not necessarily to take advantage of institutional turmoil to effect change but rather to be savvy about the resistance you will encounter; prepare for it, and develop strategies to cope with it.

The changes that honors can effect are pretty extensive. Some have already been noted, such as treating staff as educators and offering them partnerships with faculty—possibilities not readily accepted by all of our colleagues. Bringing students into the decision-making mix can also be controversial. Many of our colleagues are of the "Paper Chase" rather than "Dead Poets' Society" variety.

Our emphasis on interdisciplinary work can also threaten traditional disciplinary emphases. If there is any doubt about the institutional bias against breaking out of strict disciplinary delivery of material, try to set up team-teaching assignments, or try to find professors who can, without personal time or material penalties, teach courses outside of their department's typical offerings.

Advising is another element for reform. Most honors administrators profoundly appreciate this critical function and, in the absence of support personnel, do way too much of it themselves. Advising needs to be personalized; preferably (but not necessarily) it requires specifically trained professionals; and it needs to involve detailed record keeping so that there is consistency and continuity in the advice given semester after semester. As importantly, advisors need to be a force for apprising their charges of the huge variety of opportunities open to them with a little planning, including undergraduate research, study abroad, and application for prestigious scholarships. Most of

our students are bewildered by the university experience and have little or no idea of the breadth of prospects available to them. A graduating senior should never have to say, “Oh, I wish I had done that, only I never knew about it.” Honors needs to show the way to a better and more informed undergraduate experience; serious professional and at times personal advising is key.

Honors must also be programmatically experimental. One of our honors shibboleths is that we need to be a laboratory for new ideas and educational experiments on campus. With a small cadre of highly motivated students and an idealistic faculty, honors can undertake initiatives that others either cannot or will not. Experimental and unusual classes (our bread-and-butter activity), new degree programs, unusual study abroad and semester programs (such as the NCHC admirably sponsors), experiments with living and learning, commitments to service learning, new directions in undergraduate research, innovative advising—in these and other initiatives, honors must provide the cauldron out of which campus innovation can evolve. At our institution, for instance, honors is starting to blend the physical with the academic/intellectual; important intellectual insights can be generated while backpacking or canoeing down the Rio Grande River while studying the economic, sociological, and political dimensions of the border. The range of possibilities is as varied as are the distinct personalities of the campuses on which we reside.

Generally speaking, the principle is sacrosanct—honors must be a principal force on campus for innovation. Perhaps needless to say, innovation will meet with resistance.

### **COPING WITH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

A former president at our institution used to remark: “It is easier to change history than it is to change the history department.” In that aphorism, he has summarized one of the enduring truths of mankind, not to mention higher education: the impulse to retain the *status quo* is powerful.

As an example, the issue of “faculty rights” arises almost immediately as one wrestles with honors-related issues. To what extent, one might immediately ask, does an attempt to partner faculty and staff in decision-making roles mean a diminution of faculty prerogatives? After all, are not faculty the disciplinary experts? Is it not their task to run the ivied halls of higher learning? Has not faculty leadership had primacy since the medieval instigation of these enterprises? The learned “doctors” of Paris, Cambridge and Bologna, in their magnificent clerical garb, gave us some of the most enduring ceremonies and persuasive images for the role of the faculty in universities of our own time. The fear that bringing others, such as staff or students, into the mix will mean a lesser role for the professoriate is very strong indeed.

To address the historical objection first, I need simply to point out that medieval students at Bologna, Paris and Cambridge hired and fired their professors; they were the original arbiters of curriculum and professorial integrity. So much for the faculty as the sole “deciders.”

But even something as ostensibly benign as collective discussion about teaching techniques, as we seek to become the best pedagogues on campus, can run into opposition. After all, to discuss improvement suggests professorial weaknesses; it can be seen as an implicit criticism of faculty that threatens their autonomy. The charge of violating academic freedom even creeps into proposals to have teaching workshops—although what I suspect this really means is the self-serving freedom to be terrible in the classroom.

Cromwell understood such challenges as he fashioned the New Model Army of the seventeenth-century English Civil War. The opposition to what he was doing was fierce. What do you mean promoting men on the basis of merit rather than birth? Has not divinity already established who has the best blood running in their veins? What is it with this discipline stuff? Are you not destroying the fighting spirit of men when you take away their individuality to excel on the battlefield? And uniforms—how unseemly for the proud peacocks of the aristocracy! Contemporary educational reformers face similarly persuasive and tradition-sanctified arguments in attempting to remodel undergraduate education. Too many on our campuses are satisfied with the way things are in higher education. Comfortable stasis and apathy, combined with a certain self-satisfaction in the degrees we hold, may be more of a threat to the honors role in recasting the nature of educational delivery on campuses than is outright hostility.

Honors administrators and educators need to be the shock troops for improving matters, especially in the research universities, where the gross exploitation of tuition-paying students is rife. Give them beer and circuses, and students will not criticize what they are experiencing. The lack of attention to good teaching, the herding together in mass classes, the absence of personal but crucial educational attention, the persistence of old models of instruction and undergraduate experience, the rising costs but diminishing attention, the arrogance, isolation and self-righteousness of some of the professoriate—these are often the norm. The system can appear to be working pretty well; after all, don't we reassure ourselves that our higher education system, like our medical system, is the best in the world? Are not foreign students clamoring to come here (mostly, I might point out, at the graduate level)?

But reform is stirring. Honors is the logical instrument for that reform, both through diplomatic modeling of a *better* way to do things and through militant demand for a *new* way to do things. There will be opposition to change, as there always is, from entrenched interests. But the idealism that I

find so pervasive in the honors cadre of faculty and administrators, as well as the clear wrongs that are being done to undergraduate students, make our task possible, noble, and imperative.

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