

Faculty Forum

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FACULTY FORUM

**Volume 30
Number 1**

**Note From the Editor
Chris Cooper, Political Science and Public Affairs**

Welcome to another issue of the Faculty Forum. When I began editing the Faculty Forum, I hoped to continue providing a campus forum for thought-provoking pieces reflecting faculty voice and rooted in disciplinary knowledge. I am pleased that this issue provides four such pieces.

The first two articles in this issue address the recent events in Charlottesville and connect them to issues in our campus community. In the first piece, “WCUs Missed Opportunities,” Elizabeth McRae raises a number of important questions about WCUs response to the Charlottesville terrorist attack. In the second piece, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology provides a historical and sociological look at the debate over monuments, with particular attention to what these debates mean locally. Regardless of your opinions of our university’s responses, these are both worth reading and considering.

In the next article, the College of Fine and Performing Arts’ Andrew Adams, asks us to use the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Boyer Model as an opportunity for a campus dialogue about Boyer and the nature of scholarship at WCU. His ideas are worth considering and should provide fodder for conversations around campus.

In the first article in this issue, Ophir Sefia of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice offers a thoughtful review of Mason, Wolfinger and Goulden’s “Do Babies Matter.” His review provides a number of insights about our gender, family, and our chosen profession. It’s worth a read, regardless of your personal family situation.

As always, the opinions expressed here are those of the authors. The Faculty Commons and the university supports this publication as a place for open dialogue among faculty, but does not necessarily agree with or condone the content or opinions expressed here. I expect all of these articles will generate significant campus conversations—if you would like to respond to any of them in the next issue of the Forum, please let me know.

-Chris

WCUs Missed Opportunities

By Elizabeth McRae, Department of History

Events both exciting and disturbing marked the beginning of the 2017-2018 term at WCU. While the Eclipse's path over Cullowhee meant a chance to showcase our university and our region to many visitors, people across the nation were also deeply disturbed by the events in Charlottesville as we watched a university community become the epicenter of neo-Nazis efforts, as they put it, "to come off the internet." Our students returned to campus discussing those events, debating their meaning, and watching their peers across the country come together hold vigils, protest statues, and to contest, disagree, and argue about the meanings of history and memory.

The cancellation of the first announced vigil in support Charlottesville and then the announced replacement event - not directly announced to students - demonstrates a more disturbing trend toward the suppression of difficult conversations in an institution built to encourage civil and civic discourse. Initially, WCU seemed to fall in line with universities across the nation, when WCU's Chief Diversity Officer announced a gathering at the fountain for Tuesday, August 22. The email was distributed to administrators and not announced to campus lessening the chances of it truly becoming a public event, perhaps out of fear for student safety. Even with the sparse communication, WCU employees and students planned to attend. Then, with no explanation, the event was cancelled. The news did not reach everyone in time. There at the fountain, at noon on the 22nd, were three police officers, several faculty, students milling about for various reasons, and students who had been let out of class to attend the event. At the UC—the alternative location of the first announced event--a police officer also stood by a sign alerting folks to the cancellation. This event, many agreed, would have been a great learning opportunity for our students.

And yet it did not become a learning opportunity for our students, and neither did the subsequent event on Thursday, August 31. WCU's university community did not seize the opportunity to begin the year contemplating the serious issues that face our nation. We did not demonstrate how a public campus can be a place where difficult topics are confronted. We did not collectively condemn the senseless violence and death of a young woman exercising her freedom of assembly and of protest. We did not publicly, as a university, denounce neo-Nazis or white nationalists, both groups who reject a democratic society, democratic values, and a belief in equality and who also threaten Jewish, African American, and even allegedly communist students. (The chair of the Racism Task Force and one student from the crowd did address threats of hate groups to our campus). We did not invite the larger student community to participate in dialogue about protest, assembly, historical memory, monuments, or racist and religious violence. We did not show our students how public safety can be balanced with public discourse.

We did leave our students with lots of questions: Why did the events conflict with popular class times? Why didn't students receive emails directly inviting them to the event? With such a large police presence at the event, should they be aware or fearful of certain groups on campus? Why would an event ostensibly open to the entire campus community be limited to 425 people? Could it not take place in a central setting like the plaza around the fountain?

Why would a unity event-- which my students associated with music and even silent contemplation - be so controversial? When is fear a valid reason to squelch public discussion? How did other university communities manage to hold peaceful gatherings in the aftermath of Charlottesville? Can we not follow their model?

I want to be able to answer our students' questions. I want to be able to assure them that in a university setting, we can debate, argue, discuss, and learn about the most contentious issues of the day. As of now, I am afraid that I cannot. The next time, and there will unfortunately be a next time, we have to do better.

Reflections on Charlottesville, Monuments and Memory

By The Department of Anthropology and Sociology

The recent events that have happened in Charlottesville, VA demonstrate the inability and unwillingness of the United States to deal with issues of race and racism. When neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, the KKK and other white supremacist groups freely assemble to promote not free speech but violence in the face of a Confederate statue being removed we must question the purpose of these monuments in our communities. While Governor Roy Cooper has called for the removal of these monuments pending an analysis of cost and logistics from the Departments of Natural and Cultural resources, that indefinite timeframe is not good enough. Monuments and memorials to the Confederacy should fall throughout the South, including the one on the steps of Sylva's old courthouse. Yet in 2015 the North Carolina state legislature and then governor Pat McCrory signed into law what effectively amounted to a ban on removing Confederate monuments in our state. That was a mistake that should be corrected immediately.

The timing of the bill, passed on July 20th and signed into law on July 23rd, is telling. On July 10th of that year South Carolina removed the Confederate battle flag from its statehouse grounds 23 days after Dylann Roof murdered nine black people as they prayed in church. Calls for South Carolina to remove the Confederate flag from statehouse grounds were made after numerous photos of Roof with the Confederate flag surfaced after the massacre. Despite the inevitable backlash throughout the South, including Sylva, then South Carolina governor Nikki Haley succeeded in removing the flag. So why would North Carolina (and recently Alabama) move to ban the removal of Confederate memorabilia from public places like New Orleans, Baltimore, and other cities recently have?

The long answer is rooted in a past we often forget, are not told, or do not care to remember. We are often told that Confederate monuments are about "history," "culture," or "identity." We are told that we would be losing or forgetting something if we remove these memorials. We are told that because no one alive today was involved in the Civil War that brining attention to these monuments only further reinforces racist ideas of the past. On the surface these all seem like very rational and compelling arguments.

Yet beneath these surface arguments there is also a history of how these monuments came to be and why they stick with us. We must first and foremost recognize that the history, culture, and identity we speak of is about the causes and consequences of the Civil War. In the years after that war the South embarked on a rewriting of its history that plagues us still today. In that revision of history we encounter narratives of Northern aggression, states' rights, just causes, valiant rebellion, benevolent slave owners, and loyal slaves. So pervasive have been these narratives that few even challenge them or see them as a problem.

However, historians are in agreement that the Civil War was fundamentally about slavery. Most notably, the 1861 Cornerstone Speech by Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens openly explains that the Confederacy was founded on African enslavement and that this was justified due to their racial inferiority to the white man. Edward Baptist, author of *The Half Has Never Been Told*, explains that, contrary to popular belief, slavery was not about to die out when we went to war with ourselves. Instead, southern slave owners were looking to expand slavery into new

territories and extend their slave owning rights into Free States. Somewhat ironically then, it was Northern states that felt they needed to protect themselves from the aggressive efforts to expand slavery into states that had abolished it. This is why the Civil War was fought, but at the base of it was a fear in the North that slavery would eventually expand to poor and working class whites.

Now, how do you have whites fearing slavery in the North and whites, most of whom did not own slaves, fighting for slavery in the South? We assure you it was not for the full equality of African Americans, as many northern states were curtailing the rights of free blacks. Instead, we might look towards what sociologist W.E.B. DuBois calls the “psychological wages of whiteness.” DuBois explains that during the time of slavery and after the Civil War that even the poorest whites gained status and privilege from the social position of black Americans. This meant that poor whites still had access to things like schools, jobs, public office, voting rights, gun rights, police protection, and public respect in general. It meant that, even though slave labor undermined wages for southern whites, they could still aspire to become wealthy slave owners. For DuBois, whiteness was not about race per se but rather it was a form of payment, privilege, and power over those who were at the bottom of society—African Americans. For Northerners this means that the fight was about a fear of eventually being in the status of a slave (African American), and for southerners it was about maintaining power and economic control over black Americans. These are two sides of the same anti-black coin.

After the Civil War and the short period of Reconstruction the south engaged in what can only be called a rewriting of historical events. It is in the late 1800s and early 1900s when we see the aforementioned arguments supposedly validating the South’s position in the war emerge. Douglas Blackmon, author of *Slavery by Another Name*, explains that from 1900 to 1920 movies such as the original *Birth of a Nation*, books such as *The Leopard’s Spots*, and plays such as *The Clansman* contributed to a rewriting of Southern history. Items such as these valorized the Confederate cause, espoused notions of maintaining white purity, and provided fuel to the effort to remove the rights of black communities after slavery through Jim Crow laws.

It was also during this time that memorials and monuments to the Confederacy arose—Sylva’s was installed in 1915. In such an environment violence against black communities became commonplace and over 4000 African Americans were lynched throughout the 1900s. Many black communities throughout the south, western North Carolina included, were forced to move elsewhere. These monuments were not an attempt to educate us about the causes of the Civil War, but rather to miseducate us. They represent the reassertion of white supremacy against the gains of Reconstruction. Few, if any, of these monuments declare that the so-called Lost Cause was morally wrong or even what it was actually fought for. Reading the inscription on Sylva’s monument you might think that it was white Southerners who were enslaved. More to the point, they make normal a skewed version of history that prevents us from creating communities that can be accepting to increasingly diverse populations through our own ignorance.

Confederate monuments are used by politicians today in the same way they were used over one hundred years ago. They are used to push racial and class divides amongst people who might otherwise find common ground. They normalize a status quo that benefits those who have benefitted and continue to benefit the most, while perpetuating myths that make those at the bottom think they really can make it to the top. This is why we are told we must build walls, create bans, deport, punish, incarcerate, and enforce law and order all on or against our fellow human beings.

We are told these things by both of our political parties to varying degrees. This is why those who are most subject to these policies keep protesting and demonstrating. These groups are not in power, pass no laws, and yet nevertheless they persist in trying to tell us, all of us, decade after decade what must be done to make our society a truly just one. In Sylva we do not have the racial diversity of other towns and that may make it seem as though this argument does not matter, but it does. What we memorialize in public spaces tells people what we value. It matters because when we are ignorant of the past we are likely to arrive at poor moral decisions and these decisions have implications for violence, both physical and psychological, in our country. It matters because these are questions of being clear about where we have been as a community, state, and nation. And it matters because our collective future is only as bright as we can face and address these realities. We should not let a bad law stop us from doing what is right.

Reflections on the Boyer Model at WCU: 2007 to 2017

By Andrew Adams, College of Fine and Performing Arts

In October 2007 *Inside Higher Ed* published an article entitled “*Scholarship Reconsidered as Tenure Policy*.” Scott Jaschik wrote of the breaking news, “Western Carolina University...has adopted Boyer’s definitions for scholarship to replace traditional measures of research...Broader definitions of scholarship will be used in hiring decisions, merit reviews, and tenure consideration.” Ten years after adopting the Boyer model, we should pause to reflect upon its impact on promotion and tenure at WCU.

Efforts to introduce new tenure policies in the Faculty Handbook began in the spring of 2005 and unfolded as WCU was drafting its QEP and looking to its upcoming SACSCOC reaffirmation. A first draft of section 4.00 (Employment Policies, Terms and Procedures) was sent to the Faculty Senate in April 2006. Its statement on scholarship was not ultimately adopted but is well worth revisiting:

Scholarship includes the creation and synthesis of knowledge; the creation of new approaches to understanding and explaining phenomena; the development of new insights; the critical appraisal of the past; artistic creation, performance, and contributions; and the application of knowledge and expertise to address needs in society and in the profession...Applied scholarship should not be confused with service...Applied scholarship is serious, demanding work...Therefore, it must be disseminated in a medium that can be evaluated by others...Since the nature of scholarship differs by discipline (e.g., some publish books, others journal articles, and others produce sculptures), departments are responsible for defining the quality, quantity and mix of scholarly expression.

Six months before it became university policy with the Faculty Senate vote on October 25, 2006, WCU had already crafted a statement that included concepts from the model but didn’t mention Boyer’s name, thereby averting a wholesale incorporation with the associated complications explored in this essay.

Although it is often presented as such, Ernest Boyer did not primarily seek to broaden the *definition* of scholarship: he himself consistently said that he endeavored to broaden its *meaning* and *scope* by “reconsidering” it. If this observation seems overly semantic, it’s because any discussion of Boyer quickly focuses on words. Read his original descriptions of Discovery, Integration, Application, and Teaching. Discovery, or the Scholarship of Scholarship, is self evident and articles published about the model demonstrate that the majority of faculty list their work under this heading. The explanation of Integration suggests that Interdisciplinary Synthesis is a more accurate descriptor—although codifying an original piece of Interdisciplinary Synthesis would be Discovery. Boyer’s Scholarship of Teaching was a straightforward call for scholarly teaching and bears little resemblance to what it later became. Because the process of Application (Engagement) should, again, result in an original scholarly product, it’s unclear how distinct it is from Discovery. And while we speak of four categories, Boyer stressed that the model “divide[s] intellectual functions that are tied inseparably together” (25). Why, then, do some DCRDs state that Discovery carries more

weight as scholarship when the Boyer model is an unranked set of descriptors rather than a rubric with points?

Among the most interesting documents related to our implementation is Chancellor John Bardo's and Provost Kyle Carter's joint letter to the campus on November 5, 2008. As we were using Boyer for the first time that year they sought to remind the faculty that, beyond questions of nomenclature, scholarship involves an initial process, a final product, and its subsequent evaluation. They wrote:

There is an important distinction between scholarly activity and scholarship. A scholarly activity is an action that has not been vetted to determine its value...A faculty member writes a review on the effects of global warming (integration). When she is finished, she sets the article on her bookshelf...Is this a scholarly act? Yes. Is it scholarship that will count toward promotion/tenure? No. Why? It hasn't been evaluated by discipline experts who can attest to the validity of the methodology or its scholarliness...An engineering faculty member conducts a process redesign (application) for a major corporation...Is this scholarly activity? Sure. Is it scholarship that will count toward promotion and tenure? Not yet. The evaluation component is missing.

Bardo and Carter articulated the heart of the matter: a process redesign or a review—like choreography for a musical, a blog, a playground, or a bird sanctuary—can be scholarship. As faculty at an institution nationally recognized for engagement, we can all support the premise that scholarship can and should follow a rich variety of paths. No matter the Boyer category to which it is ascribed, the challenge voiced in 2008 endures: “How do we ‘determine the value’ of the final product?”

Much of Boyer's writing contemplates the role of the academy in society and ways that scholarship could address its “disturbingly complicated problems” (81). In *Scholarship Reconsidered* and in some of his other writings Boyer quoted the words of noted historian Oscar Handlin: “[S]cholarship has to prove its worth not on its own terms, but by service to the nation and the world” (23). This observation encapsulates issues that might in their totality be called “The Boyer Problem.” Boyer's philosophy of scholarship and Boyer's model as a method for categorizing and evaluating it are difficult to reconcile. To embrace his philosophy is to view the Academy from 30,000 feet; to craft objective assessment methods is to reinterpret his original paradigm ever more narrowly for individual disciplines. Despite Handlin's sweeping words and Boyer's soaring ideals, scholarship must indeed ‘prove its worth on its own terms’ or it risks being unworthy of the name.

Quantitative data is fundamental to effective assessment and to assess the Boyer model on our campus we should consider how many faculty members have successfully negotiated tenure and promotion processes in the last decade with the kind of work Boyer championed. Lee Shulman, past president of the Carnegie Foundation, envisioned such data a decade ago. In the 2007 article noted above, Shulman is quoted as saying, “What could really have an impact...is if a few years from now, Western Carolina can point to a cohort of newly tenured professors who won their promotions using the Boyer model.”

As tenure portfolios and deliberations are confidential, an exact number of Boyer faculty at WCU may never be known. Nonetheless, it would be a valuable exercise in the coming year to distribute a survey to faculty tenured in the last decade to assess the extent to which Boyer scholarship played a role in their advancement. We could also prepare a separate survey for faculty applying for tenure and promotion this year to gather information on their use of the model. In-depth, longitudinal studies on the implementation of Boyer are almost nonexistent and such an assessment would go far in realizing Shulman's call. Recognizing this void in the literature two years before our adoption at Western, KellyAnn O'Meara wrote in 2005: "...very little empirical research has been conducted to see if, in fact, any of the claims made by Boyer and other advocates have occurred" (481). Just two years ago Jossey-Bass published a 25th anniversary edition of Boyer's book that is prefaced with five introductory essays collectively entitled "The Impact of *Scholarship Reconsidered* on Today's Academy." The authors took the first approach noted above and viewed "Today's Academy" from 30,000 feet. They fail to identify a single institution at which Boyer's work has had a lasting impact and, upon examining the endnotes, one finds that the essays are largely based on sources published a decade or more before the the volume was being prepared in 2015.

Finally, some of our colleagues at WCU have produced important scholarship based on our Boyer implementation. Four articles—the last from August 2017—explore the ways in which definitions of scholarship and methods for outside peer review have evolved at Western over the past decade (see Cruz, et al., below). Each notes the lack of consistency across campus with regard to how Boyer-related elements like those explored above are articulated in DCRDs. They wrote in "Bound by Tradition?" (2012): "The experiences of Western Carolina University suggest that there is a fine balance to be struck between flexibility and consistency in implementing processes for the review of new forms and types of scholarship" (15). And they observed in "Boyer in the Middle" (2017): "Boyer's stated intention was to provide the faculty with multiple pathways to pursue scholarly work; but in practice this has resulted in pathways within pathways within pathways, thereby complicating the increasingly less epistemological and more pragmatic concerns of efficacy, equity, and transparency."

What are we to do, then? Scrap the Boyer model? Rip a page out of the Faculty Handbook and excise paragraphs from our DCRDs? I'm not proposing anything so radical. First, we should study *Scholarship Reconsidered* and reexamine Boyer's original ideas—the main text is just eighty-one pages. Second, we should engage in meaningful dialogue and objective assessment. From the perspective of both the institution and individual departments, has adopting Boyer accomplished what we hoped ten years ago? Has it impacted numerous faculty or relatively few? Can there be consistent review of dossiers when definitions of scholarship and processes for external peer review vary across campus?

It is my hope that we will take advantage of this anniversary year to have a spirited campus-wide discussion about the Boyer model—just as we did so notably and meaningfully a decade ago.

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Book Review: Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower

By Ophir Sephia, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

In, *Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower* (Rutgers University Press) scholars Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden examine the effect of family formation on academic career and the effect of career on family formation. Located at the intersection of career, gender, and family, the authors argue that at nearly every rung in the academic career ladder, women in all disciplines experience harm from having kids. Family negatively affects women's, but not men's, early academic careers, and when more than half of doctoral degrees are now earned by women, women continue to earn less money and do not ascend major academic leadership roles commensurate with their numbers.

The findings in this book will resonate with faculty members that are parents or parental caregivers as many have undoubtedly experienced the stress that accompanies managing career, family, and children. The book considers two core questions; how does having a family shape professional trajectory and how does gender inform this process? To answer these questions the authors rely on existing research, census data, and their own interviews and longitudinal surveys of faculty, graduate students, and postdocs.

The book chapters trace the route traveled by academics, from graduate school to retirement, uncovering discrimination at nearly every stage in the career process. We read that marriage and children affect men and women's careers differently at different stages in the academic life course and among the social and natural sciences. At each stage, women pay what the authors term a 'baby penalty.' For each child a woman has, her income incrementally decreases 1 percent while men's income is unaffected. Women who became parents within five years of earning their PhD are significantly less likely than their male counterparts to get tenure-track jobs. Women Assistant Professors with young children are less likely than other groups to get tenure and more likely to leave academia. Post-tenure, women disproportionately serve on institutional committees and as mid-level administrators. These obligations contribute to delayed promotion to full professor and to lower salaries upon retirement. Inequalities are similarly pronounced when examining the cumulative effects of career on family formation. Among tenured faculty, women are more likely than men to be unmarried, with fewer children, and with higher rates of family dissolution.

Findings here highlight deep occupational inequities in higher education. Fortunately, the authors submit a number of recommendations that include expanding existing policies that have produced positive results at many universities including affordable child care, dual hires, and gender-neutral family-leave policies. They also recommend universities offer flexible tenure clocks and clock stoppage for faculty needing to care for family members, as well as part-time tenured or tenure-track lines that allow faculty to return to full-time later in their career. In short, the authors advocate for policies that offer families greater flexibility especially during the critical early professional and childcare years.

However, policy alone will not produce gender equity in the workplace. The authors argue that the cultural and social climate of academia which continues to undervalue parenthood and family must be reckoned with. Indeed, their research indicates that when

considering whether to have children, female academics fear that colleagues will question their occupational dedication and resent their temporary absence from the workplace. These concerns are essentially fears of discrimination and stigma which are themselves cultural issues and therefore will not be remedied by policy alone. Reducing stigma requires actively promoting, supporting, and encouraging faculty to take advantage of these policies. The authors suggest that administrators and department heads can promote a family friendly workplace culture by making policies well known, easy to access, and most importantly, structured as opt-out rather than opt-in policies.

Taking the findings from *Babies* seriously challenges us to reckon with a far broader social problem, the difficulty of balancing career and family obligations with professional life. At its core, these are not women's issues or family issues or even labor issues, but rather issues that speak to the increasingly unreasonable expectations placed on workers and their families. Establishing a true family friendly work environment requires facilitating a work-life balance that reflects the realities and obligations of contemporary life.

END

Mason, M. A., Wolfinger, N. H., & Goulden, M. (2013). *Do babies matter?: Gender and family in the ivory tower*. Rutgers University Press.



FACULTY FORUM

**Volume 30
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**Note From the Editor
Chris Cooper, Political Science and Public Affairs**

Welcome to another issue of the Faculty Forum. This issue includes two important articles, each representing two very different aspects of the university.

The first article is a thoughtful and challenging piece by Kadie Otto. In “The Elephant in the Field,” Kadie examines the prevalence of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) in football and discusses what this growing body of evidence suggests for the ethics of offering football at WCU. Not everyone will agree with Kadie’s conclusions, but we would all be well-served to grapple with her argument and conclusions.

The idea for the next article came in the Fall when I saw Sloan Despeaux walking into the Stillwell Building carrying a dozen or so white tube socks. I’ve known Sloan for 15 years and I’ve never known her to wear one pair of tube socks—much less a dozen, so I asked her what was going on. Turns out Sloan was using these socks to solve one of the most ubiquitous problems facing teachers today—cell phones in the classroom. Please read her piece if you’ve ever wanted to understand how to convince students to put down their cell phones and concentrate on learning.

As always, the opinions expressed here are those of the authors. The Faculty Commons and the university supports this publication as a place for open dialogue among faculty, but does not necessarily agree with or condone the content or opinions expressed here. I expect both of these articles will generate significant campus conversations—if you would like to respond to either of them in the next issue of the Forum, please let me know.

-Chris

The Elephant on the Field

By Kadie Otto, Professor of Sport Management

For over a year now I've been plagued by a nagging ethical question: Why are institutions of learning (i.e., colleges, universities [WCU], and high schools) continuing to offer, support, promote, and altogether celebrate a sport that has been proven to cause inherent damage to the brains of young men whose minds these entities clearly state is their mission to develop? The damage is CTE—Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy:

CTE is a progressive degenerative disease of the brain found in people with a history of repetitive brain trauma (often athletes). The repeated brain trauma triggers progressive degeneration of the brain tissue, including the build-up of an abnormal protein called tau. These changes in the brain can begin months, years, or even decades after the last brain trauma or end of active athletic involvement. The brain degeneration is associated with common symptoms of CTE including memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, depression, suicidality, Parkinsonism, and eventually progressive dementia. CTE has been known to affect boxers since the 1920's...and in recent years CTE [has been] found in other athletes, including football and hockey players...as well as in military veterans who have a history of repetitive brain trauma. CTE is not limited to current professional athletes; it has also been found in athletes who did not play sports after high school or college.¹

Our University's mission states that WCU exists to "create learning opportunities" for students. Research has shown that the force of repeated blows to the head in professional football players is equivalent to 20G's of force—such force is the same as driving a car at 35 mph. into a brick wall!² It would not go over well if one of our physics professors asked students to put on helmets and run full throttle into the wall to "learn" about force. Yet, herein lies 'the elephant on the field'. If we agree that athletics is also a "learning environment", then we run into the problem of systematic *inconsistency*. If said trauma damages the brain, then, to be systematically consistent, we cannot allow said trauma to go on in *any* "learning environment".

So, where do we stand? Let's examine the evidence. Researchers at Boston University, the hub of CTE research, have examined the brains of 202 deceased former football players at all levels. "Nearly 88 percent of all the brains, 177, had CTE. Three of 14 who had played only in high school had CTE, **48 of 53 college players [emphasis added]**, 9 of 14 semiprofessional players, and 7 of 8 Canadian Football League players. CTE was not found in the brains of two who played football before high school".³ Even more recently, researchers found "...that

¹ Boston University Research CTE Center, available at <https://www.bu.edu/cte/about/frequently-asked-questions/>

² The NFL's Concussion Crisis, *PBS Frontline*, Oct. 8, 2013, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/league-of-denial/>

³ All Things Considered, *NPR*, available at <http://www.npr.org/2017/07/25/539198429/study-cte-found-in-nearly-all-donated-nfl-player-brains>

participation in youth tackle football before age 12 increased the risk of problems with behavioral regulation, apathy and executive functioning by two-fold and increased the risk of clinically elevated depression scores by three-fold”.⁴

Given these findings it will not surprise me when, in the near future, football players file a class action against universities alleging willful negligence. (Let’s not be naïve--the NFL, the NCAA, and Pop Warner have already been sued.) Indeed, Associate Professor *Matt Sienkiewicz warns us that* “Colleges...ignore the reality of brain injuries at their own financial and moral peril”.⁵

It appears that University leaders and faculty have a choice: Sit idly by waiting for researchers to come up with a test to determine whether CTE is present in the brains of *living* football players while more football players’ brains are damaged or be proactive in addressing this problem before it morphs into a full-blown moral and legal catastrophe! According to Professor Sienkiewicz, “Given the evidence at hand, there is no neutral position to take. We will either be complicit in the continuing epidemic of football-related brain injuries, or we will be at the forefront of creating a safer, less-hypocritical college experience for our students. When our students graduate, they must know that every aspect of their education was geared toward building their mental and physical capacities, not destroying them”.⁶

‘The elephant on the field’ can no longer be ignored. Ignorance is not a defense. And, willful negligence is not a charge that universities want to contend with. Institutions of higher learning whose mission is to develop the minds of young people cannot simultaneously support a sport that has been proven to damage these same minds.

⁴ Boston University Research CTE Center, available at <https://www.bu.edu/cte/2017/09/19/study-suggests-link-between-youth-football-and-later-life-emotional-behavioral-and-cognitive-impairments/>

⁵ See *Professors are complicit in football players’ brain damage*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 22, 2017, available at <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Professors-Are-Complicit-in/241521>

⁶ Ibid at para. 14

Putting Cell Phones to Bed in Class

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This is a short article about how tube socks have helped me become a better teacher.

Regardless of their capabilities for communication and speedy fact retrieval, cell phones are, without a doubt, distracting. I doubt any teacher would welcome distraction into his or her classroom, but I suspect that most of us feel overwhelmed by the ubiquity of cell phones and simply do not know how to best deal with it. Some of us embrace cell phones and try to get our students to use them in ways that benefit their learning. However, in their 2015 study of cell phone in college classes, Berry and Westfall found that “despite the obvious potential for enhanced student engagement using cell phone technology, the consequences associated with the vast majority of students entering class carrying a cell phone are often negative.” (Berry and Westfall, p. 64)

In their survey of college faculty, Berry and Westfall discovered a variety of cell phone deterrents ranging from verbal reprimands, to confiscation, to ejecting offenders from class. The most common deterrent was the verbal reprimand, used by 80% of faculty respondents. However, when they surveyed college students’ perceptions of these reprimands, they uncovered “an unexpected result; students who have been reprimanded for using cell phones in class seem less likely to change their behavior than those who are not reprimanded. Further, where reprimands do change behavior, they do not have a very large effect in contexts outside that particular classroom.” (Berry and Westfall, p. 68) They found that the most successful deterrents were also the most confrontational and punitive. (Berry and Westfall, p. 70)

I did not enter this career with the expectation of being confrontational and punitive on a daily basis. On the other hand, I feel that many of my students have acquired a technology addiction that is detrimental to their personal learning experience. I want to make it clear that I am not a Luddite in the classroom. I usually integrate short videos and mathematics “applets” in my classes everyday. However, in my MATH 101 class in particular, the factors of technology addiction, unease with the subject, and full classrooms have combined to ensure that a large proportion of my students were simply not paying attention. I want to give my students the tools and the best chances to succeed. Therefore, for the past decade or so, I have implemented a variety of anti-cell phone policies, but frankly, I have not been happy with any of them. For example, citing cell phone use as a penalty to a student’s participation grade has proven to be too abstract. Having cell phone use as a trigger to a class-wide pop quiz turned me into a constant enforcer who in the end suffered the biggest penalty (I was the one, after all, who had to grade all of those pop quizzes). Near the end of last fall’s MATH 101 class, I was frustrated, and I finally asked my students what I could do. Enter, the tube sock.

For the Spring 2017 and now the Fall 2017 semesters in MATH 101, I have arrived to class the first day with a package of brand-new tube socks. I pass out one to each student. I tell them that the socks are theirs to keep forever (last fall’s students and I decided that it is better not to share socks). I explain that they may keep their phones on their desks, but that they need to be in the socks. Any student who does not want a phone-filled sock on the desk has only to

convince me that they do not possess a phone (i.e. the phone needs to be out of sight in a backpack on silent). As an incentive, any student who successfully “socks” or hides a phone for the whole semester gets to drop a unit test grade.

My students have been very amused and very pleased with this arrangement. About half dutifully put their phones in their socks every class (the rest, presumably not wanting to suffer the indignity of having a sock on the desk, successfully stow their phones away). Some decorate the socks. Many lovingly fold them into soft cotton packages that they carefully place on the corners of their desks. One student last semester looked relieved and told me that the sock was “like a bed for my phone.” Like the popular Tamagotchi digital pets of the 1990s, cell phones constantly ask for our attention. By using the tube socks, my students get a well-deserved break from technology, and I get a class that (for the most part) pays attention.

Berry, Michael J. and Westfall, Aubrey. “Dial D for Distraction: The Making and Breaking of Cell Phone Policies in the College Classroom,” *College Teaching* **63** (2) (2015): 62-71.