

**FACULTY BULLETIN  
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## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

**Peter Wegner and Peter Richardson**

This issue of the *Faculty Bulletin* contains ten articles. The first five explore questions of policy and behavior at Brown and the world at large, while the second group reflects the personal actions and interactions that have impacted the authors' university work.

The first article by economics professor George Borts examines the economic costs and benefits of prevention of further global warming. The costs would arise from curtailing various activities to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide, while the benefits would include better amenities and reduction of morbidity. Borts points out that the economic method for assessing future benefits in terms of present costs (as we do with mortgages) involves discounting - and applying this method when the benefits accrue so long into the future, which raises questions about future interest rates to be assumed. Amy Greenwald focuses on her seven-year project of developing strategies to win an international trading agents competition, using Brown's RoxyBot project developed by her and students in her computer class. Joachim Krueger of the Department of Psychology examines the impact and psychology of power in the use of spaces: so often "up" represents power, and "down" or "lower" represents passivity or submission. He suggests that these associations are not simply biological, but cultural, with cultures that attribute their origins to the earth not building lofty structures of worship, while for entertainment even our culture comes to a counterpoint in the use of space for Theater. Former Provost Bill Simmons continues his series of articles on Academic Freedom in American universities, particularly exploring current threats arising from questioning the possible tendency of academic persons to choose too often faculty additions of the same stripe as themselves, thus upsetting sufficient ideological balance in such institutions separately for debate to be healthily diverse in each. Newly-appointed Ombudsperson Flora Keshgegian examines the role of an ombudsperson in applying neutrality and fairness while supporting respectful dialog in resolving disputes between professors, students, and administrators.

Ann Dill, the current Chair of the Faculty, focuses on her life as an activist during her early academic career before becoming active at Brown, with a sense that activism is tempered by various constraints, even as innocuous as a policeman explaining leafleting being prohibited in a park, and the need for extensive discussion with others to achieve a supportable position, exemplified now by the Faculty Executive Committee discussing models for an enhanced leave policy. She concludes by pointing out the many opportunities for faculty participation in the Committees which are an essential aspect of Faculty Governance. José Amor praises Norman Fiering's contribution to Brown on his retirement as Director and Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library. We appreciate Norman's series of articles in the *Faculty Bulletin*, and have wider appreciation for his fund-raising skills on behalf of the JCB Library which have not only supported collection of words and images from the past, but also for a number of scholars to have time in residence and themselves carefully craft more writings, because "only the words transform what happened into history". Undergraduate Kaitlin Goldstein investigated the scope of outreach at Brown to encourage students at Hope and other high schools to

study science and mathematics, and through her personal participation gained insights into Brown's contribution to high school education where the rubber meets the road. She points out the utility of discovering the needs of schools within their own constraints so as to make matches more effective. Her article makes interesting reading especially in the context of the recent Report of the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, which recommends that the University should interact more directly with school education in the State. Peter Richardson's article explores the growing evidence of continuing cheating and plagiarism, citing recent outside articles and personal observations of past students in the work they submitted for grading. The increase of such unattributed "out-sourcing" by students, and of cases involving falsification by others in professional publications, calls us faculty to be more diligent in reiterating our expectations of honesty to our students, and being willing to keep wider track of those who have difficulty keeping to our expectations. Peter Wegner's article about his recent lecture and award in Vienna, a city rich with associations involving scholarship of various sorts, illustrates yet again that retired professors can continue to undertake research, writing, and other activities in the Brown community, and continue to represent the University's breadth and depth in the international scholarly community.

## GLOBAL WARMING MEETS COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

**George H. Borts**  
**Department of Economics**

Economists rarely speak with a single voice, as witness the disagreement over public policy toward global warming.<sup>1</sup> Our inability to decide whether global warming is high on the list of civilization's remediable ills has created considerable soul searching and cries of shame and irrelevance.

Economics has nothing to say about the validity of predictions about the growing atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide or its effects on the earth's average temperature and average oceanic levels. But it provides a methodology, called cost-benefit analysis, to evaluate the merits of proposals to use public resources to prevent global warming. This is an extension to the public sphere of the thought process that individuals are assumed to apply to the problems of the accumulating and spending wealth over their lifetimes.

The economic benefit of preventing global warming is the cost that would be saved by averting future damage. William Cline's projections suggest that damage could reach 15% or more of World Gross Domestic Product by the year 2300. Losses would occur in the areas of agriculture, electricity requirements for cooling, sea level rise, warming of the water supply, loss of human life from heat waves, forest loss and increased tropospheric ozone pollution, and species loss. Other potential losses arise from the reduction of human amenities and increase of human morbidity, as well as the threatened interruption of the circulation of the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean, which mitigates winter temperatures in northern Europe.

The economic cost of preventing global warming is the loss of valuable output from the activities that would be curtailed to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide. Examples are increased cost and reduced output of electric energy to control smokestack emissions, and increased cost and reduced use of autos to control exhaust from internal combustion engines.

The evaluation of costs and benefits hinges on the delay between the adoption of preventive policies and the realization of full benefits. If both costs and benefits were to take place in the same year, one would subtract one from the other to determine if the result is a positive saving of economic resources. However, all of the economic studies

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<sup>1</sup> The present article was stimulated by reading Global Crises and Global Solutions, edited by Bjorn Lomborg, New York 2004. Three of the papers examine climate change, resulting in the mixed verdict described above. The main paper was written by William Cline of the Institute for International Economics, (pp. 13-43), and comments were provided by Alan Manne of Stanford University (pp. 49-55) and Robert Mendelsohn of Yale University (pp. 44-48).

imply a delay, with the benefits achieved over the next 300 years, while the costs of preventive measures start in the present and near future.

As a consequence of the delay, it is necessary to use compound interest to convert distant sums of money into present values. The process is called discounting. Because money earns interest, a sum of money payable in the future has a lower present market value than the same sum payable today. The longer the delay, the lower the present value. Indeed, long delays may force the present value of distant benefits to fade in comparison with near term costs. This is exactly what has happened in many economic studies of the costs and benefits of eliminating global warming. The use of market levels of interest rates has led to the conclusion that preventive measures are too expensive compared to the benefits to justify any current restrictions on carbon emissions.<sup>2</sup> There are more productive uses of public resources.

An Optimistic Conclusion: Using market rates of interest, mitigation of global warming does not pass the cost-benefit test, when near term costs of prevention are compared with the present value of averted damages that will be achieved centuries later. However, Cline's discussants, Alan Manne and Robert Mendelsohn, present a perspective on the lag between costs and benefits that is likely to reinstate the economic validity of the prevention policy. Their views are paraphrased below:

Manne's principal concern is that Cline has advocated a discounting strategy that is unduly alarmist, and that he has overstated the immediacy of the climate change problem. Mendelsohn also believes that Cline has overstated the benefits of near term preventive policy. His view is:

It is a mistake to require the present generation to attack a problem that future generations will cause. Our first priority is to be responsible for what we ourselves do. We must reduce current emissions because of what our emissions will do in the future. If every generation does the same, the problem will be taken care of over time.

By requiring each generation to be responsible for the environmental damage it causes, the cost-benefit test (using market interest rates) is more likely to show that prevention is economically efficient. The time horizon of cost-benefit analysis is shortened, reducing the delay between costs and benefits. Allowing each generation to decide on its own prevention policy increases the possibility that later generations will find the present value of benefits exceeds the present value of costs. The time path of prevention costs is also rebalanced, delaying the more expensive preventive measures until the potential occurrence of the most significant pollution damages.

Manne and Mendelsohn have shown us a better way to determine when to start spending the money, and how much to spend.

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<sup>2</sup> Some authors, such as Cline have carried out the analysis using interest rates below market levels, and have obtained results more favorable to prevention of pollution, but the rationale for doing so is not totally convincing.

**AUTONOMOUS BIDDING AGENTS:  
STRATEGIES AND LESSONS FROM THE TRADING AGENT COMPETITION**

**Amy Greenwald  
Department of Computer Science**

Trade is a quintessential human activity. Throughout history, the institutions and artifacts of trade, such as markets and currency, have evolved hand in hand with major technological advances, such as the printing press and telecommunication networks. The rise of the Internet in the past decade is another transformative advance. In the new online markets, buyers and sellers have unprecedented opportunities for trade through a wide array of novel mechanisms. For example, eBay, the largest online auction site, is solely responsible for creating viable markets for numerous idiosyncratic goods, and providing a medium where hundreds of thousands of small businesses earn their livelihood.

Compared to other interactive decision-making domains (e.g., politics), the trading task is particularly amenable to automation. Successfully automating trading, however, depends not only on trusted, reliable software interfaces, but also on being able to render effective decisions about which trading actions to take (e.g., what to exchange, when, and at what price). The topic of effective decision making is paramount to many disciplines, including psychology, economics, operations research, philosophy, and computer science. The field of artificial intelligence draws on principles from these subjects and others to develop techniques for decision making by "autonomous agents".

Autonomous agents are software programs that make decisions without direct human intervention. Even though computer software is conceived of by (human) designers and implemented by (human) programmers, we refer to programs as autonomous to the extent that their decisions are not rote implementations of instructions spelled out by a human. For example, a program that carried out the direction "bid \$99 for eBay item 123" would not be considered an autonomous trading agent. But a program that submitted this bid based on the direction "buy a digital camera at a good price" could be credibly attributed a meaningful degree of autonomy.

**The Trading Agent Competition**

The annual Trading Agent Competition (TAC) challenges its entrants to design autonomous agents capable of effective online trading. The first TAC, held in July 2000 in Boston, attracted 16 entrants from six countries in North America, Europe, and Asia to play a challenging market game in the domain of travel shopping. Excitement generated from this event led to refinement of the game rules and continuation of regular tournaments with increasing levels of competition over the next six years. Year-by-year entrants improved their designs, developing new ideas and building on successful techniques in previous tournaments. Published accounts of TAC agents and TAC-based experimental studies now amount to a substantial literature (visit <http://tac.eecs.umich.edu/researchreport.html>). FOOTNOTE: The distilled experience

from seven years of TAC provides the basis for "Autonomous Bidding Agents: Strategies and Lessons from the Trading Agent Competition", by Mike Wellman, Amy Greenwald, and Peter Stone, MIT Press, forthcoming.

TAC dresses in a familiar narrative several realistic features of trading in electronic markets. Shopping for airline flights and hotels is a routine activity for many people, and assembling trips for clients is a plausible application for agent technology. The key feature captured by this domain is that goods are highly interdependent (e.g., flight and hotel reservations must be coordinated), yet the markets for these goods operate independently. A second important feature of the game is that agents trade via three different kinds of market mechanism, each of which presents distinct challenges. Flights are traded in a posted price environment, where a designated party sets a price that the other parties must "take or leave". Hotels are traded in simultaneous ascending auctions, like the FCC spectrum auctions. Entertainment tickets are traded in continuous double auctions, like the New York Stock Exchange. In grappling with all three while constructing their agent strategies, participants are confronted by a number of interesting problems.

### **RoxyBot, Brown's Entrant**

Since TAC's inception, Brown has entered successive modifications of its autonomous trading agent, RoxyBot. I have developed this agent together with my research group--most notably Ph.D. student Victor Naroditskiy and undergraduate Seong Jae Lee (2007), a key engineer. RoxyBot was one of the two top-scoring agents in the 2000 tournament. At the core of RoxyBot-00's architecture was a \*deterministic\* optimization problem, namely how to bid given predictions of the auctions' clearing prices in the form of point estimates.

In spite of its effectiveness in TAC 2000, a weakness of the 2000 design was that RoxyBot could not explicitly reason about variance within prices. In the years since 2000, we recast the key challenges faced by TAC agents as several different \*stochastic\* bidding problems, whose solutions necessarily exploit price predictions in the form of distributions. But, in spite of our perseverance, RoxyBot finished near the bottom of the pack year after year until 2006.

Half a decade in the laboratory spent searching for bidding heuristics that can exploit stochastic information at reasonable computational expense finally bore fruit, as RoxyBot emerged victorious in TAC-06. The "secret" of RoxyBot-06's success is, in a nutshell: price prediction by simulating simultaneous ascending auctions, and bidding based on the sample average approximation method. Details of this approach will be published at the 2007 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence.

## POWER IN SPACE

Joachim I. Krueger  
Department of Psychology

The natural language teems with expressions that link the quality of human relationships to spatial distance or orientation. We feel close to others we love, and the nearest friends are the dearest. When we part ways or move on, we become more distant, and eventually lose sight of one another. Spatial metaphors of liking, loving, and intimacy extend across the horizontal plane. Metaphors indicating power differentials, however, extend vertically. The dominant lord it over the submissive, talking down to them or even running roughshod over them. Power resides in high places and commands are handed down. To get power, we climb the social hierarchy, aiming for the top of the heap. Power evokes spatial imagery, and this imagery is expressed in the physical environment we construct to live in.

### Power Is Up

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the ultimate power resides with God. His spirit floated above the waters when He created the world. He gave his commandments to His prophet on a mountaintop. The prophet descended from the mountain to educate the children of Israel, who later built shrines on other mountaintops, and looked to the mountains for divine help. Soaring high, the gothic cathedrals of the late middle ages expressed this metaphorical return from the low earth to divine height. Priests would ascend to the pulpit and direct their homilies down to the laypeople. In synagogues, newly minted adults ascend to the *bima* (an elevated platform), and the Torah scrolls are taken down to be touched by the people. Above is power and influence; below is passivity and prayer.

Secular society understands the power of these metaphors and perpetuates them. The bosses roam the *chef étage*, peering through large windows down on a conquered world. The height of the office building represents how strong a claim to power is being laid. The business district of the average American city is a showcase of symbolic competition for power. Although governmental architecture has resisted the single-minded *Drang nach oben*, it nevertheless remains cognizant of height. The Rhode Island State House is tall, situated on a hill, and without nearby competition. In Washington, the nation's representatives symbolically and literally inhabit a grand edifice "on the hill." The comparative humbling of the Chief Executive in a mere lower-elevation "house" is historically significant, as an American President is construed as a sojourner, a person who must never be king. So it should be for, say, the President of a University. At Brown, the President's office is not on the top floor of University Hall, although the residence is suggestively located on Power Street.

The equation power = up almost seems too obvious to belabor. Examples are easy to find, and exceptions are easy to explain away (as in the case of the President). Can we say then that the equation power = up is a law of nature, on a par with gravity (n.b., power is impressive because it defies gravity), or is it a social construction, a peculiar product of our history and pre-occupations?

The case for the law-of-nature view is biological. As a general rule, larger creatures prevail over smaller ones when they are in physical conflict. As humans grow up, they live through years of knowing that their comparatively tall parents have both physical and economic power over them. Recognizing this evolutionary backdrop, Freud suggested that symbolic constructions, such as the Judeo-Christian religions, are little else but elaborated childhood fantasies.

The case for the social-construction view rests on cultural differences. If Western culture equates power with up, it does so because it has worked for a host of economic or political reasons, but it does not have to be this way. Cultures that attribute their origins to the earth and to growth from the soil, do not build lofty houses of worship. The *kivas* of the pueblo nations of the American Southwest literally burrow into the ground to connect finite and weak human-beings with sacred power. Caves have long served the same function without the burrowing.

### **Embodied Imagery**

A solution to the question of whether biology or economic-historical circumstance lies at the heart of the power = up equation is beyond the scope of this essay. It is, however, possible to ask just how deeply this equation has sunk into everyday consciousness. A recent set of experiments, published by Thomas W. Schubert in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2005, volume 89, pp. 1-21) is instructive. Schubert suggests that thinking and perceiving are “embodied,” that is, both rely in part on the same mental apparatus. Because of this entanglement, people automatically associate power with vertical size (height) and vertical position (above). The latter allows even small objects or people to appear powerful, as when a diminutive jockey controls the horse beneath.

Schubert’s tests of the automatic association of vertical position with power are simple and elegant. In one experiment, powerful words like *master* are paired with powerless words like *servant* and presented on a computer screen. Participants in the study hit a response button faster to identify a powerful word when it is presented above a powerless word, instead of below it. Likewise, they identify a powerless word faster when it is presented below a powerful word instead of above it. Even when words are presented one at a time, powerful words are identified faster when presented at the top of the screen. In a follow-up study, Schubert finds that participants express greater respect for powerful animals (e.g., lions, elephants, bears) when their names are presented at the top of the screen, whereas there is no such effect for powerless animals (e.g., hares, does, llamas).

### **Enter Trump**

The nature of these findings may not be surprising, but their subtlety is. If relatively minor changes in spatial arrangements are sufficient to call forth deep-seated associations with power, it should not be surprising that individuals who have power, or who aspire to get it, capitalize on their effects. As case in point, consider Donald Trump. Whatever eponymous

product he pitches is not only the best but also the biggest. His signature building, the Trump Tower, may not be as tall as the Empire State Building, but it has a sly semantic advantage.

Trump shows his adeptness at manipulating space most effectively on his show “The Apprentice.” His entrance is always spectacular and mindful of space. He swoops down on the waiting contestants by helicopter, or, more prosaically, descends on them by escalator. He never emerges head first on an upward-bound escalator. But it is the dreaded boardroom that holds most of the clues to his spatially crafted authority. The contestants have to go up to the boardroom, but in it, Trump’s only vertical prop is the time-tested high-rising backrest (which he never uses because he leans forward into the contestants to maximize the impact of his trademark “You’re fired!” line).

In the boardroom, the savvy Donald goes beyond mere verticality. The conference table is long and narrow. The contestants file in and sit in a long line of up to 16 on one side, facing Trump’s lieutenants, George and Caroline, who are already there. Trump enters through a special door in the back, a door that spells privilege. Only he can use it and he arrives late. Power does not wait, it let’s others wait. Trump, scowling, sits down on the high back-rested chair, virtually enthroning himself. He is at the center, his lieutenants on either side are wing men (or, in Caroline’s case, a wing woman). Their placement at the far corners of Trump’s table is significant. It accentuates the centrality of the chief, and, consistent with the military imagery of high-powered, Sun-Tzu smitten corporate culture, shields him from encirclement by the restive but frightened contestants. At the end of the show, the unlucky firee must shoulder the burden of representing failure, rejection, fall from grace. The elevator takes the firee down to the street—always at night—to a waiting cabbie. This urban equivalent of ancient Charon takes the ex-contestant to an even lower destination: the shadowy world of people whose one moment in the spotlight has passed. For the man in power, there is no exile on the far side of the River Styx. After the commercial break, Mr. Trump is back as a seer, letting us catch a glimpse of next week’s power play.

### **Counterpoint: The Theater**

Cathedrals or corporate headquarters, power rises up and talks down. Power can exhort and command, or it can tell you you’re finished. But power does not entertain. Trump may entertain the American viewing audience, as Letterman would say, but he does not entertain the contestants. Entertainment affords different spatial arrangements. The architectural prototype of entertainment is the Greek amphitheater. This is Trump’s world in reverse. The audience rises up high, row after row. What is more, it virtually encircles the performer. Being able to see the audience on the opposing side of the stage magnifies the collective experience. The actors on stage are trapped in a sort of pit, having to project their voices and gestures at a steep angle. To control the audience, they cannot use any of the regular tools of power, such as carrots or sticks. Subtler methods are needed. The actors must find ways to get the audience to identify with them. To the ancient Greeks, the arousal of pity was crucial. They regarded identification with the tragic hero, and the realization of his fate’s inevitability as a purifying experience. Their architecture afforded these sentiments. The fallen hero lay below and pity went well with bowed heads (Try pitying Oedipus while craning your neck!).

Occasionally, the themes of power and entertainment mingle resulting in uncertain space. College professors are caught in such a space. Forget seminar rooms. Seminar rooms are architectural non-entities, little boxes to contain the teachers and the taught at little expense. The interesting spaces are the lecture halls that are presumably laid out with purpose and aspiration. What do they communicate? Combining the theatrical with implied military discipline, the European model features stadium seating in straight rows. In my own neighborhood, Carmichael Auditorium in the Hunter Laboratory of Psychology is a good example. But then there are the more modern lecture halls that return to the amphitheater prototype. Macmillan 110 is gorgeous, large, and steep. An Epidaurus on Thayer Street. Next to it is Macmillan 115, which seats 120. It is wide, but less steep, and not as many rows deep. This is where I introduce students to social psychology. I love the location, but I am mindful that it curtails my power. In the spirit of the times, it casts the college professor as an entertainer. Jokes are told and illustrative anecdotes enliven scientific data. No divine wisdom is imparted and no one gets fired by a pointy finger. There are no lieutenants to protect the professor/entertainer from encirclement. There is only the lone but stalwart teaching assistant in the first row.

We are creatures in space. We (and our architects) shape it, and we are shaped by it. Most of the time we give it little thought, remaining unaware of Schubert-like associations. When we have power that we don't want to lose or attain power that we don't have, it is worthwhile taking a look around and learn from those who design space and those who use it to their advantage. Both are integral parts of the equation.

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## CURRENT THREATS TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

**William Simmons**  
**Professor of Anthropology**

*Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free expression.*

*...the scholar must be absolutely free not only to pursue his investigations but to declare the results of his researches, no matter where they may lead him or to what extent they may come into conflict with accepted opinion. To be of use to the legislator or the administrator, he must enjoy their complete confidence in the disinterestedness of his conclusions.*

(AAUP 2001: 3, 296).

Worries about threats to academic freedom are increasing in volume and in the diversity of opinions about the sources of these threats and what to do about them. One current example is concern over the increase in contingent faculty appointments that are off the tenure track and thus not protected by the shield of academic freedom (Bradley 2004; Kirp 2005). A second example is the huge literature that addresses risks inherent in the research university's dependence on massive subsidies from federal, corporate, foundation, and private sources and the many ways that this dependency affects academic values, autonomy, and integrity (Bok 2002; Slaughter and Rhodes 2004; Washburn 2005). Head and shoulders above these at the moment, however, are the worries expressed by two classes of adversaries each of which claims to subscribe to the fundamental principles that underpin American academic freedom but that hold the other responsible for assaulting these principles.

In one corner stand a collection of loosely affiliated persons who are mainly outside the ivory tower looking in but who also include a number of students, faculty, and administrators. In their perspective, the university has become polluted (or at least is going to ruin) because those within it, particularly faculty, have abandoned the disinterested search for objective knowledge to assert leftist political ideologies in their teaching, scholarship, evaluation of students, the appointment of new faculty, and in promotions to tenure. According to this viewpoint, such ideologues have corrupted our campuses and in the name of academic freedom have succeeded in creating intolerant sanctuaries where political correctness now reigns--in the case of public universities, at public expense. From this vantage point, signs of the defilement of academic freedom can be seen everywhere—and even especially—on the most prestigious college and university campuses, particularly in social science and humanities departments where admirers of Jean Baudrillard, Antonio Gramsci, Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, and Michel Foucault argue that disinterested research, truth, and objective knowledge are ideologies that support the givenness of power.

Roger Kimball, in his essay “Retaking the Universities,” commented that “The use and abuse of academic freedom to indemnify not the expression of unpopular opinions but political incitement of various kinds is one symptom of the degradation of American academic life....Why should parents fund the moral decivilization of their children at the hands of tenured antinomians?...Why should trustees preside over an institution whose faculty systematically repudiates the pedagogical mission they, as trustees, have committed themselves to uphold?” (Kimball 2005). David Horowitz, author of the “Academic Bill of Rights” (see [www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org](http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org)) forcefully asserts the need for a course correction toward “intellectual pluralism” in academia that requires the intervention of state legislatures: “I never intended to take my Bill of Rights to legislatures, but did so after I found when I approached university administrators their response was universally to blow me off” (Horowitz 2005). Anne D. Neal, President of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni--ACTA ([www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org)), in a recent presentation entitled “Why Outside Input is Important: Academic Freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” argued that it is time for the American Association of University Professors to live up to their own 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure. She continues:

*...we must also understand...how academic freedom can...be threatened from inside academic institutions, and how, in such situations, institutional independence can undermine the academic freedom of those threatened. This threat from within is one in which administrators and academics impose on their students and on one another political or ideological standards rather than academic ones. It is this scenario that all too often characterizes the modern academy and it is why outside input—in the form of criticism and legislative attention—is essential if academic freedom is to be preserved in any meaningful way (Neal 2006).*

ACTA, in a recent publication, *Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action* presents a case for the necessity of change in contemporary academia (that the trustees must lead) and offers 16 “Practical Suggestions” for implementing this change, starting with--“Conduct a self-study to assess the current state of intellectual diversity on campus and identify areas for improvement” (ACTA 2005: 11). With regard to the Ward Churchill case (Churchill is the Professor of Ethnic Studies who described the victims of 9-11 as “little Eichmanns”) ACTA suggested that “the extremist rhetoric and tendentious opinion for which Churchill is infamous can be found on campuses across America” and that “academic freedom should end at the point where professors abuse the special trust they are given....” (ACTA 2006).

According to Mark Bauerlein, Professor of English at Emory University, professors are feverishly upset by criticisms of their lack of intellectual diversity--“Because something is, indeed, threatened: the ideological grip of liberals and leftists on campuses. Under the public eye, they can no longer propagate their viewpoints as if they possessed the only rational and moral approach to cultural or political matters....They’ve lived too long without a challenge, and the dissenting voice comes off as evil-spirited or stupid” (Bauerlein 2005). One widely expressed interpretation of the difficulties of Lawrence

Summers' presidency at Harvard was that he had fallen victim to politically correct intolerance (Dershowitz 2006; Fish 2005).

In the other corner stand a great many tenure-track faculty and academic administrators who see serious political dangers to academic freedom in these criticisms and practical suggestions. For example, Amy Gutmann, President of the University of Pennsylvania, observes that "American colleges and universities derive their greatness not by echoing the conventional views of society" and asks the question—"Is there, then, a problem? If so, how should we rectify it?":

*Not by outside regulation, as some critics urge. Guided by established procedures of self-governance, universities must be steadfast in their commitment to the principles of academic freedom—which is not a license to suppress student dissent or engage in partisan proselytizing in the classroom. Upholding academic freedom does require universities to furnish a safe haven for free inquiry and discussion. And it recommends that we provide a respectful hearing to all debatable opinions and to external criticisms of the academy, rather than dismiss those who question us....* (Gutmann 2005).

The American Association of University Professors and contributors to their bulletin, *Academe*, are particularly alarmed by the calls for external intervention to implement intellectual diversity, which, from their perspective, would be the undoing of academic freedom. The 2003 AAUP statement on the Academic Bill of Rights says specifically that:

*...the Academic Bill of Rights...infringes on academic freedom in the very act of purporting to protect it. A fundamental premise of academic freedom is that decisions concerning the quality of scholarship and teaching are to be made by reference to the standards of the academic profession, as interpreted and applied by the community of scholars who are qualified by expertise and training to establish such standards....The danger of such guidelines is that they invite diversity to be measured by political standards that diverge from the academic criteria of the scholarly profession.* (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/protectrights/academicfreedom/>).

In an essay entitled "'Intellectual Diversity': the Trojan Horse of a Dark Design" Stanley Fish observed that "as a genuine academic value, intellectual diversity is a nonstarter. As an imposed imperative, it is a disaster" because--"Someone is going to say, let's monitor those lefty professors and keep tabs on what they're saying; and while we're at it, let's withhold federal funds from programs that do not display 'ideological balance'...." (Fish 2004).

With academic freedom being a kind of summary symbol of academic values and the structure of academic relations, such tensions over its meaning and practice ascend from tremors within society that are altering the relationships between universities and the world in which they are embedded. In the next piece I will consider some recent efforts to rethink the idea of academic freedom and the societal context in which such efforts at rethinking arise.

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## THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY OMBUDSPERSON

**Flora A. Keshgegian, PhD**  
**Brown University Faculty Ombudsperson**

When President Simmons and the Faculty Executive Committee decided to establish an Office of Faculty Ombudsperson at Brown University, they joined a growing trend in colleges and universities. In the last several decades, more and more schools have opened such offices, not only for faculty, but also for staff and students. These offices are sign of the complexities of the institutions in which we reside and the need for more ways to navigate institutional dynamics.

The term, ombudsman, is Swedish and refers to someone “who has an ear to the people.” The first ombudspersons were public officials who “listened” to the people, investigated citizen complaints and issued reports to the government. Independent from the government, they were able to speak freely and even forcefully in order to keep the government informed and to call it to account. In this classic model, the ombudsperson is outside governmental and institutional structures.

More common is the organizational model in which the ombudsperson is employed by an institution to serve its constituents. Even here, there are a variety of types: ranging from a newspaper’s ombudsperson who deals with queries and complaints from readers, to a corporate ombudsperson whose focus is on employee issues and disputes, to a university ombudsperson who serves as a confidential resource for the various constituencies within the institution. In Brown’s case, the ombudsperson’s constituency is designated as the faculty. In order to insure that the role of the ombudsperson remains independent, it is common for the ombudsperson to report to a chief officer, such as the President.

This is the case at Brown. The commitment Brown made in establishing this position was to provide for its independence and neutrality, as well as the confidentiality of meetings with the Ombudsperson. Reporting to the President helps to guarantee these conditions. The Office is autonomous from institutional channels. It is not an office of notice, which means that the Ombudsperson does not report on the things that are discussed or feed them into official channels.

The Ombudsperson does, however, have access to administrators and offices of the University so as to enable the resolution of cases. In granting such access, the University is also inviting the Ombudsperson to bring to its attention policies and procedures that may be unfair or ineffective.

In all these ways, the Ombudsperson functions as an inside “outside consultant” whose commitment is that everyone be treated fairly and that the processes used to make decisions be fair ones. This standard of fairness becomes the measure of how the Ombudsperson functions and what she does. The Ombudsperson maintains neutrality and does not take sides, other than advocating for fairness.

Further, the Ombudsperson does not participate in decision-making or adjudication. Rather she focuses on the process of decision-making and evaluation and how fair and functional those processes are. Since most administrators are involved with the outcomes of policies and procedures, they may not be as free to attend to the processes themselves. Again, the Ombudsperson functions consultatively to help processes be fair and to right them when they need correcting. In doing so, the Ombudsperson may draw upon resources of mediation or dispute resolution.

The Ombudsperson may be helpful not only in dealing with manifest conflict, but also in preventing conflict from deepening or becoming destructive. Conflict is an inevitable part of institutional life. The particularities of academic institutions and departments generate their own types of conflicts. Especially at times of change and transition, much gets stirred up, including old injuries and unresolved disputes. Change often causes uneasiness which can easily morph into tension and conflict. The Ombudsperson can help faculty and departments manage change to prevent conflicts from taking hold. Those needing to negotiate a difficult situation or dynamic might consult the Ombudsperson for help in developing strategies and approaches.

Since the Office of Faculty Ombudsperson is new at Brown, an understanding of the concrete ways in which it might serve as a resource to individual faculty and departments is still developing. The commitment Brown has made in establishing this office, however, is clear. It is to fairness and to enhancing the well-being of the faculty and the mission of the University.

## **MY LIFE AS AN ACTIVIST**

**Ann Dill  
Chair of the Faculty and  
Faculty Executive Committee**

Since I was a child, I have found myself in positions where people see me as an advocate for social change, while I see myself simply as asking questions. Either way, I've become an activist, if only at times by accident. Since this background goes a long way in explaining my involvement in faculty governance and how I understand the work of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), let me tell you some stories.

The first incident I remember occurred during my early years at school. One of the few positions of responsibility accorded students was to be a crossing guard at intersections close to the school. At the time there wasn't much traffic on those streets, so the job of the guards was more to make sure the smaller kids stopped and looked before crossing, than to direct traffic. To appear as official as possible, the guards wore a white belt around their waists and across one shoulder – the same type of belt used by guards at military forts, complete with silver badges. It was a position of rare prestige for a young student, and one to which I definitely aspired. The problem was that I was a girl, and membership in the guards was limited to boys.

I talked with some girlfriends, and we all agreed that just wasn't right. Inspired by sixth grade civics, I drew up a petition, gathered signatures (mainly from girls), and along with my friends took it to the Principal, an august woman whose only activity outside of school appeared to be tending the roses on its yard. The response was not what we had hoped for, nor expected. Parents were called in, talks were held, and my parents assured the Principal (and me) that I would never do such a thing again. No one saw this as the first breeze of the feminist storm that would soon overtake the country; it was just a bunch of girls "acting up." Yet despite the push-back, we were heard: the next year, I got to wear the white belt and belt and realize, with some disillusionment, that this coveted position largely consisted of waiting for a child to show up and be walked across the street. Of course, I still couldn't become an "officer" among the guards; those ranks would remain a male prerogative until bussing came to the area and eliminated the guards altogether.

My high school years were at the height of Civil Rights protests. I had one close friend who became involved, especially in the marches on Washington, D.C., which was less than ten miles away. You could tell she was an activist because she wore sandals. These were against the school's dress code, as were any type of pants for girls and skirts above the knee. My friend asked me to come with her to the demonstrations, and encouraged me to put up at home some people who had come from distant states. My mother's reaction to such an invitation involved so much eye-rolling and sputtering I feared she was having a seizure. Any activist impulses I had from then on took life covertly, until I could escape to the heady freedom of the college protest.

I will jump over that period, because I did no more than what became expected for a college student. In fact, I did less, since the Southern campus I attended was slower to catch the spirit than those in the Northeast or West. Only after I left did things heat up there, and I recall my rue at having missed the smell of teargas in the chapel. The year after I graduated I got a small opportunity to recoup the experience. On a trip to London I hitched up with a group of Americans who were protesting the Vietnam War, distributing flyers outside the gates of Hyde Park. On my own, I was heralding International Woman's Day by wearing an armband with the sign for "female" encompassing a clenched fist and surrounded by the words, "Bitch, Baby, Bitch." I ventured unawares into the park, leaflets in hand, and was shortly accosted by a British Bobby. Ok, "accosted" is too strong a word; he just politely informed me that leafleting inside the gates was not permitted and asked me to leave. At the time, though, it felt like an international incident.

In my second year at graduate school, I volunteered to be a student representative to my Department. My motivation was personal: a fellow student had committed suicide just before taking her qualifying exams, and I wanted to make sure the Department did whatever it could to prevent such a tragedy in future. In one of the first meetings I attended, the Faculty started planning additional meetings to re-evaluate the curriculum. Primarily so that I could write the dates down in my calendar, I asked whether I should be there. Several seconds of silence ensued, while the Faculty exchanged glances. Then the Chair said, "I don't know, we've never had a student ask before." I don't know whether anything I contributed to those discussions, and the many that followed, made a real difference, but the Faculty never again excluded students from its deliberations.

Jumping ahead to my time at Brown, my first venture into Faculty Governance was on the Honorary Degrees Committee. This was during my third year, and my Chair suggested that engaging in a service activity would be a good idea in terms of my upcoming review. He also recommended this committee as one that would be interesting and not particularly onerous. He was correct on both counts, but failed to foresee a hazard to the work, namely, that the people nominated for an honorary degree might include individuals I would find objectionable.

I hope by now I've convinced you that I'm not an ideologue, just at times naïve but prescient in my causes. Still, when the nominees included a man about whom all I can say is that he was an architect of war, my hackles went up. This, again, was partly a personal issue: my father had served in two wars and was still in the Reserves during Vietnam. Conversation around the family dinner table was more than a bit tense. But my reaction was equally based on what I thought the campus reaction would have been, and how that would devastate the intent and symbolism of the award. I spoke against it – strongly, and in confrontation with the representative of the Corporation in attendance.

When the meeting ended, I went back to my office and sat trembling for about half an hour, wondering when to start looking for a new job. The next week, I was walking up to my office, holding an umbrella against the rain, when I felt a hand touch my elbow. The hand belonged to President Gregorian, who walked the rest of the way with me and told

me, “You did the right thing.” I felt a bit more secure that he was right when, later that year, the nominee received a very hostile reception along with an honorary degree at another university.

This brings us to two years ago, when I was asked to run for Vice Chair of the Faculty. After an invaluable apprentice year, wondering how on earth Bob Pelcovits managed to handle everything attached to being Chair, I now find myself as Chair attending more meetings than I thought were legally permitted. My latest piece of accidental activism came during the October “Agenda Meeting,” where the President, Provost, FEC officers (with Secretary and Parliamentarian), and Dean of the Faculty hash over what will happen during the next Faculty meeting.

Those of you who attended the October meeting will recall that there has been a change in the sequence for presentations. The Chair of the FEC now reports before the President and the Provost. Before my colleagues start giving me high-five’s for staging a coup, let me assure you that I’m not really sure how this happened. I remember the President challenging us to think about ways we could get more Faculty to participate in the meetings. I remember suggesting that we include a discussion point for the Provost to toss up for dialogue with the Faculty. The next thing I remember, someone said, “Gee, Ann, why don’t you present first so that Faculty talk more about their concerns?” – and, that was that.

This is an exciting year for the Faculty Executive Committee. On paper, the work of the FEC may look about as exciting as waiting for a child to cross the street. We “investigate” and “make recommendations,” “refer” and “serve in an advisory role,” “coordinate...operations,” “consult” and “review,” and so forth. Behind these unassuming words, however, the FEC is an engaged, committed, and occasionally argumentative group of people tackling issues of paramount concern to our colleagues and the University at large. We are already in the midst of debate how to provide an enhanced leave policy. We are involving more Faculty into the Campaign for Academic Enrichment and examining the entitlements of those with research appointments. Issues faced by junior faculty, work/family life concerns, the diversity of the University – these are some of the areas that have surfaced in just the first two months of fall semester. The only thing I know for certain about my role is that it will challenge me in ways both unanticipated and exhilarating.

You may be wondering why I’ve chosen this theme for my premiere in the Faculty Bulletin. To be candid, I wanted to write about the importance of service but was afraid about seeming trivial, not to say trite. “Ho hum,” I could hear people saying, “service is as rewarding to the person giving it as to those served; it’s important for our collective well-being. Let me sign right up.” But then I started thinking about the times I have served, whether as a crossing guard, committee member, or chair of one thing or another. Each time, it didn’t seem to be the service itself that was important, but my presence in the company of those who cared enough about the same things to show up. And it hasn’t been my sometimes fumbling attempts at activism that have made a difference, but the

currents of much broader change that have propelled myself and others forward, forcing social institutions to evolve in spite of themselves.

If I had not become open to being drawn into activism, I would not have come to know many Brown colleagues beyond my own spheres of interest. I probably would not have come to understand the University as the complex, diverse, inspiring creature that it is. I undoubtedly would not have developed the sense of ownership and stake in the future of this creature that I now have. I would be less aware of the forces challenging the intellectual integrity of universities across this country and around the world. So yes, I have gained at least as much as I have given, but that gain has taken forms I never could have imagined.

If you've wondered what Faculty Governance is about, I would say this: it's about engaging with the core of what propelled you into the academy. It's about assuming collective responsibility for what happens – in our curriculum, for our students, during our research, throughout our careers. It provides an opportunity for faculty collectively to envision the future of the University, without being limited by beliefs about what Brown can and cannot do. It's about being open to reflection, disagreement, contradiction, excitement, and now and then a moment of pure silliness. If you haven't tried it, I suggest that you do. You never know what might happen, if only by accident.

**DR. NORMAN FIERING:  
A JOB WELL DONE**

**José Amor y Vázquez  
Professor Emeritus of Hispanic Studies**

Norman Fiering's name is not a stranger to the Faculty Bulletin, for he has contributed to it several interesting articles about the John Carter Brown Library (JCB).

This time, however, he is the subject of these lines, most of which I had the privilege to read at the annual meeting of the JCB Associates on May 12, 2006. This was in anticipation of Norman Fiering's retirement on June 30, 2006 as Director and Librarian of the JCB.

Occasions such as this call for lasting public recognition. Across the street the JCB, for instance, there is one to President Wriston, in Latin: "Si monumentum requiris circumpisice," reminding us that one only needs to look around to see his monument.

Although the circumstances are not exactly the same, the phrase could apply to Norman Fiering. When he came to the JCB in 1983, the Library was already here, and so was the Wriston Quadrangle, but you need only look around to see proof of some of Norman's attainments. Among the most visible, the renovated MacMillan Reading Room, where we are now; the handsome Caspersen Building, which doubled the existing space to its present 30,000 square feet; an elegant Bromsen/Bolívar Room full of precious items; the two large paintings on the walls, and the bronze bust of J. Carter Brown looking at us from its prominent place. All these and others made possible thanks to the generosity of donors in response to Norman's enthusiastic initiative and tireless drive.

For less obvious and yet perhaps more significant accomplishments we have to look in other areas, finances first: a more than ten-fold increase in endowment, plus considerable financial support for different events, and regular grants for research. The latter have resulted in a large number of fellowships annually attracting highly qualified applicants from many countries. This and collaboration with multiple institutions from the United States and abroad, have enhanced the distinction of the JCB, Brown University and Rhode Island in the world's cultural map. To give you an idea, the research fellows program, which from 1962 to 1972 consisted of 37 fellows from 6 different countries, in the 2006-2007 year alone expects 35 from 9 different countries besides the US. And its weekly luncheons, held uninterruptedly since 1984, enjoy international fame as fora for budding and well-established scholars alike.

History is a burning passion for Norman; two of his works on intellectual history had received awards just before his coming here. He knew, however, that his new job as head of the JCB would demand putting aside his direct involvement in scholarly research. Therefore, he wisely took the challenge of promoting and guiding historical studies by others under the auspices of the JCB. It is not by chance that the present inscription on

the Southern wall on the Library says: “speak to the past and it shall teach thee.” Another passion of Norman’s since his college days is book printing, which is reflected in the more than forty-two JCB model publications since 1984.

In rapid review I must mention also the accession of more than 5,000 rare books to a collection already rich in bibliographical gems, a difficult and costly endeavor. As an illustration, let me remind you of the 1974 list of 101 publications NOT in the JCB that should have been there. Before Norman’s arrival, his predecessor acquired 3 of these items; Norman added 4 more. Keeping abreast with this growth, 80% of the Library holdings have been catalogued, together with the computerization of all appropriate functions. And an exciting state-of-the art research tool is getting in place: the Archive of Early American Images; by 2007-2008, 6,000 images will be available on line at no cost to individual researchers world-wide.

Attainments of such magnitude have not gone unnoticed. The governments of Brazil and Spain have awarded decorations to Norman Fiering, while last January the American Historical Printing Association distinguished the JCB as the 2006 Institutional Laureate for its leadership “in collecting, preserving and promoting the printing history of the colonial Americas, North and South.” Let it be said that Norman has generously and publicly shared these and other honors with the JCB staff, an indispensable group whose diverse talents, expertise and contributions he greatly values.

On this very particular occasion, the Library Board of Governors wishes to extend a special recognition to Dr. Norman Fiering. I feel most honored to have been asked to present him, in their name, with the JCB Medal for his outstanding work as Director and Librarian of The John Carter Brown Library. Not surprisingly, its inscription reads: “speak to the past and it shall teach thee.”

A few days after the event, with the cooperation of the weather, another inscription was carved on the northern side of the building by decision of the JCB Board of Governors. It states, in elegant characters: “Only the words transform what happened into history.”

Together with the previously quoted one, both inscriptions encapsulate Norman Fierings’s philosophy as a leader of historical scholarship and his practice as Director and Librarian. May they also augur a fruitful intellectual future for the John Carter Brown Library.

## **EFFECTIVE OUTREACH: LEARNING TO GIVE AND RECEIVE**

**Kaitlin Goldstein  
Physics Undergraduate**

I grew up in Providence, in the very heart of the University's campus. Until the age of sixteen, Brown was simply a backdrop upon which the events of my childhood played out. Entering Brown as a student, I began to see my home differently. It was as if I had been raised on a movie set, and one day, realized that the cardboard edifices possessed three dimensions. This new mentality was not reserved for campus buildings. Juxtaposed with the wealth of opportunities unfolding before me, was a sudden, acute awareness of the inequities I had always chosen not to see. Led into a world of infinite possibility, I began to see the barriers in place for my neighbors. I started to ask how it was possible that a school like Moses Brown, where students were afforded every opportunity to succeed was located across the street from a then struggling Hope High School. Why was it that 60% of students were failing math and science while being a few blocks from the resources of a major research University? How could we, how could I, have always averted my eyes?

I began to work for Dean Targan with the intention of taking an inventory of the outreach at Brown in the Math and Sciences. I soon realized that such a record did not exist, and the outreach at Brown, while pervasive, was scattered and un-centralized. Without an extensive list of the work in progress we reasoned that it would be difficult to move forward. Beginning with interviews of the chairpersons in each of the math and science departments, I attempted to gauge departmental endeavors, involved faculty, and those who might be willing to extend themselves for future work. Interviews trickled down from chairs, to recommended faculty members, and to involved students and student groups.

Addressed within interviews were current community work, possibilities for extension and expansion, and further links yielding a web of opportunities and contacts. Compiled through this work were two documents: A list of Current Outreach in the Math and Sciences and a compilation of "Possibilities for Hope" to be presented to the principals of Hope High School.

Throughout the compilation of these documents, I held this unrealistic vision of the almighty University "swooping" down to save the community in despair. What I failed to recognize was that my vision was not only misinformed but destructive. It played into a long patronizing history of Universities as "Ivory Tower" Institutions, detached, aloof, and out of public reach. To paraphrase Don Dippo, the strength of higher education is not in its role as a social service or community development agency, but as a place of ideas. Common to the literature describing successful University-community partnerships are four salient points, each direct reflections of my own experiences.

First and foremost, productive relationships are based on reciprocity. Even with the best intentions, we are subject to viewing ourselves as the parent institution. Any program devised will operate from parent to child, and as the larger institution, we have a better idea of what a school needs to succeed. As a research University, we know how to foster the growth of young scientists, and teach the teachers. This could not be further from the truth, and it is this type of mindset that causes relationships to fall apart. Entering into any partnership, we need to realize that we have just as much to get as to give. Our expertise will always differ; and there is much to learn from our community collaborators. Productive and lasting relationships are about leaving ourselves open to reciprocity.

Second, the conception of new initiatives cannot take place without a thorough understanding of the preexisting framework in which they will be implemented. I believed, with my grand list of opportunities in hand, that Hope High School would greet every possibility with open arms. I had not researched the structure and standards of their curriculum, nor was I aware of what the school actually needed. Even great ideas fail when one attempts to superimpose them upon an existing organization. Integration is possible only when we work hand in hand.

The third point is that prior to embarking on any project, both parties need to have established a mechanism by which the program may be evaluated and sustained. One must commit to long-term oversight, keeping the vision alive through dynamic improvement.

Lastly, as suggested by the former elements; the creation, implementation, and sustention of such programs need to be the focus of a full-time position. The mandate for a "Broader Impacts" section in every NSF grant provides researchers with an opportunity to engage in outreach activities where they might not have otherwise. It serves to orient the scientific community outwards, and lays the foundation for new ideas and alliances. It also puts pressure on already over-committed researchers to develop outside of their expertise. This can be a wonderful possibility, but it can also lead to the development of afterthought programs, hastily put together to satisfy a requirement. In addition, unlike the research aspect of the grant, children do not simply forget one's presence when funding is up. By entering into the life of a child, you are also making a commitment. Children crave stability and need someone to believe in them; often, students in urban environments have neither. You represent more than a program; you are their exposure to higher education. This may only be mechanism by which you receive extra funding, but for a student, you could mean the difference between giving up or holding on. Worse than reaching out, is reaching out and letting go.

The truth is, at the end of a day with students, I seldom remember who is inspiring whom. If I am privileged enough to light that spark of wonder in a child; to transform their view of science by helping them perceive the world of science as exploration, rather than obligation, my work up to that point is justified one thousand times over. I am reminded every day of why I began to love science in the first place. I return to my lab physically exhausted but mentally refreshed; everything makes sense again. They are so full of life,

contagiously enthusiastic, and have risen up against all odds. They have reawakened my own passion, and taught me what it means to be bigger person in the face of bias and prejudice. Our relationship truly is one of symbiosis, and my days at Hope High School have been the most rewarding of my entire life.

Yet, as was mentioned before, outreach development and oversight is a full-time job. We are lucky enough here at Brown to have people like Dean David Targan, Professor Karen Haberstroh, and Lamont Gordon who have made this work their priority. I believe our strength is in numbers; our potential is awesome if we work together. We have the opportunity to help change the face of public education as partners of a community. We have the chance to inspire, and in so doing, remember why we fell in love with our subjects in the first place. Centralization is key to the realization of these goals. I believe that we must utilize and support the resources currently available and the people who spend their lives dedicated to this work. Rather than reinvent the wheel with every new grant, become integral components of preexisting endeavors. Programs that have factored the existing Providence curricula and standards are both in the works and currently exist here at Brown. These programs have recognized the symbiosis of partnership, and have evaluation systems already in place, help sustain them. Help becomes that unceasing foundation, believing in a child who has no one else to do so.

## **THE PROBLEMS OF CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM**

**Peter D. Richardson**

**Division of Engineering and Dept of Molecular Pharmacology,  
Physiology and Biotechnology**

Cheating, including plagiarism, is a pervasive problem in academia. With the continuing evolution of the Internet this is big business as well as a major international problem. The University is making efforts to raise security for some data <SecureIT@brown.edu>, and to be consistent I recommend we should have more knowledge of the extent of cheating and plagiarism, and institution-wide, consistent and accessible means to combat it as well.

In late July 2006 there was an article in The Guardian (UK national newspaper) which provocatively asked: "Q. How do you make €1.6m a year and drive a Ferrari? A. Sell essays for €400." The article, by Matthew Taylor and Riazat Butt, went on to describe the multimillion-pound trade in internet cheating - thousands of students handing over money for bespoke essays. Loopholes? The companies claim they tell students to check their university's guidelines. Take a common-sense approach. Use it like any other source. "The essay is a starting point. We do the sifting out for you. We're also showing how to write a great essay." An owner of such a company commented his turnover for 2005 was €1.6M. One of their customers had spent €17,000 with them. "My overheads are pretty low because we work from home, and our writers work on commission. So I take about a third of €1.6M."

There are, of course, opportunities for students to copy work without financial cost from the Internet and paste it into materials which they submit as their own work. And it happens here. Often this tends to stand out on its own. A few years ago I was grading student reports on lab experiments and was struck by how many had diagrams of the apparatus which were in error on significant details compared with the equipment in our laboratories here ... and it was so easy to see what had happened because I could also Google the generic name of the lab experiment and within twenty listings come up with exactly the same diagram, which had been cut-and-pasted by students without attribution. I have always told students it is important to prepare and annotate their own diagrams, it is a way of demonstrating and communicating what they see as functionally important and to gain practice in careful observation and essential graphic presentation, so necessary in the sciences and engineering. I've shown good examples to the students, so it is not an abstract concept. The lab reports were meant to be narrative in their written components, and it was interesting to note that in so many reports the verbs switched to the imperative when describing the procedure. Again, Google showed why: sites with diagrams of the apparatus also had instructions on the procedures to be followed at their own institutions written in the imperative, and there again some cutting-and-pasting had been done without even bothering to switch verbs from imperative to normal active or passive form; without noticing differences in detail because of differences in equipment; and again without attribution. Little wonder, then, that the discussion and conclusions in

many of the reports were weakly written and void of showing that details of the apparatus and procedure had been appreciated for their significance.

Even within written material, students do not seem to realize that faculty can spot shifts in style within a single document which are often signs of borrowing material from another source. Many years ago, before the internet existed, I would sometimes be reading works submitted by fifty or so students and come upon a reasonably extensive passage which I would recall having been written in the work submitted by another student - a bit of work to read back and find in whose work I had read it previously, but there it would be - and while I couldn't tell who was the originator and who the copier, because it is an offense to lend for copying as well as to copy, both had to be investigated. Sometimes graduate TAs have raised questions about specific students possibly cheating, and I have made investigations which have sometimes exonerated the students - examination by microscope, for example, to see if possibly new work had been written over a grader's marks, or not. Some plagiarism I have encountered has been more extensive, as in a course project which had been copied without any attribution from a Japanese website (in English there), including diagrams of a machine design complete in all details, even down to the dimensions of the various components, which the student had submitted as all his own work. Not surprisingly, there was then a directed No Credit and suitable entries on the record.

It is not just students who plagiarize, of course, although that is a specific concern for us as faculty. In writing an invited review of a subject in which I had written fairly extensively, I came across a paper in French which had equations with the same notations as I had used, and a text which would translate somewhat closely to a publication of mine in English, which was not cited. Many years ago somewhere I saw on a faculty member's office door copies of pages from an article he'd written, and which had appeared in print first, and from someone else's article, in print later, with a paragraph having more than 100 words identical to those in part of his. The occupant of the office had pointed this out in writing on the copies. A bit curious, I looked up the original articles, only to find that the one that was published second had been submitted for publication much earlier than the other, leaving ambiguous who might have copied from whom. We act as reviewers in our own fields, at the invitation of editors, so we may see manuscripts on matters close to our own work. With more persons writing in English as a second language there is obviously a temptation to copy some piece that seems to read well in someone else's work, and that is a slippery slope.

We all know of concerns about falsification of data in publications, sometimes involving ambitious young people, "seeking bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth" (W. Shakespeare, Jaques in *As You Like It*.) Now, some eminent journals are developing approaches to combat fraud in scientific publications. "Science" has asked an external committee to assess its handling of the 2004 and 2005 papers involved in the Woo Suk Hwang case. Such cases have occurred in the remoter past as well. What is new is an effort to combat it before publication. As reported in *Nature* 444: 658, 7 December 2006, Sheldon Krinsky, a bioethicist at Tufts U, comments: "Until now, it has been assumed as a default that scientists are honest. The burden of proof is to show that they are not. Now,

at least for a select number of papers where the risk factor is high, there is a new burden, to show that these papers are honest."

In September 2006 I attended a session at the Sheridan Center on student cheating and plagiarism, for faculty in the life and physical sciences. It was remarkably under-attended by faculty members; less than 2 per cent of our roster. We have policies, clearly spelled out, in our Academic Code. Every student is expected to know and respect them. Some do not. As Dean Krahulik has pointed out, there are Tip Sheets for preventing cheating and plagiarizing on papers/written exercises, and for preventing cheating on Tests/Quizzes/Exams, with <http://plagiarism.dal.ca/faculty/detecting.html> and <http://www.uscsumpter.edu/~library/Cheating.html> as cited sources.

Occasionally we detect cheating because a facilitator tells us about it - like the former secretary who told me about a student (by name) who had taken an exam in the morning, I had put the exams on my desk to go to a meeting, and left my door locked; this student came to her after the exam telling her he'd accidentally made a terrible mistake on the exam and wanted to correct it, "he was terribly upset", so she said she let him in to my office to correct it. She volunteered the information; clearly she thought she had done the right thing. Whatever mistake he might have corrected, he was then worse off than if he'd not taken the exam in the first place. And now I have filing cabinets in my office I can lock.

I believe we as a faculty need to reflect on what we do to instruct students about cheating and plagiarism, its detection and penalties - with uniformity, so students will not be lulled by the complaisant, nor get away with the claim "it was the first time I did this" when that's not true. While we cherish our students, and keep our eyes open for signals they may need help of medical or psychiatric nature, we expect them to keep to the Academic Code in fairness to the institution and all the members of it.

## VISIT TO VIENNA

**Peter Wegner**  
**Professor Emeritus of Computer Science**

I was invited to Vienna in Mid October 2006 to give a lecture at the University and receive an award for my contributions to Arts and Sciences (Oesterreichisches Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst). My airplane from Boston through Heathrow arrived in Vienna on Monday Oct 16th, and I was met at the airport and escorted to a hotel in central Vienna near the St. Stephen cathedral. On Tuesday, I visited my old home in Vienna's Prater Strasse and was invited to the opera to a performance of "The Marriage of Figaro".

My lecture on Thursday was attended by about 100 faculty and students, and was followed by an award by the dean and the Austrian minister of education. I was shown around many parts of Vienna, including the Hapsburg palace, and the coffee houses used by philosophers and scientists like Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Wittgenstein in the early 20th century.

My lecture "Interactive Principles of Problem Solving" explored the expansion of models of computing from Alan Turing's 1936 model of Turing machines to recent modes of databases, computer graphics, and the internet that go beyond the Turing machine model. I reviewed my recent book, "Interactive Computing: A New Paradigm", published by Springer Verlag in September 2006 with articles by 18 authors about their research and beliefs about interactive computing. I and my two co-editors believe the discipline of computing is expanding in a variety of ways to handle biological, physical, and mental disciplines and propose interaction with the environment as an evolving modeling method.

My talk included analysis of the Vienna Circle, which revised principles of philosophy in the 1920s. I particularly discussed Kurt Godel, a Viennese logician who showed the falsity of Hilbert's paradigm that the truth or falsity of all mathematical theorems were provable by logic. Godel's falsity proof implied a strong paradigm shift in human mathematical ability that led to a proof by Turing that computers (like logic) were unable to prove all mathematical problems or solve all human problems.

My research as a retired professor has included rereading Bertrand Russell's "History of Western Philosophy" (published in 1948). I have questioned the philosophy of Plato's undemocratic republic, Descartes rationalist model of a priori reasoning, and Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" which criticizes Descartes but accepts a priori reasoning. More generally it appears to me that the attempt by scientists to formulate a theory of everything has failed in physics, mathematics, and computer science and other scientific disciplines. Moreover, Thomas Kuhn's assertion in "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" that "new paradigms are often unnecessarily criticized by believers in the old paradigm" appears to be true because scientists are against negating beliefs on which their early work is based.

I recently attended a meeting at Princeton's Institute of Advanced Study for the 100th anniversary of Godel's birth (in 1906) at which his mathematical paradigm shift was both applauded and criticized. Kuhnian paradigm shifts are strongly criticized not only in science, but also in politics and religion. Current political criticism of the war in Iraq and religious criticism about the nature of God are central to current conflict between societies.

We would like our assertions about the nature of truth in science, politics, and religion to be provably correct, but unfortunately this does not usually work out, and divergence between different groups leads to strife and war. Our goal of making the world a better place by accepting the correctness of scientific, political, and/or religious beliefs cannot generally be achieved.

Peter Richardson and I have often discussed writing an article on how to make the world a better place but find this a very difficult challenge because proposals that all or many humans could accept are almost impossible to formulate.

**FACULTY BULLETIN**  
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***GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES:***

We hope to receive articles for the Spring 2007 issue of the *Faculty Bulletin* by:

**March 16, 2007**

**Text should be submitted electronically via e-mail attachment to:**

**Cheryl\_Moreau@Brown.edu**

Essays should be approximately 1,000 words (two to three pages). If space permits, longer papers will be considered.

Articles and/or questions should be directed to:

Cheryl A. Moreau, Executive Editor  
Office of Faculty Governance  
317 University Hall  
Box 1830  
Phone: (401) 863-9440