



A New Script for Educating Young Men – Revised 4/23/10

Are boys and young men underachieving? As the presidents of the four all-male colleges in America (Hampden-Sydney College, Morehouse College, St. John's University (MN), and Wabash College), we are especially invested in this question.

Richard Whitmire has pointed out that high school boys are twice as likely as girls to repeat a grade or to be suspended. Although more boys than ever are going to college, the U.S. Department of Education reports that only 30 percent of men who enroll at a four-year college or university will earn a degree within four years, compared with 40 percent of women. Sara Mead, author of *The Truth About Boys and Girls*, found that "From 1970 to 2001, men's share of college enrollment fell from 58 to 44 percent...and fully 57 percent of bachelors degrees in 2001 were awarded to women."

Today, in regard to recent college graduates, we are living in a "60-40" world and, possibly, heading toward a "70-30" world.

Increasingly male students are ill-prepared for the academic rigors of the college experience. This demands a reallocation and increased investment in basic college preparation.

Sadly, popular culture discourages the pursuit of excellence by our young men. With this challenge in mind, our faculties and staffs work diligently to excite our students about the realistic possibilities that await them if they acquire a first-rate education. We encourage our students to compete and to achieve more than they may at other institutions less attuned to the particular needs of young men.

We believe that most well-adjusted and successful male college students demonstrate a desire for improved societal conditions, self-esteem based on religious or spiritual beliefs, and a nascent global perspective.

Instead of trying to change young men, we offer an alternative environment in which they are expected to learn and to thrive—an environment where diversity is valued, where caring faculty are committed to teaching and mentoring students, and where, in small classrooms, students claim their voices and receive notice and support.

The four colleges for men have an opportunity to lead a movement that is desperately needed at this hour in our history. At a time when our society needs a new script for being a good man, a healthy man, a sensitive man, our project is exciting and audacious. And, it is morally significant. If we succeed, children will benefit from having better fathers and role models. Women will benefit from having better friends, partners, and husbands. And, our communities and nation will benefit from having men who are committed to act on behalf of the common good and of the next generation, rather than of their own selfish interests.

In this cultural renewal process, none of us wishes to restore a patriarchal culture of misogyny, mindless machismo, or homophobia. We assert the need for men to understand their distinctive identities, potential, and vocations in life.

We call for men to comport themselves in a manner that communicates maturity and leadership. We call for men to develop healthy minds in healthy bodies governed by healthy values. And we call for men to be serious, when sometimes it appears that society would prefer otherwise.

We call for men to be magnanimous and wise—men who are secure and have no need to demonize those who are different, men who can demonstrate respect for differing sexual orientations, men who take a strong and public stand against domestic and sexual violence, men who understand themselves.

The great American intellectual W.E.B. DuBois said, "[T]he problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of [race]." Let us not allow the problem of the Twenty-first Century to be the problem of gender.

Dr. Robert Franklin of Morehouse College in Georgia, Dr. Christopher Howard of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, Dr. Patrick White of Wabash College in Indiana, and Father Robert Koopmann of Saint John's University in Minnesota are the presidents of the four accredited, all-male, four-year colleges. They met recently in Atlanta at the American Men's Studies Association 18th Annual Conference on Men and Masculinities.