

Dr. Clancy titles the introduction of his strategic plan: “Jobs As Central to Life”, a name which informs what the administrations’ idea of “True Commitment” really is: a reorganization of our university for job preparation at the expense of all else. The restructuring announcement opening sentences read that, “automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning, predictive analytics, advances in the neurosciences and cybersecurity will be major influencers in the job market”, then relying on a telling and implicit premise (a concept I was taught here by the philosophy department), reaches the conclusion that these disciplines are “therefore, the work of universities.” This fundamental assumption by administration, that universities are career preparation centers, betrays the fundamental concept of a university: to act as a house of learning that fosters both economic and uneconomic knowledge. Philosopher Benedict de Spinoza is quoted as saying “every learned man who fails to acquire a trade will at last turn out a rogue.” Spinoza was a lens crafter by trade, but this was never “central to his life,” he was a philosopher. His writings have rested deeply in minds such as Einstein and were limited in volume due to his premature death at the age of 44, likely due a lung illness caused by the inhalation of glass from the lenses he made to sustain himself. The restructure is not resented because it concerns the marketable studies, but rather that it makes them the exclusive focus of the universities efforts: it is fundamentally an attack on the philosophical spirit: the love of wisdom for its own sake.

Most of the marketable disciplines mentioned earlier fall strictly under the purview of my only major, computer science, and the remainder are strongly influenced by its developments. While my declared major likely did show up in an all important department headcount in the PPRC’s deliberations, mine and many others’ respect of the philosophic quality of a university did not. The use of the word ‘likely’ is quite purposeful, as the administration has seemingly gone to lengths to make their plan obscure and inaccessible, lacking a detailed, comprehensible, and accessible budget, one of its most deficient and unacceptable qualities. It seems unimaginable to confidently follow along with a plan as poorly understood as this one, especially when public relations efforts have been put forth to convince and mislead rather than to inform students and prospective students. The latter of which have been deliberately asked to be guided away from this event and fed a “positive spin” narrative of the restructuring by their tour guides, barring students from giving these tours if they do not comply.

Currently I am taking a class on machine learning, a fashionable job skill mentioned earlier. Last semester I studied Rousseau and Tocqueville in a upper level philosophy class with about the same number of students as my machine learning class: around ten. Focused humanities classes such as these are the kind under serious threat for disappearance, crammed in the single year of the ill defined “University Studies,” which will make up what remains of the unmarketable studies, in an inevitably limited and watered down form. Students including myself voiced our opinions by taking the prior mentioned philosophy class in the only way that seems to matter to administration, with our feet, declaring that the writings of Rousseau alongside artificial intelligence, are both important things to study “not just for the 21st century, but the 22nd century,” following the administration’s phrasing. The reason why Tocqueville won’t be making the cut is because Phillips 66 and Bank of Oklahoma don’t care about him, not that they should, their business is business, ours isn’t!

Although there is a wealth of other decisions to find issue with, the removal of the philosophy program is above all in unveiling the ugly transformation of our university into a corporation. There is no discipline, economic or uneconomic, that does not owe much of its foundations and guidance to philosophy. Computer science will serve as a single example in the

vast multitude in the history of academics. Most of the major developments of computer science occurred in the 20th century, long after scientists felt compelled to style themselves as natural philosophers. Despite this, many of the pioneers of computer science were either philosophers themselves or considered themselves students of philosophy. Among them are names such as famed philosopher Blaise Pascal, who invented the mechanical calculator, Charles Babbage, father of the computer and self-described philosopher, Ada Lovelace, who wrote the first algorithm for Babbage's machine also valued metaphysics alongside mathematics, George Boole, who gave us the basis of digital logic, that is boolean algebra, which was informed largely as a response to Aristotle's logical works, monumental analytical philosopher Bertrand Russell gave much to the study of computation with his additions to mathematical logic, Alan Turing, father to theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence, employed the work of logicians Kurt Gödel and the earlier mentioned Bertrand Russell in his most famous proofs, finally there is the still living and philosophically well-versed Noam Chomsky, who formulated the Chomsky Hierarchy which makes up the entire structure of the theory of computation class offered at this very university.

This account, and many others that could be given for other disciplines, demonstrates the myopic and foolish nature of the decision to evict philosophy from the house it has built since the foundations of Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, and the first chartered universities of the middle ages, where the study of philosophy was honored above law and medicine, the distinguished members of the new "Professional Super College". Philosophy, History, and English are now likely to be members of the reductionist and ridiculous "Humanities and Social Justice" division, while in the Engineering and Natural Sciences college we will have three separate engineering divisions alongside a massive packing of sciences in a new "Natural Science" division. Even in the seemingly well-treated department of computer science, it would be expected that as time goes on, less focus will be given to theory and more to applications, particularly cyber security, so we may go on to work for the often advertised NSA who have been invited to recruit us during lectures. The history of computer science particularly shows how philosophy played an important role in establishing a field that blossomed less than a hundred years ago. However not just the past, but the future of computer science informs us of the importance of philosophical deliberation when considering the tools it will likely soon provide us: automation to the point of ubiquitous unemployment, artificially intelligent weapons of war, superintelligent machines, and efficient and pervasive personal data collection and analysis. I will conclude with the wise words of Bertrand Russell: "When we have acquired these immense powers, to what end shall we use them? Man has survived, hitherto, by virtue of ignorance and inefficiency. He is a ferocious animal, and there have always been powerful men who did all the harm they could. But their activities were limited by the limitations of their technique. Now, these limitations are fading away. If, with our increased cleverness, we continue to pursue aims no more lofty than those pursued by tyrants in the past, we shall doom ourselves to destruction and shall vanish as the dinosaurs vanished. They, too, were once the lords of creation. They developed innumerable horns to give them victory in the contest of their day. But, though no other dinosaur could conquer them, they became extinct and left the world to smaller creatures such as rats and mice. We shall court a similar fate if we develop cleverness without wisdom."