Editorial: Why are we here?

Why are we here? People ask that question about religion, about God, for all sorts of personal reasons. Here this question is posed of college. Why are we here? What are we supposed to be taking away from this long, expensive and often torturous endeavor?

At some point, in every student’s college career he or she must decide what they hope to accomplish and if that reward is really worth it.

People come here, not knowing exactly what they want to do with the rest of their lives and many of them leave in the exact same situation. They have a little piece of paper that gives them worth, that says all the money and all the years gave them something. Did it really? How many hours have we all spent in classes that we cared less than nothing about, but had to take because it is a core requirement?

Most of us have been doing this all of our lives, right from the time we started school in kindergarten. Someone older and wiser says that we have to learn something, so we learn it, never really knowing why, but trusting that we will need it somewhere down the road. The same occurs in high school but the reasons are a bit more outlined for many. “You have to take this or no decent college will look at you,” they say.

Wonderful. So we all roll through our foreign languages and our chemistry and our history and our English, so that we can get into what someone deems a decent college.

Finally, we get into college and it all changes, right? Now we have specific goals because we have things like tracks and majors and other things. Not so fast. It continues on. Now we have these requirements outlined for us that we have to fulfill. Now our motivation for doing all of this is a degree rather than a diploma.

It can be justified by saying that students should leave college as well-rounded, well-read individuals. That is admirable and correct. However, a student that does not really want to learn cannot be forced to learn. Forcing someone to take a geology class won’t force them to learn geology. It will merely give them another class to skate through, to barely pass and to forget about.

As for the students who want to learn, and they are out there, they will do it on their own. They don’t have to be forced into it. Besides, when a student is forced to do something that they do not want to do in the first place, and they end up having a difficult time with it, they hate it even more, try even less, and become further disenchanted with the entire college academic experience.

There is something subtly wrong with our education system. Something hasn’t evolved or doesn’t work any longer. We have to make some serious changes in the generation to come or we will lose all students to the mind-numbing world of television and video games completely and forever. Learning can be great, it can be wonderful, but it can also be easily smothered by those who have no faith in students.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion editor.

Letters to the Editor: The Rider News welcomes letters on all subjects of interest to the campus community. Letters must be typed and include the name, address, phone number and signature of the author for verification. Send to The Rider News via e-mail (ridernews@rider.edu), campus mail, or hand deliver to Centennial House. All letters must be received by midnight the Monday preceding publication. The Rider News reserves the right to edit all letters for space and clarity.

Quote of the Week:

“A citizen of America will cross the ocean to fight for democracy but won’t cross the street to vote in a national election.”

— Bill Vaughan

Eyes Open:

Misconceptions and ignorance

For many, the college experience is one that breaks down walls built by stereotypes and closed-mindedness, one that begins to erode foundations of misconceptions lodged in the soul of our parents, our friends and sometimes even our communities, eventually revealing a vast landscape of opportunities for companions, success and love.

College is the rope that draws the curtain from previously blind eyes, barring all the world before them. It presents a chance for the individual to examine his peers and catch at least a glimpse beyond the rows of conforming smiles and polite banter. Rather than nourish himself on solid, unshakeable beliefs, the college student is called to question traditions, examine laws and filling a niche that was left empty by those who join fraternities, mentally filing them under the category of jocks or beer guzzling misfits. When, in truth, many of those involved in Greek life are active contributors to campus life, holding degrees in any number of fields and filling a niche that was left empty by those who were willing to waste the time and energy on making uninformed assumptions but unwilling to eke out anymore at making the campus a better place. By making such conjectures, the student draws forth the curtain once again, blinding himself to all but that which is most familiar.

Such individuals, those who date to make judgments without knowing all the facts, and stereotypes are inevitably believed to be fulfilled. The latter is the most common misconception of all. For example, the “anti-Greek” may scoff at those who join fraternities, mentally filing them under the category of jocks or beer guzzling misfits. When, in truth, many of those involved in Greek life are active contributors to campus life, holding degrees in any number of fields and filling a niche that was left empty by those who were willing to waste the time and energy on making uninformed assumptions but unwilling to eke out anymore at making the campus a better place. By making such conjectures, the student draws forth the curtain once again, blinding himself to all but that which is most familiar.

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