



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on January 10, 2018

Dirty College Secrets

A frequent point I have made in past columns has been about the educational travesty happening on many college campuses. Some people have labeled my observations and concerns as trivial, unimportant and cherry-picking. While the spring semester awaits us, let's ask ourselves whether we'd like to see repeats of last year's antics.



An excellent source for college news is [Campus Reform](#), a conservative website operated by the Leadership Institute. Its reporters are college students. Here is a tiny sample of last year's bizarre stories.

Donna Riley, a professor at Purdue University's School of Engineering Education, published an article in the most recent issue of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Engineering Education*, positing that academic rigor is a "dirty deed" that upholds "white male heterosexual privilege." Riley added that "scientific knowledge itself is gendered, raced, and colonizing." Would you hire an engineering education graduate who has little mastery of the rigor of engineering? What does Riley's vision, if actually practiced by her colleagues, do to the worth of degrees in engineering education from Purdue held by female and black students?

Sympathizing with Riley's vision is Rochelle Gutierrez, a math education professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In her recent book, she says the ability to solve algebra and geometry problems perpetuates "unearned privilege" among whites. Educators must be aware of the "politics that mathematics brings" in society. She thinks that "on many levels, mathematics itself operates as Whiteness." After all, she adds, "who gets credit for doing and developing mathematics, who is capable in mathematics, and who is seen as part of the mathematical community is generally viewed as White." What's worse is that the university's interim provost, John Wilkin, sanctioned her vision, telling Fox News that Gutierrez is an established and admired scholar who has been published in many peer-reviewed publications. I hope that the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's black students don't have the same admiration and stay away from her classes.

Last February, a California State University, Fullerton professor assaulted a CSUF Republicans member during a demonstration against President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration. The students identified the assailant as Eric Canin, an anthropology professor. Fortunately, the school had the good sense to later suspend Canin after confirming the allegations through an internal investigation.

Last month, the presidents of 13 San Antonio colleges declared in an op-ed written by Ric Baser, president of the Higher Education Council of San Antonio, and signed by San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg and 12 other members of the HECSA that "hate speech" and "inappropriate messages" should not be treated as free speech on college campuses. Their vision should be seen as tyranny. The true test of one's commitment to free speech doesn't come when he permits people to be free to make statements that he does not find offensive. The true test of one's commitment to free speech comes



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when he permits people to make statements he does deem offensive.

Last year, University of Georgia professor Rick Watson adopted a policy allowing students to select their own grade if they “feel unduly stressed” by their actual grade in the class. Benjamin Ayers, dean of the school’s Terry College of Business, released a statement condemning Watson’s pick-your-own-grade policy, calling it “inappropriate.” He added: “Rest assured that this ill-advised proposal will not be implemented in any Terry classroom. The University of Georgia upholds strict guidelines and academic policies to promote a culture of academic rigor, integrity, and honesty.” Ayers’ response gives us hope that not all is lost in terms of academic honesty.

Other campus good news is a report on the resignation of George Ciccariello-Maher, a white Drexel University professor who tweeted last winter, “All I Want For Christmas is White Genocide.” He said that he resigned from his tenured position because threats against him and his family had become “unsustainable.” If conservative students made such threats, they, too, could benefit from learning the principles of free speech.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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