

Curriculum 'suggestions'

BY KARLA KRAYNAK BRUNO
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Earlier this month, the William and Mary Board of Visitors approved the new curriculum that Provost Michael Halleran presented.

ESSAY Halleran asserts that all students will

be required to take courses in three domains: arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural science. Professor Paul Davies asserts that the new curriculum does *not* have a requirement for social sciences and has a loophole that allows a graduate to bypass natural science as well, if desired.

They cannot both be right. After reviewing the curriculum as presented to the faculty Dec. 10, 2013, I have concluded that Professor Davies is correct and Provost Halleran is not.

With the new domain "Culture, Societies and the Individual" (CSI) collapsing together W&M's previous social science and history requirements, a student can take two history courses and never take any social science — and vice versa.

A student could graduate from this liberal arts university never having taken a course in economics, American history, or government. No American history re-

quirement at the second oldest college in the country is a travesty and spits on the biggest claim to fame W&M has.

No economics or government requirement produces a graduate unable to understand the complexities of American politics and the economy and thus unfit to cast an informed vote.

Natural science can indeed be skipped in favor of some kind of "quantitative reasoning" course.

And "content" is nonexistent.

No one — not the provost, not the professor, no one — knows what courses are included in the CSI domain because the powers that be haven't decided yet. So much is left up in the air in this curriculum, it is a wonder the entire faculty isn't in an uproar over the uncertainties it presents.

If two or more courses outside history and social sciences are approved to fulfill CSI (and they could very well be), then a student could graduate without history or social science of any kind.

This would make Halleran's "requirements" mere "suggestions" for graduation. We are to just trust that he and his committee will do the right thing down the road. Pass it now; we'll find out what's in it later.

It makes the curriculum a

Curriculum

Halleran's report is available online at wm.edu/about/administration/provost/documents/bov-curriculum-report-2014.pdf.

The new curriculum as it stands today can be read at kkbruno.com/CurriculumStatement2014.pdf.

hollow core, with as much substance and nutrition as cotton candy.

The provost, then, is either grossly uninformed or has willfully misrepresented the facts to the local papers and to the Board of Visitors.

The board, now aware of the inaccuracies presented as truth by the provost, should consider rescinding its approval of the new curriculum and insist on a product that is clear, easy to understand and describes the content for all required course work.

Facts are stubborn things. The mess that Halleran created more than three years ago can be cleaned up, but it will take a board with a strong constitution to do so.

Karla Kraynak Bruno is a 1981 W&M graduate and a former longtime resident.



A retirement boon

BY DAVID GEORGE BALL

JAMES CITY
Martin Luther King Jr., who inspired me to champion the 401(k) program under President George H.W. Bush as his assistant secretary of labor, would be delighted at the dramatic growth of these pension plans. They help people help themselves.

ESSAY

Today, more than 70 million workers have 401(k) plans, and it's thanks to Dr. King who challenged me to make a difference.

As far as cost, 401(k) plans are considerably less expensive than traditional, defined benefit plans, because primarily they are funded with the workers' own money, whereas defined benefit plans are funded by the employer.

If companies run into financial difficulties, they shift to less costly 401(k) plans and usually make a small matching contribution. This trend will continue to drive the growth of the program.

Not surprisingly, workers are attached to their 401(k) plans. Once the contribution is made, it belongs to them. Unlike traditional defined benefit plans, they know exactly how much they have in their accounts. It is their property, which they can take with them if they change jobs, manage as they see fit, and bequeath to their heirs.

There are other reasons to anticipate growth in the number of participants in the 401(k) program.

Generally, unions favor defined benefit plans because they are not portable and lock workers into union membership. However, the union blockade is beginning to crumble.

In February 2014, Boeing machinists, concerned about building Boeing's new 777X

in Washington state, overruled the union chiefs and voted to replace a traditional defined benefit program with a 401(k)-style plan.

A few weeks later, Boeing's unionized machinists at its St. Louis defense plant voted 74 percent in favor of shifting from a defined benefit plan to a 401(k)-style plan. This will enable the company to present more competitive offers to its government customers for products and prevent layoffs.

Even more astonishing, there are signs that states and municipalities with underfunded public-retirement systems are considering shifting to 401(k) plans.

Recently, Rhode Island, which had an unemployment rate of 9.1 percent in December 2013 and one of the nations' most underfunded public retirement systems, adopted a 401(k) program for workers with fewer than 20 years on the job.

The Rhode Island treasurer estimated that a cost saving plan, which included this 401(k) provision, would save the state \$4 billion over the next two decades.

Unlike health care under the Affordable Care Act, the 401(k) program is not controlled by the federal government. It is driven by the market place.

I predict that within fewer than 10 years, without government intervention, the marketplace will propel the number of people with 401(k) plans to more than 100 million workers.

David George Ball of James City received his bachelor's degree from Yale in 1960 and his law degree from Columbia University in 1964. He served as assistant secretary of labor 1989-93. His memoir, "A Marked Heart," is available at the Bruton Parish Shop.

Tell-'tail' signs of voles

BY ED ANTLE

JAMES CITY
It's winter, so nothing's really going on in the yard, right? Well, unless the voles are eating your plants!

Most gardeners know about moles, but what about voles?

One of the main differences between moles and voles is diet. Moles are meat-eaters (such as earthworms and grubs), and voles prefer mostly vegetables. And they really dig the roots of your plants.

Voles like bulbs such as tulips. They eat the roots of many perennials, including hostas. They like vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, beets, as well as many other plants. In a pinch, they will eat the bark off of trees and shrubs, especially in the winter when food is scarce.

Voles can kill trees and shrubs by girdling them — eating the bark all the way around the trunk.

Voles look like mice but with shorter tails. And with shorter legs, smaller ears and plumper bodies, some say they're cuter than mice.

There are two species of voles common in Virginia, except in more western parts of the state: pine voles and meadow voles. Meadow voles live mostly above ground while pine voles dig tunnels. Voles use mole tunnels, and also dig their own.

Here are some tell-'tail' signs you have voles: Moles

push up dirt from their deep tunnels and make piles of earth. Voles don't. But while moles do not expose their tunnels by making holes, voles dig tunnels with holes along the way. Voles also use surface runways that may be covered over by tall weeds, grass or ground cover. And voles do not dig deep. They stay within 3 inches to 6 inches of the surface. Both moles and voles can make the ground feel spongy.

If you notice a plant looking funny and, on closer examination, see the roots are eaten off, you've probably got voles.

Voles can be very destructive, especially during occasional population explosions. They are prolific breeders. If you notice a lot of plants being eaten by voles, you should take action to protect your gardens.

During these times, heavy trapping is recommended. Get about 10-12 strong mousetraps, bait them with peanut butter and either birdseed or rolled oats, and cover each trap with a plastic pot and a brick on top. The plastic pot gives the vole cover, making it comfortable enough to go after the bait. It also protects other animals from getting snapped. When you dispose of the voles, use gloves or plastic to avoid direct contact, as they can carry diseases. Check the traps daily.

Live traps can be used as well, but there is a problem.

It is illegal in Virginia to take a vole from your property and relocate it.

However, if you have a vole problem, it is best not to Mickey Mouse around with just one solution. Keeping mulch away from the base of shrubs and trees is recommended. But don't expose previously covered areas of the trunk since this tissue is especially vulnerable. Cutting grass and ground cover closer to the ground limits their cover and exposes them to predators. There are repellents specific to voles, but they get mixed reviews, and they're only repellents. Effective lethal rodenticides are not available to the public and require a license to apply.

Large swaths of grass are natural barriers to voles (but do attract moles). When there's an area of lawn that is clean, clear and without cover, voles take paws — so to speak.

When preparing beds to plant, prepare the soil by tilling in a product called VoleBloc or sharp gravel. This gives voles something unpleasant to chew on. Also effective is a 1/4-inch wire mesh fence used as a barrier. Most articles recommend going 6 inches underground and up to 1 foot above.

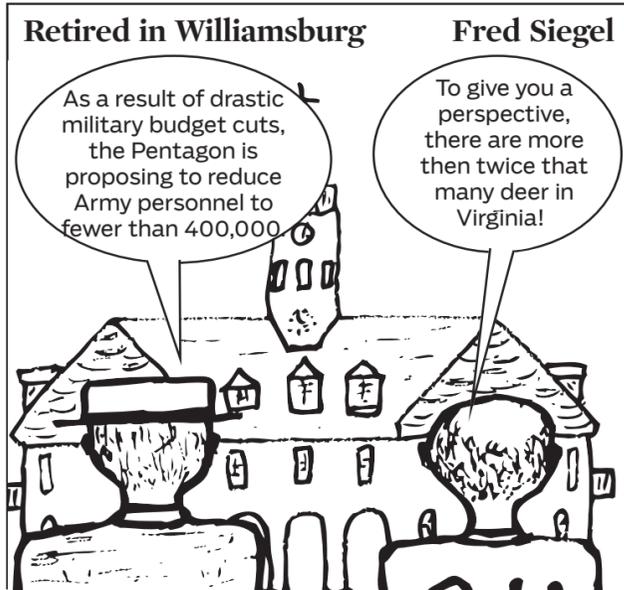
Lastly, get a cat. Voles have several natural predators, such as birds of prey, foxes, dogs and cats.

Literature on voles shows little or no evidence that solar-powered sonic gadgets that produce a constant, inaudible-to-human sound actually work. However, some swear by them.

None of the literature recommends eradicating the vole population completely. Many articles emphasize that they are an important part of the food chain. And when their populations are kept in check, you probably won't notice them around.

There's no one solution to voles damaging your garden. However, taking some precautions may send the little vegetarians to the neighbor's yard for dinner.

Ed Antle is a freelance writer and owner of Jeremiah's Landscape Maintenance. He lives in James City.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. cuts the birthday cake at a party given by David George Ball to celebrate King's 30th birthday on Jan. 15, 1959. Ball was a student at Yale, and Dr. King was his guest.

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