



Safety Director
Must be CSP certified and have 5 years DOT experience. Needs to be a self started and have the knowledge and confidence to make decisions. Apply online at www.alanritchey.com

Home > Editorials & Opinions

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

RSS

Mobile

Newsletters



Quick links: [Submit a letter](#) [Submit a Cheer or Jeer](#)

Schrump: The solution to government gridlock is liberal arts education

Posted Sunday, Mar. 07, 2010

Comments (0)

Recommend (1)

Print Share

Buzz up!

Reprints

Topics: The arts, Member of Congress

Tags: members of Congress

ARTICLE

COMMENTS

A

BY JAKE B. SCHRUMP

Special to the Star-Telegram

Have more to add?
News tip? Tell us

Even though it might have happened unwittingly, Americans have sent the liberal arts to jail.

Often, it seems there was no time to "Pass 'Go'" or "Collect \$200."

We as a society need to bust the liberal arts out of confinement, and there are several timely reasons why.

Let's turn first to government gridlock. Our most difficult dilemma here is the misunderstanding between service and self.

Thomas Jefferson, who was a Renaissance man, likely made the assumption that representatives and senators would serve the country for a few years and then return to their chosen occupations. One wonders if he ever imagined a professional politician who would spend as much time getting elected as serving the country. He probably also assumed that all members of Congress would possess what we now call a liberal arts education.

Whether reading Machiavelli, Plato, Socrates, Jefferson or the Bible, you can find discussion about the choice between service and self, and the difficult balance that makes them uneasy partners.

Knowledge of political science, history, psychology and sociology would help our government officials understand why we desperately need them to serve. They don't have to leave self behind; they just need to make sure it doesn't trump service.

Next, consider our struggling public schools. Some have predicted that if we cannot rejuvenate and re-imagine our public schools, then this is the first death knell of our American democracy. I maintain that the denigration of creativity in our public schools is the single most decisive issue in the fight for their



MOST POPULAR

Plans for wastev
concerns

Old-school barb
medical district

Texas Rangers
big payoff

Energy audit rev
reduce their elec

In these Olympic
Canada

survival.

What if one of Michelangelo's early teachers had taken away his paint brush because that activity was not on the standardized test?

What if Simpson College, a liberal arts college in Iowa, had not given George Washington Carver an opportunity to access the liberal arts?

What if some public school teacher in the Fifth Ward in Houston had told U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan or Brown University President Ruth Simmons that they couldn't go as far as they did and have because of the limits on creativity in our public schools?

Our public schools are desperate for creative administrators, teachers and school board members. With most Americans going to public universities where they concentrate on their discipline even in their first year, they rarely have the opportunity to engage the liberal arts. This increasingly prevalent tunnel visioning is hampering our public schools' ability to be creative and innovative.

The liberal arts are meant to liberate one's mind, to cause one to think across disciplines, to create new ways of approaching challenges, to use considerate conversations to move toward counterintuitive innovations, to believe that creativity is more important than standardized tests, and that innovation itself is liberating.

Finally, we need to liberate the liberal arts so that we can reclaim our civil society. More and more, it seems, we witness congressional meetings, PTA meetings, church or synagogue meetings, or city council meetings where lines are drawn in the sand early, and people choose a side before considerate or civil conversations can occur that might lead to solutions built on compromise and, surprisingly enough, a better idea than proposed by either side.

The liberal arts are all about considerate conversations. One might have a strong opinion, but in a liberal arts setting, openness to new ideas is the "coin of the realm." How can people liberate their minds if they are unyieldingly locked into only one way of approaching an issue?

A conversation means that all interested parties have the opportunity to weigh in and state their position. Conversation assumes that each party has the good fortune of learning something from the other, even if one's viewpoint is substantially different from the other's.

This is how a person with a liberated mind learns -- by staying open to lifelong learning and by respecting the worth, dignity and ideas of others. This is a hallmark of a liberal arts education.

This is what our country desperately needs. We must grab the key, unlock the door, and free the liberal arts.

Jake B. Schrum is president of Southwestern University, a private liberal arts college in Georgetown.

Looking for comments?



**Hot Penny Stock
Picks - Free Alerts**

Find stocks that move up 700%. Make huge profits when you join today.
StockPickTrading.com

**Mortgage Rates Hit
3.54% APR**

There May Never Be a Better Time to Refinance.
[SeeRefinanceRates](#)

**Make Less Than
\$45,000/Year?**

You May Qualify for a Grant to Go Back to School.
[SeeCollegeDegrees](#)

Ads by Yahoo!

TERMS OF SERVICE PRIVACY POLICY ABOUT OUR ADS COPYRIGHT CONTACT US REPORT A PROBLEM ADVERTISE WITH US /
COLLEYVILLE COURIER GRAPEVINE COURIER KELLER CITIZEN MANSFIELD NEWS-MIRROR SOUTHLAKE JOURNAL TIMES-REGIST