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AN OPEN LETTER TO STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Most of these comments are based on personal experiences in the scientific and parascientific classes, but they may just pertain to other areas also.

What happened to the spirit of '69? Through a lack of student initiative or as a result of faculty despair or a combination of both, we have lost some of the liberalism in classroom policy. We are regressing back to militarism and regimentation. Experimentation and openness that was encouraged last year to develop a more beneficial structure or non-structure as the case may be, possibly left things a little chaotic. But I do think much good was accomplished through the liberalized attitudes.

When the syllabi were handed out and classroom policy expounded the first couple of days this semester, I'm sure many students were not amazed, but took it in stride, feeling that with an organized basis more could be accomplished than having to fumble around for the first couple of weeks in order to establish some acceptable organization of their own. I'm sure many of these students were even relieved to have a concrete base upon which they could innovate. But something went wrong along the way. There was no innovation. If it was because the students did not pick up the opportunities right in the beginning or if the atmosphere of the classes were such as to preclude all innovation, who knows? Whatever the case, there was none. The classes have remained strictly regimented and the students are running about "getting things done and handing them in".

I thought we were developing a "good thing" here at Alverno. What happened? Maybe it is too late to change, but this is what I think has happened (for whatever reasons):

1. "Extra work," study aids -- Those things that are available to aid the student in his understanding of material have taken on the auspicious quality of being mandatory requirements. No margin is allowed for setting up priorities or for a judgement of the worth of utilizing specific visual aids, articles, etc. by the student. (e.g. reading reports, film reports, etc.) What happened to the idea of these aids being used for the benefit and betterment of the student at his option?

2. Busy work -- speaks for itself -- too much precious time spent attempting something of proportionately little value.

3. What happened to the voluntary class attendance policy? (This is a personal gripe. I don't care what anybody says. Some classes aren't worth going to.)

4. Subject integration -- Maybe this involves more effort on the student's part. Sometimes the same material is gone over in two different courses. If somehow this material could be integrated it would seem that time and energy would be conserved and a more complete and broader understanding would be obtained. (Microbiology and Physiology)

5. The God-almighty grade is back again. The pressure is on. (e.g. 20% of your grade for reading reports. The number of films you view will affect your grade.) What about what's in a person's head? What about a person's learning performance? Maybe a person can get it together without writing 20 article reports.

Right now it seems to me that there is too much doing and not enough done. (What is being internalized, the process or the results?) I'm not trying to lay blame. I'm just observing a state of affairs and attempting to catalyze a change.

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