

## Universities losing monopoly on education

**D.G. Martin**



The coming of the new year reminds us how quickly times change. Faster and faster and closer to home these changes come.

Change, refocus, compete, find better ways of doing things.

Or step aside.

That is the message for American business, government, and people these days.

What about our universities? Are they rocks of stability and towers of strength in an otherwise uncertain American landscape? Or are they just as threatened and challenged as others?

I hesitate to try to answer. I treasure the stability and order and safety that undergirds strong academic communities. But colleges and universities are not magically unaffected by changing times. They will have to adapt and change in response to the different circumstances, too.

Or step aside.

Among the challenges before American higher education is the probable loss of several of its "monopolies." These include:

(1) The monopoly of location. Students who want to participate in the higher education experience have almost always had to come to the university classrooms. But new technology permits high speed, high quality interaction of teachers and learners at different places. There is so much thinking, talking, and writing about the many challenges and consequences that come from the loss of this "classroom" monopoly that I only mention it here.

(2) The monopoly of access to information. Great libraries, collections of other research materials, and groups of scholars have made university campuses the entry gate to participation in research and scholarship. But the new electronic linkups will soon make it possible for any of us to have access to all the information in the best university libraries - and contacts with great minds all over the world - without leaving home. In an earlier column I shared with you some of my thoughts about the revolutionary impact on our universities of this democratization of scholarship.

(3) The monopoly of credentialing. For much of this century, a college diploma has been a basic key to participation at the top levels of American life. It has been the distinction between those who were presumptively qualified for the best jobs and those who would have to prove themselves - or work their way up - just to get a chance.

The rest of the community has trusted universities and colleges to define what is needed and to determine how best to provide it.

But as the cost of higher education increases - whether paid by the students and parents or by the government - those who are paying are beginning to look for alternative "keys to participation."

As reported in a recent edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, some government leaders are already threatening to take this monopoly away from the college and university community.

Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, acknowledging that the certification of what has been learned has always been the role of the university, now asserts, "We are coming to the age where that is going to be blown apart." As an alternative to the university diploma, Romer is pushing for an institution or procedure "where we certify and verify for the student and the employer that learning has occurred."

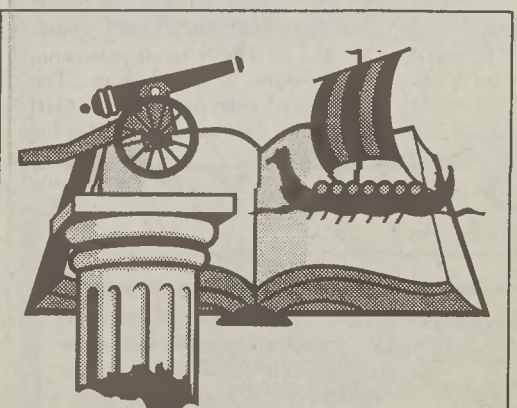
According to the *Chronicle*, Romer thinks a certification process can be designed to go beyond mere job competencies. "This method is applicable to civics, ethics, politics, art."

If leaders like Gov. Romer get their way, and such certificates take the place of college diplomas as the passport to participation, how bad will it hurt our colleges and universities?

For those who only seek the "passport," colleges and universities may no longer be essential.

But for those who believe that higher education is more than just acquiring a set of skills and a certificate, the campus community experience will always be one of life's great treasures - and a "monopoly that I believe will always be secure."

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs for the University of North Carolina system.



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## A different kind of dream

**Herbert L. White**



America is a different place from April 4, 1968.

When Martin Luther King Jr.'s life was cut short by an assassin's

bullet that day, he was nearly five years removed from his "I Have A Dream" speech that foretold a society where decisions based on skin color would be eliminated. I was 5 years old, a skinny, bespectacled boy growing up in the country outside of Wilmington. I remember looking at our black-and-white television set that evening when NBC news anchor Chet Huntley suddenly flashed across the screen to announce King's death. I remember national leaders getting on television to urge the nation to stay calm and not take to violence in the streets. Looking back, that message was intended for black folks, who probably figured there was nothing to lose that night. America's urban core burned, and The Dream took a beating, too.

Today, African Americans

are looking to fulfill their own destiny not by chastising the larger society to accept us, but by taking it upon ourselves to carry the load. For all the posturing about who did us wrong and owes us a break, the fact is we're more capable of raising our boats than anyone uptown, in Raleigh or Washington. Government and corporate entities should be held responsible to address our concerns and sanctioned when they ignore them, but Americans traditionally have helped themselves first. Our history is a living testament to that.

As a child of the post-civil rights era, I didn't have to live through church firebombings and lynchings intended to keep so-called negroes in their place. But it never hurts to look back through the prism of history to see that we haven't come as far as Dr. King envisioned. Blacks face severe challenges that were unheard of even 10 or 15 years ago. We're one of the fastest-growing groups of people suffering from AIDS; unemployment is still generally higher than other ethnic groups, and for black men and teens, it's even worse. We're quick to split our families with divorce and slow to live up to our parental commitment to nurture and raise our children. And the most dangerous people in our communities don't wear white sheets; too often they're young people packing automatic weapons and a chip on their shoulder. It's a different world, all right.

But change is in the air. There's a new commitment to the black community that's coming from African Americans, which manifests itself every day in Charlotte and across the country. We are joining to rid our neighborhoods of drug pushers and criminals. We're becoming more entrepreneurial, and preaching an end to government dependence, something that's long overdue. Last year's Million Man March, though repudiated by some of our friends and reviled by our enemies, was a shining moment in the history of black people in America. Its message was clear: African Americans can be knocked down, but we're not going to stay there for long.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing is the embracing of our own heritage, customs and institutions. There's a renewed sense that black people are capable of competence in all endeavors. For all its good points, desegregation had its drawbacks. Our businesses, homes and institutions suffered, overrun by people trying their darndest to get out of black communities. As things turned out, all that glitters isn't gold, not because it's bad, but to make rules, one has to own the game.

What would King think of African Americans today? I don't know, but we're making strides to achieve The Dream in our own way. Maybe Dr. King would've approved. HERBERT L. WHITE is editor of *The Charlotte Post*.

## The forgotten ones: Minority teachers

By William R. Davis Jr.  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

The urgent cry of every major or minor American school system is: We need minority teachers. While this is a known fact, what are we, the minority teachers, to do about the problems that we experience within these systems that so badly need us?

Every American school superintendent scratches his or her head to think of ways to attract minority teachers to their system. They usually send a representative to scout the best talent to complete a projected goal for that particular year. However, the numbers individuals who are certified fully are very small indeed (figures that are based on writer's knowledge). The individuals that are secured for possible employment in these systems are those who have the desire to teach, but lack certification to insure full licensure by each individual state. Thus, the individual is hired to teach in these school systems at the mercy of the various state institutions of higher learning. They are given long programs of study to complete, and often times programs that really almost certifies them of obtaining a master's degree in their area of study.

While I may speak from experience, it becomes very disconcerting to work in environments that start out as being ideal, and turn into complete nightmares before your eyes. The teaching profession may not be as glamorous as a stock broker, or CEO of a Fortune 500 company, but, it does have its rewards - student success and achievement. It is this achievement and success that teachers try to give their all to insure will take place and will continue throughout each child's life upon earth. However, the minority teacher, depending upon the geographical locale, may be viewed among his or her peers as being unskilled and inadequate in completing the task.

### Feeling of isolation

In today's school environment, especially in the modern middle school environment and team teaching, the minority teacher is more so thought of as a "token" or tag-along. Often, being rejected or isolated from the functioning

group. It is with this in mind, that some minority teachers feel as though they are the true "forgotten ones." Having taught under provisional guidelines for two southern states, I have experienced the worst of these forms of isolationism; the latter being very mild, but noticeable. It was in my very first year of teaching that I experienced this at its best. I was hired to take over a class of upper middle schoolers in the middle of the year. Having been warned by my peers in a southern school district (Georgia), I continued to seek employment at this particular school, was interviewed and secured the position. I began teaching the second semester of that year with the knowledge that I was provisionally certified and that I was actively seeking full certification in the state.

I was assigned to a mentor teacher on my hall whose basic function was to help guide me through some of the problems that I would encounter along the way, and that I was to actively seek the advice of the members of my team throughout the entire school day, if needed. The relationship between the team and myself had worked fine for about two to three months, until there was a problem with one of the students in my classes. There was an incident of which I informed my team involving this student and fully disclosing the problems that I was encountering in other classes.

The mentor teacher listened, but didn't take in all that was said, merely shrugging off the entire incident. I was asked to come to the principal's office for a conference to discuss what had happened with this particular child with the child's parent. The parent was very ornery and disagreeable, and even cursed me in the presence of the principal, with no apology demanded by the principal from this parent. It was from this incident that the principal's lack of effort to respond that I began to formulate the theories of conspiracy and distrust of the members of my team and the lack of support from the principal.

In response to the incident, the principal sent a letter in my box about the concerns of the parent that were discussed behind closed doors. The memo sent to me read on the bottom those individuals who were to receive copies

with the parent's name at the bottom. Having noticed this, I told those persons down at the central office of the problems I was having and the nature of the letter, as well as, the name of parent who was receiving a copy of a confidential memo. The principal's response was that it was a mistake and to disregard the parent's name on that memo. I was not confident that there was any truth to that.

The actions that followed caused me to seek increased camaradery with fellow minority teachers; teachers who had many years of experience, as well as the only African American assistant principal present at the school. I was placed under constant watch and severe patrol by the members of this particular team and given little or no respect as to proper classroom etiquette (entering, retrieving students, and leaving a classroom). This had become a constant problem and had begun to effect my daily routine of performance; causing the effect of my health. The problems did not subside at all, and had even escalated to the point of me asking for a behavior specialist to come in with classroom tips on curtailing the problems. The first specialist was quite rude, but did offer some advice. The second was very considerate and understood the problems that I was having and offered many ways that became quite helpful to me in my second try at the profession. To no avail of any type of reconsideration, both principals (white) adamantly asked me to resign my position after evidence of improvement; refusing to sign any type of transfer to another school; causing me to seek another site for possible rehire at another location.

Finally, having been informed of not receiving a contract and putting the matter in the hands of a higher authority associated with the local teachers union, I left the county for another state to seek yet another teaching opportunity. This event alone has given a clear picture of the problems associated with minority teachers and the reasons for them being called the "forgotten ones."

Former Charlotte resident WILLIAM DAVIS JR. is a teacher in the Maury County (Tenn.) school system.

## Letters to The Post

### Don't censure black history

I had to call Discovery Place to find out if Rudy Cooper, vice president of exhibits, research and planning, was Afro-American or white. My thoughts after reading the article ("Blockade of black history," Jan. 4) was 'He must be white.' When I called, the receptionist informed me he was an Afro-American. How saddened I was to hear this.

Factual information and truthful information is reality. Only ignorance is shown in trying to hide, escape from reality and considered deplorable in my eyes. For someone to be vice president of exhibits, research and planning and try to hide, not bring to light the facts of history, is totally unacceptable. Who are you trying to hide, suppress this information from our children, white America? Our young Afro-American children, most of all, must be informed of our history and culture. The Jewish people never ever let us forget their terrible plight. Why should we as Afro-Americans?

I'll never forget my first time visiting Charleston, S.C. I had wanted to go there for so long to see some of my history and culture. I knew the slave ships came there and slaves were sold, but I wanted so much to see what exhibits were preserved. I wanted to know and feel within my heart and soul what my people went through. I stood in front of a building where the slaves were sold, silently taking it all in, trying to grasp a smell, a feel of something from the past to let my body, soul and mind know what really took place at this spot. It was very moving to me. I felt so proud to be black.

I'm not ashamed for what my people had to endure. I don't like what they went through, but never, ever ashamed. We as black people survived, and we are survivors. Don't rob our children of knowing the truth, even if it hurts. It will help us all to know and remember. How we choose to use this knowledge is up to each individual, but don't ever suppress us from knowing the truth. Hopefully, we will never see that time again, nor anyone else.

It's our right to know what happened. Don't you decide for our people.

-Barbara Morris  
Charlotte

## Perking N.C. economy keeps state revenues growing

By Dennis Patterson  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH - North Carolina's economy is perking right along, bringing more money than anticipated into the state's tax coffers, even after factoring in a cut in personal income taxes and elimination of the intangibles tax.

That trend has legislative leaders talking cautiously about another round of tax cuts when the General Assembly returns in May. But a wild card in their plans is Congress, which still is thrashing out a budget that could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

When legislators drew up a two-year budget last year, they based it on projections that tax collections would grow by 5.7 percent this year. That projection was based on expectations for steady growth in the state's economy.

But instead of 5.7 percent, the state's tax collections from July to November grew by 7 percent, \$47.1 million more than legislators had predicted.

Analysts are cautious about predicting the surplus that will be available when the full fiscal year ends June 30. In previous years, the surplus recorded by November had tripled or quadrupled by the end of the year.

Only in the disastrous year of 1991-92 did the state show a surplus in November that had become a deficit seven months later.

In 1993-94, for instance, legislators predicted surplus tax collections of just over \$100 million. But at the end of the year, actual collections showed more than \$300 million in surplus funds.

The trend continued in 1994-95, with more than \$300 million in surplus collections.

It was those back-to-back years of large surpluses, due in large part to conservative forecasts of the state's economic growth, that allowed lawmakers last year to cut taxes.

David Crofts, the legislature's senior fiscal analyst, told legislative leaders two weeks ago that the state does not need much new growth in the second half of the fiscal year to stay in black ink.

Taxes do not come in 12 regular monthly payments. Instead, some months show a boom in collections for specific kinds of taxes, while other months lag.

About a quarter of all the sales taxes collected each year by the state come in November and December, during the Christmas sales season, for instance. It is why the selling season is as critical for the state as it is for merchants.

On a month-by-month basis, analysts had anticipated a more robust economy and heavier tax collections in the first half of the year than in the last half, Crofts said. That means the state's economy can cool off a little in the last six months and still generate enough taxes to pay for the budget.

"For the rest of the fiscal year, on an economic basis, we only have to have a 2 or 2.5 percent growth rate to meet the (revenue) targets," Crofts said.

The projection gives legislative leaders some comfort that they won't be looking at a shortfall this year, like the \$1.2 billion hole that opened in the budget in 1991.

Business interests argue that the corporate tax rate of 7.75 percent is too high when compared to states competing for industry. That argument comes despite studies, including one financed by business, that showed North Carolina is not a high-tax state when all taxes are taken into account.

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