

Why Is Everyone So Obsessed With 'Ideological Diversity'?

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Here are some highlights from this week's *On Hiring and Diversity* newsletter. If you'd like to subscribe, [sign up here](#).



You keep using that word. I don't think it means what you say it means.

“Ideological diversity” and “intellectual diversity” are the buzzwords on everyone’s lips these days. Recently, when a student at a town hall [asked](#) Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg how he makes his company a “free and safe environment” for self-expression, he said, “We have a board member who is an adviser to the Trump administration, Peter Thiel. I personally believe that if you want to have a company that is committed to diversity, you need to be committed to all kinds of diversity, including ideological diversity,” an [article](#) on *The Ringer* reports. Meanwhile, since students [shouted down](#) the controversial sociologist Charles A. Murray at Middlebury College this month, many conservatives and some liberals have been quick to [chide](#) liberal students and academics for their intolerance and push for ideological and intellectual diversity on campuses, notes Kate Knibbs, a staff writer for the sports and pop-culture website.

Robert Boyers, an English professor at Skidmore College and editor of *Salmagundi*, is among those chastising liberal professors for supposedly suppressing free speech and intellectual diversity on college campuses. In a recent [article](#) in *The Chronicle* (for subscribers), he accused liberal academics of promoting “groupthink” and driving out “those who fail to observe the officially sanctioned view of things.”

Kevin Gannon, a history professor at Grand View University and director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning there, calls that preposterous: “Were the Middlebury students not entitled to free speech?” he asks in a [post](#) on his blog.

Stanley Fish, a law professor at Florida International University and visiting law professor at Cardozo Law School,

argues that the notion that anyone's First Amendment rights were trampled is beside the point. He explains in another *Chronicle* [article](#) (for subscribers) that free speech is *not* an academic value; free inquiry is.

Which brings us back to the central point of Ms. Knibbs's article in *The Ringer*. There's more going on here than meets the eye (or the ear, in this case).

While it sounds good to call for ideological or intellectual diversity in the academy and elsewhere, as if it were "a mere extension of calls for gender, race, and sex diversity," some people are deliberately conflating a diversity of political views (which Mr. Fish says have no place in the academy) with racial and gender diversity, and it's important to know why, Ms. Knibbs says. While Mr. Zuckerberg deployed the phrase as cover for the [lack of racial and gender diversity](#) in his own company, some conservatives have another goal in mind, she suggests. In the latest in a long line of attacks on liberal views and institutions, right-wingers have weaponized the phrase against universities, she argues. Much as Trump has hijacked the term "fake news" to undermine the press, conservative proponents of ideological diversity are turning the left's language of inclusivity against it in an attempt to make universities lean right and hire more right-wing faculty, she warns: "The phrase 'ideological diversity' is a Trojan horse designed to help bring disparaged thought onto campuses, to the media, and into vogue. It is code for granting fringe right-wing thought more credence in communities that typically reject it, and nothing more," Ms. Knibbs concludes.

The strategy seems to be working.

Last week we [noted](#) that a couple of Republican legislators in Arkansas had introduced an amendment to de-fund Arkansas Tech University's diversity and inclusion department. Tennessee legislators have now gone even further. A year ago, the General Assembly withheld money from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville's office of diversity and inclusion, an [article](#) in *The Tennessean* reports. Now a panel of state lawmakers has voted to put \$450,000 — which is more than the \$436,000 denied to UT's office of diversity and inclusion last year — toward the creation of an intellectual-diversity office instead, Adam Tamburin, a reporter for the paper, notes. The funds would go to staff and programming, "including holding a minimum of four events on campus that allow for the discussion and debate of societal and philosophical issues by presenters with differing views," and toward encouraging conservative views to be voiced more openly, Mr. Tamburin writes.

Meanwhile, in a humorous [response to this news](#), the *Knoxville News Sentinel* columnist Mark Harmon says Tennessee's state senators should be careful what they wish for.

Will asking for flex time hurt your career?

New research suggests it might if you're female, an [article](#) in the *Harvard Business Review* reports. A [study](#) by Christin Munsch, an assistant professor of sociology at Furman University, looked at reactions to flexible-work requests from men and women and found that women's requests were significantly less likely to be approved than men's requests, notes David Burkus, an associate professor of management at Oral Roberts University who wrote the *HBR* article. What's more, the study found that the women who asked for a schedule adjustment were far more likely than their male peers to be stigmatized as less likable and less committed, Mr. Burkus writes. Meanwhile, a [study](#) out of Germany shows that the flex-time gender discrepancies don't end there, Mr. Burkus adds. The researchers analyzed how having greater scheduling autonomy affects men's versus women's pay, and discovered that men reap higher financial rewards than women — in part because employers presume that women are using their flex time to meet family demands, even when they're working, yet assume the opposite for men, Mr. Burkus writes. While flex-time policies are undoubtedly a godsend for parents and probably go a long way toward helping mothers stay in the work force, it seems paradoxical that they'd favor men. Implicit bias strikes again.

Short Takes

[The gender pay gap persists across faculty ranks.](#)

Women's salaries are rising at a slightly higher rate than men's, but the latest figures show that the problem is far from fixed, reports Joshua Hatch, assistant managing editor of data and interactives at *The Chronicle*.

Here are 7 ways nonprofits are building economically diverse staffs.

The Massachusetts branch of Bottom Line noticed a while back that for a charity that helps low-income, first-generation students go to and graduate from college, it had a high number of white staff members from elite private institutions, an article in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* reports. Nicole Wallace, a senior editor for the paper, looks at what Bottom Line and other organizations are doing to bring on more staffers of modest means.