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deft rhetoric of responsibility and maturity suggests that he knows otherwise.

RUSSELL T. McCUTCHEON
Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, Mo.

TO THE EDITOR:

Arthur Schwartz . . . asserts that principled behavior can be inculcated in students via a continuous and conscious "reshaping" effort that should be made an aspect of undergraduate education. . . . Among the principles stressed are: encouraging students to develop virtues, utilizing the "significant presence of principled people and shared standards" as a "reshaping" tool, and prioritizing the principles of "decent" behavior.

The realities of academe must, however, be considered. Virtues are rules that guide individual reactions to situations. In this context, over 70 percent of students come to college with internalized rules that allow cheating, plagiarism, lying, etc.; students come out of precollege educational programs where many teachers . . . cheat in conducting assessments . . . ; there is absolutely no evidence that college faculties come close to . . . having "shared standards" regarding what constitutes "decent" behavior; and many forms of academic hucksterism characterize administrative operations on many campuses, as customer service suppliants demanding academic standards.

If faculty members have any sustained impact on student virtues, I believe that derives from the chance encounters wherein principled professors . . . who have the courage to stand for something influence others.

ROBERT YOUTH
Professor of Psychology
Dowling College
Oakdale, N.Y.

Federal Aid: Who Benefits Most?

TO THE EDITOR:

I was astonished to find a wealth of misleading information about the federal campus-based aid programs in your June 16 article on the government's allocation policies ("In Some Federal Aid Programs, Not All Campuses Are Treated Alike"). *The Chronicle*, it seems, got dragged into a long-standing intramural fight between California State University and the University of California over which deserves the most campus-based aid. The result was an article that misses the mark in portraying the significant benefit these three student-aid programs make to poor students throughout the country.

The article failed to note the differences among the Perkins Loan, the College Work-Study, and the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Programs that help account for the government's policies. Participation in the first two programs requires colleges to establish extensive (and costly) infrastructures. To administer Perkins funds, for instance, institutions need loan and collections offices; to place students in work-study jobs, they need employment offices. It's not surprising that the federal government provides a "base

guarantee" to institutions that have made significant infrastructure investments. The base guarantee also provides a level of predictable funding, so that institutions can ensure that jobs will be available and loans can be managed from year to year.

From the article, one would think that S.E.O.G. funds go to Beverly Hills families to pay for cell-phone calls. Nothing could be further from the truth. S.E.O.G. funds are targeted to the neediest Pell Grant recipients. Families with incomes below \$30,000 receive 78.9 percent of Pell funds and 75.5 percent of S.E.O.G. funds. . . .

This does not mean that all colleges have enough campus-based aid. The Student Aid Alliance, a coalition of 60 higher-education associations (which I co-chair with Stanley Ikenberry, president of the American Council on Education), strongly advocates substantial increases in these programs. . . . Federal allocation rules mandate that new appropriations for these programs be evenly distributed among participating institutions, based on their students' unmet need. Efforts by the White House and Congress to increase this year's budget for campus-based programs could benefit every institution that applies.

Campus-based aid is student aid. Together with Pell Grants and student loans, these programs give poor but talented students the opportunity to go to college. With these funds, even children of poverty can attend those institutions your article dismisses as "big-name public and private universities."

DAVID L. WARREN
President
National Association of Independent
Colleges and Universities
Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

Stephen Burd's analysis of federal aid programs misses two important points: Federal student aid goes to needy students regardless of the institution they attend; and the cost of education at public colleges and universities is already subsidized by state and local governments. Implicit in Burd's story is the suggestion that needy students should not aspire to attend the most selective private universities. Wouldn't it be better for society if more money was made available to more students to attend their college of choice, instead of pitting public institutions against private ones for a tiny piece of a tiny pie? . . .

At the University of Southern California, 27 percent of our undergradu-

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The large volume of letters prompts this suggestion: Limit the length to 500 words. In the competition for space, short letters must sometimes be given preference. Letters may be edited and condensed. They may also be posted on *The Chronicle's* Web site.



THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MATT HALL

ates receive Pell Grants, a program designed to help fund the neediest of students. The average family income of these u.s.c. students is \$17,307. The recipients of the federal campus-based funds also come from families with significant need. Our Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant funds go only to students who are also eligible for Pell Grants. The average family income for these federal-grant recipients is \$18,206. . . .

Although the cost of educating undergraduates at public and private universities is about the same, the price to students at public institutions is only a fraction of the tuition and fees at private universities. The reason is that state and local governments subsidize all students who attend public institutions, whether they come from rich or poor families. At u.s.c., the amount students get from federal aid programs is only a fraction of their total financial-aid packages; the rest comes from university resources and students' loans.

One of the great strengths of the University of Southern California is that we have one of the most economically and ethnically diverse student bodies of any private university in America—even more diverse than many public institutions. In our undergraduate population of 15,000 students, more than 60 percent get some form of financial aid. We believe it is in the best interests of our democracy to provide access and opportunity to students to attend the college or university best suited to their needs and talents.

JOSEPH ALLEN
Vice Provost
Enrollment Services Division
University of Southern California
Los Angeles

TO THE EDITOR:

Stephen Burd's article describing disparities in the federal government's campus-based aid programs omits data highly relevant to the comparisons presented there. No-

where in his article does Mr. Burd make it clear that the University of Southern California is a private institution. . . .

u.s.c.'s administration and faculty struggle to find the means to make u.s.c. an affordable option for students. It is our job to do so. It is our noblest enterprise. Our administration makes every effort to qualify our institution for the campus-based aid programs that serve our students. . . .

I did like Mr. Burd's characterization of our students. He reports that they "walk the sprawling, sun-drenched grounds armed with cell phones like young Hollywood executives making big-picture deals." His description is a little over the top, but I must admit that our students are an attractive, ambitious, enthusiastic bunch. They are hard-working and smart, too; and they seem quite happy to be here.

JAMES E. MOORE, II
Associate Professor of Civil Engineering
and of Public Policy and Management
University of Southern California
Los Angeles

TO THE EDITOR:

The data you presented on campus-based aid missed the point. In addition to listing the average . . . awards, you should have listed the percentage of a student's cost covered by the average award. You would have found that needy students attending the University of Southern California are, in fact, the students disadvantaged by the current system. Having been out of Washington and back on a campus for nine years, I can assure you that what students care about is whether they walk out of the college's business office with an invoice, or cash in their pocket.

Surely students who come from needy families—much as I did—deserve a chance to attend our country's finest colleges and universities, whether public or private. A stu-

dent's talent and motivation—not her parent's income—should determine her college options.

JULIANNE STILL THRIFT
President
Salem Academy and College
Winston-Salem, N.C.

A Critical Look at Pop Culture

TO THE EDITOR:

Notwithstanding his barely suppressed self-congratulation at having recognized meaningful resonances between Shakespeare and sitcoms, . . . Richard Keller Simon does make a valuable point: that studying the great works of literature provides us with greater insight into popular culture ("Much Ado About Friends: What Pop Culture Offers Literature," *Opinion*, June 16). Ultimately, in becoming better readers of literature, we become better readers of our everyday lives.

However, I think he misses the boat in suggesting that sitcoms ("What our students love") and Shakespeare ("what we know how to teach") are "almost the same," proceeding to distinguish them on the basis of such incidental components as setting and language. This is hardly the case. Shakespeare is a lot more challenging to read, which is why Mr. Simon's students would rather watch television, given the chance. But if they can be persuaded to rise to that challenge, they will certainly be better readers for their efforts. A student who has read and understood such demanding texts as *Much Ado About Nothing* will invariably have a firmer grasp of her language's capacity for creating meaning than another who spends her time watching TV.

Pop culture may be as textually valid as high culture, insofar as both can and should be read critically, but that does not mean it is as effective a teaching tool. Honing a student's reading skills on a steady diet of pop culture is like trying to sharpen a knife on a stick of butter.

JAKE HOLDEN
Instructor of English
Fulton-Montgomery Community College
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TO THE EDITOR:

One need not oppose Richard Simon's eminently reasonable proposition that popular culture be incorporated into English curricula in order to be disturbed by his claim that the distinction between Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the *Jerry Springer Show* "has more to do with context than with any inherent quality of the stories."

We ought to be teaching contexts as well as inherent qualities of texts, and when we do, students discover—as Professor Simon reports about his own classes—meaningful differences in talent and achievement that are not merely a function of context. Even—especially—Vulgara, his fictional "senior vice president for programming at a major communications conglomerate," recognizes inherent differences in quality, or she cannot function in her job, which is to make selections.

As professors of literature, our job is, through the use of both canonical and popular works, to refine our students' aesthetic perceptions and judgments. The study of popular cul-

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