

"Illiberal Arts"
Harper's
November 2005

Your forum on "ideological balance" in university faculties begins with the familiar contention that left-wing professors dominate academia. The debate then proceeds between those who think left-wing dominance is a bad thing and those who do not. The premise is nevertheless false.

Consider the field of political science: the discipline has long been intertwined with the United States foreign-policy establishment. The Central Intelligence Agency was a major provider of research funds during the 1950s, and its influence has since been reestablished. In 2000, Yale Professor Bradford Westerfield commented, "There's a great deal of actually open consultation [with the CIA] and there's a lot more semi-open, broadly acknowledged consultation." A recent president of the American Political Science Association has openly consulted for the agency.

Pharmaceutical companies are major funders in the biomedical sciences. Right-wing think tanks support researchers in economics and philosophy, especially those who celebrate market solutions to problems. The Department of Defense funds a broad range of fields--as, no doubt, will the Department of Homeland Security.

Talk-radio listeners may, if they wish, believe that universities are loaded with Marxists, but this picture has nothing to do with reality. I was sorry to see that Harper's did so little to dispel this misperception.

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