COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

Make money.
Advance science.
Just by being yourself.

Social scientists at the Behavioral Lab seek Columbia students to participate in paid studies ranging from short opinion surveys to group discussions. Many students find the studies fun--and they don't mind the cash. You can feel good about participating, too: your input helps Columbia scientists stay on the leading edge. Click here to learn more.

Letter to the Editor

By Robert Pollack
Published March 9, 2012

To the Editors:

After reading Judge Cabranes' op-ed ("No to the siren song aimed at Columbia College," March 6) I've reread Dean Alonso's article in Spectator ("Teaching and research at Columbia," Feb. 17) and here is my response.

The core passage of the piece is this:

"The ultimate reality is that we are all dependent on one another to thrive, and fostering fantasies of untrammeled autonomy distorts that interdependent reality."

Let's set aside the unfortunate and insulting rhetoric that describes the concerns of many alums of the College, including this last dean of the faculty of Columbia College who has taught graduate and undergraduate students here for 35 years, as a "fantasy of untrammeled autonomy." The current Dean of GSAS is correct to say that the reality is one of interdependence. But he is wholly mistaken about the nature of that interdependent reality.

In fact, the current interdependent structure continues to place him, along with the Deans of the college and of Continuing Education, as well as the dean of SEAS, at a distance from the funding of the faculty who do teach in the Core. And in their unstructured, inarticulate interdependent reality, those faculty have every reason to wonder, as I do, whether or not the current fragile and new structure of the Arts and Sciences can and will in fact provide the fiscal and other incentives to convince deans, chairs, and faculty together that the costs to them of teaching outside their fields of expertise in any interdepartmental curriculum are repaid by not only the pleasure of such teaching, but by additional compensation for the additional effort and for the risk to an academic career that goes with teaching outside of one's field of expertise.

I am deeply impressed by VPAS Dirks' decision to teach CC. I look forward to learning how his experience may have led him to a deeper understanding of the need for an articulation of the fiscal particularities of the current interdependent reality. From there, it would be only a short distance to a Columbia University in which the interdependent reality is one that assures not only the persistence of something called the Core, but the continued quality and quantity of teaching by faculty in that Core.

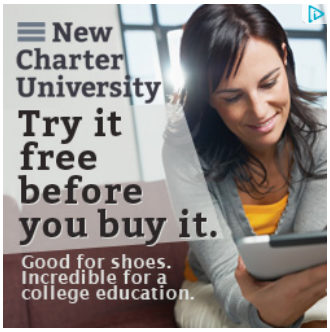
Professor Robert Pollack, CC '61

Share
Print
Email
Facebook
Twitter
Google+

Tags
Opinion, Robert Pollack, Core Curriculum

Recent Opinion
Letter to the Editor
March 9 2012
Global thinking
March 6 2012
Inconsistent West
March 6 2012
Argue but obey
March 6 2012
The core of Global Core
March 6 2012
Extending our Core
March 6 2012

UEM Fall 2012 Precalendaring
REQUESTS ACCEPTED
9 a.m. March 19 – 12 p.m. April 2, 2012
Learn more



COMMENTS

Comments will be moderated in accordance with our comment policy

Like 2 people liked this.

Showing 3 comments Sort by oldest first

ccalum

I am very concerned for the future of Columbia College. I am concerned with where the money that I donate to Columbia College goes. I want to ensure that my contributions are used to improve the education and college life of Columbia College students. I am concerned that the College is allowing too many graduate students to teach the Core. And, I am concerned that the class size for Core courses is getting larger. The Core takes-up a large part of the education of every Columbia College student. If the academic quality of the Core decreases, then the academic quality of the College decreases. If the Core is not going to be great, then it must be abandoned. We cannot have the excellence of a Columbia College education become a thing of the past.

I think College alumni need to demand that the administration release the findings and suggestions of the consultants and explain to College alumni what direction the University is going to take the College. I also think Alumni need to be sure that their contributions to the College are being used as they want. For this purpose, I think having separate fundraising for the Core, an endowment for the Core, is an excellent idea.

I also think that the concerns for the future of Columbia College need to be featured not only in Spectator, but also in Columbia College Today. There may be many alumni who don't realize yet what is happening to the College.

Yesterday 08:57 PM 3 Likes Like Reply

Guest

Robert Pollack once again demonstrates how much of a BAMF he is

Yesterday 11:08 PM 9 Likes Like Reply

CC 88

A very clever letter that effectively backs Nicholas Dirks into a corner, and forcing him to continue his grudge support for what defines Columbia College in the hearts and souls of all of its loyal alumni. Nothing would make that postmodern radical ideologue happier than to destroy the Core.

He's ideologically opposed to it, because he built the Anthropology Department (which produces students who call wounded veterans racist for asserting that there are evil people in the world who want to kill us; they apparently believe that taking members of Al Qaeda out for a coffee at the Hungarian Pastry Shop to have a discussion over how gender is a social construct will solve all of the world's problems), and because as VPAS he is aware of how expensive the Core is to maintain, therefore leaving less money for him to further advance his radical agenda.

Today 11:16 AM Like Reply

M Subscribe by email S RSS

Add New Comment Login

Type your comment here.