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# Curriculum calls for intervention

BY KARLA KRAYNAK BRUNO

ALEXANDRIA

While Kate Conley, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at William and Mary, is patting herself and the faculty on the back for voting in a weaker general education curriculum in their insular world, allow me to show you an aerial view of the process and its catastrophic results.

First and most alarming, the college, a self-described liberal arts institution, will be churning out graduates who, because there are no requirements in place, may avoid taking a W&M course in literature, history, natural science and social science.

No literature or history of any kind, from any era, from any country. No natural science, no social science.

This isn't a liberal arts education. It's a travesty. Where were the professors of these departments, protesting this absurdity?

Perhaps they felt, like some W&M math and economics professors I know, that the joy of not having to teach students who don't want to be in their classes was reason enough to vote yes for this insipid model.

Or perhaps they were too terribly, terribly busy living in their own little bubbles to care about the plan itself. After all, as long as their lives remain the same or better, what difference does it make to professors what the college does or does not require of students?

Secondly, Conley is lying when she claims in her essay (Gazette, Dec. 25) that the administration timed all votes on the curriculum for "broad participation." Let's take a look at just how obvious a lie that is.

For convenience and to improve participation, other

important faculty votes are taken via the Internet, but not curriculum votes.

Faculty had to be present in person to vote. And to maximize the inconvenience to the faculty, faculty members had to vote in person during exams when faculty are busiest trying the records of the whole semester's work together for their students prior to final grades.

Faculty had to be motivated enough either for or against the curriculum to show up at the most stressful, work-laden time of the semester.

The process ensured the least number of faculty would participate in the vote.

No wonder the turnout was small and the margin of victory exceedingly narrow. It was rigged that way by the administration to force through the absurd, watered-down curriculum.

There is no way a responsible Board of Visitors should reward such an obvious misuse of administrative power and departure from long-established procedure. Let a proper vote be held, and if that votes the new curriculum through, so be it. At least it will represent a wider consensus of the faculty.

Some faculty may still complain about the changes, but at least they can't claim the procedure was poisoned by design by Conley and Provost Michael Halleran.

Thirdly, nowhere did anyone in power in this process answer the question, "What will employers get when they hire a W&M graduate?"

Someone trained to think about thinking won't cut it in the business world, the legal profession, the medical realm, or the teaching classroom.

For want of a meaningful curriculum, for want of a

faculty motivated by students' needs and not selfish wishes, for want of a provost who leads with decent ethics, William and Mary will sink into mediocrity.

A liberal arts degree from the college will be meaningless.

William and Mary's reputation is at stake, and the only way to save it is for the Board of Visitors to refuse to fund the new curriculum, to insist on a liberal arts education that includes literature and history requirements.

The board will have to be strong and not yield. The Visitors will have to rise above their natural tendencies to be figureheads who do no more than meet four times a year, share a glass or two, and laugh about their now-remote college days.

Being on the board is a privilege, often tied to political connections, but a Visitor also has a duty to steward the college's resources well and to lead when the administration and faculty have gone astray.

Such is the case today. When it meets in February, the board will need to be resolute and united.

Does it have the authority to refuse funding and point out errors? Yes.

It will need to be prepared for a fight both internally and in the media. It will not be pretty, but it will be right.

Fighting for what is right is never easy.

I urge the board to do what's right for the good of the college's reputation, for the good of the students themselves. And damn the professors and administrators who cannot see past their own noses.

*Karla Kraynak Bruno, a 1981 graduate of William and Mary, was a longtime resident of James City County. [www.kkbruno.com](http://www.kkbruno.com).*

# Farewell 2013

BY RONDA PARSONS

JAMES CITY

Well, old friend, we knew this day would come. The countdown to your departure began 12 months ago, with high hopes,

**ESSAY** promised resolutions

and days in such abundance that, like small children, we viewed your existence as a long stretch of time on an infinite road. It is only as you begin to draw your final breaths that we pause and think of all the events that you summoned into our lives, weighing our victories against our defeats, counting our gains against our losses, and measuring our tears of joy against those of deep sorrow.

Don't think for one moment that you will be forgotten. How could I forget your soft summer breezes that brought simple pleasures like birdsong, impromptu picnics, kite flying, bees drunk with honey and secrets whispered in my ear on the breath of a small child? There was the choir that sang heartily, tender smiles from newfound friends, and the knowledge that in the end, a devastating disease was survivable.

You brought hope in the shape of crescent moons, swooning wildflowers and sunsets so lovely that I wept for their beauty. And as you prepare to leave and gather all those destined to join you, you are taking with you the gentle

spirit of someone I deeply loved, leaving your date marked forever in stone on a quiet hillside.

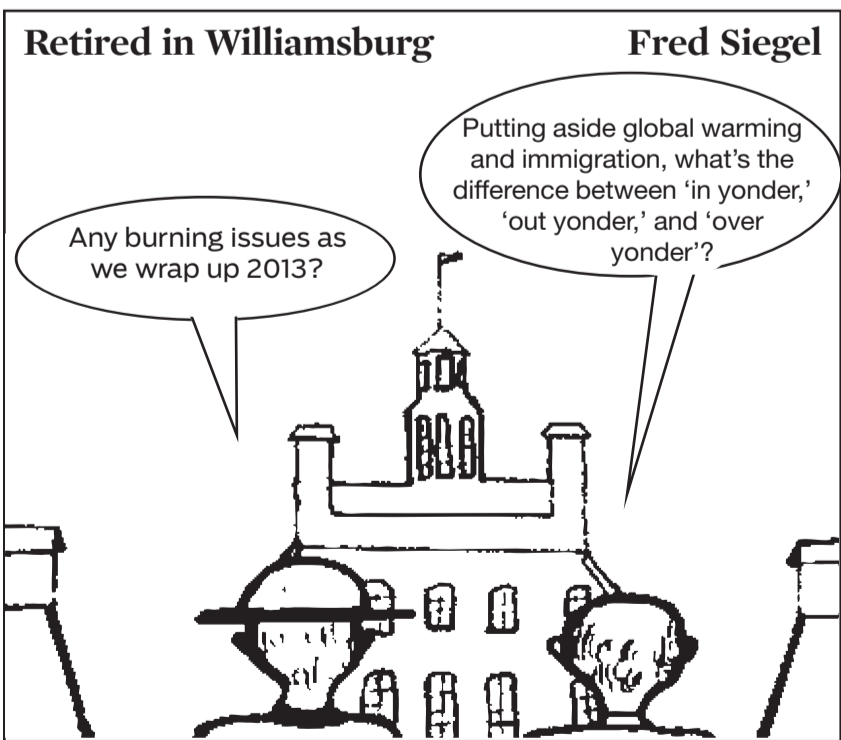
I am sorry, old friend, but this great reckoning is your epitaph. You are destined to be remembered by each of us differently as your hand swept fatefully through or lives.

You arrived on our doorstep on a cold January day like a long lost uncle bearing suitcases filled with unimaginable gifts from exotic places that we could not begin to imagine. And we accepted you along with your offerings: sadness as bitter as summer quinces, joys soaring beyond the peaks of our wildest dreams, surprises as unexpected

as a small snowdrop blooming up through an icy snowbank.

Now our journey is almost complete, and I feel your pace quickening as I prepare to greet the New Year. Soon you will be a distant memory and join your brethren among the distant hilltops. I will think of you often, the bitter and the sweet, but I will keep pushing forward until your influence is softened by the gentle breezes of time and all I can see is the majesty of the mountains that lie behind me.

*Ronda Parsons has lived in James City for 13 years and has a background in corporate sales and marketing management.*



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