

THE SAMPSON INDEPENDENT

A threat to higher education

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By Mac McPhail - Contributing columnist



Evidently there's a threat to higher education. According to the column I read, any university that allows it "to function within the context of higher learning should remove the word 'education' from its mission statement."

What is it that is such a menace to our colleges and universities? Is it a lack of facilities, or the lack of qualified instructors? Or is it inadequate funding for educational programs? No, according to a column in "The East Carolinian" campus newspaper, the threat to the word "education" in higher education is the leaf blower. Yes, that's right, the leaf blower.

While in Greenville recently, I picked up a copy of "The East Carolinian," the East Carolina University campus newspaper. I enjoy looking at the campus newspaper, since I did write a little for the campus newspaper way back when I was a student at ECU. Back then the campus newspaper was called "The Fountainhead."

It's interesting to check what is considered news now at ECU. The front page stories were informative. There was a headline reading, "The debate on marijuana," with a picture of a guy smoking pot above it. There was an article about how the Student Activity Board "plans to help ease the overwhelming stress of school and the holiday season for students on campus." (Bless their hearts, we sure don't want those students to be "overwhelmed.") Also, on the front page was a story about a student who is taking a break from his education to focus on his passion in rap music. The last article on the front page was about the ECU football team preparing to play N.C. State that weekend. Enough said about that.

But it was back on the Opinion Page that I learned about the threat from the leaf blower to higher education. Craig Maimrose, a professor at ECU, wrote the column entitled, "Leaf blowers interrupt, annoy classes." Evidently, Mr. Maimrose has been involved in some classes at ECU where there were workers outside gathering up leaves with those dreaded leaf blowers. He stated that the class was "blatantly interrupted with never so much as an apology."

His recommendation – workers should have to use a rake. Besides, he stated, those employees could have "enjoyed the benefits that came with vigorous exercise under blue skies in outdoors spaces." Gee, maybe he could also help them raking and get some "vigorous exercise."

Now leaf blowers are loud. This time of the year I run one quite often getting up leaves and doing lawn work. Terri told me that she read that they are so loud that they can cause hearing loss. Well, I think that's what she said. I don't hear as well as I used to.

Of course, lawn care workers should be aware of their environment, and be considerate if the noise of their machines interfere with classes. But maybe it's being a little melodramatic to say that something must be done that "prevents classes from being trampled by this noise." And that if they don't, according to Maimrose, ECU "should remove the word 'education' from its mission statement."

Remember, this column was written by a college professor. A college professor who is teaching and influencing college students. I wonder if a student will go home from ECU this Christmas and tell their parents that they have been traumatized by leaf blowers. (Well, if students at UNC can be traumatized by a statue, I suppose ECU students can be traumatized by a leaf blower.) If they do, hopefully their parents will hand them a rake, tell them to go outside and think about it while they rake up leaves in the yard. They may realize that they are not as traumatized as they thought.

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