

Kids resilient enough to handle liberal colleges

Youth is wasted on the young. So, for that matter, is college.

That's how I felt after visiting my son for Freshman Parents' Weekend. Strolling among the ivy-covered buildings, admiring the fire-and-gold brushstrokes across the foliage that herald the beginning of a New England fall, I felt the years roll away with every step.

All the parents I spoke with heard the siren song of the past: Oh, to be young again, to draw back the curtain of time. How sweet it would be to lose ourselves in the world of ideas, the pursuit of knowledge and the sea of young, idealistic faces so free of the cares of adulthood.

Of course, time tends to romanticize these things. We forget the stress-ridden days before a big exam, the panic-stricken all-nighters trying to get an assignment done and the maddening frustrations of the opposite sex. Except, of course, for your roommate, who never seemed to have a problem in that area. Which didn't help your self-esteem one bit.

My son goes to one of those eastern schools that drive conservatives crazy. They complain about their disproportionate influence on the media and they complain about non-traditional sexual mores. But mostly, they complain about the overwhelming dominance of liberal views on campus. Based on my extremely thorough two-day visit, I can say with complete confidence that conservatives are 100 percent correct.

When was the last time you saw posters blasting Hillary Clinton as too right-wing? The Green Party thinks so, and I saw far more announcements for their candidate on campus than anybody else. Some media studies students were planning an anti-Bush media event with posters that were everywhere, and there were a couple of singers coming to campus to support "political mobilization." It's pretty safe to say they weren't stumping for the Republican Party.

I looked really hard for evidence of conservative or libertarian views among the students. I couldn't find a single poster or announcement that was even close. I got excited when I saw a copy of *The Economist* magazine on a desk, until I realized it was my son's. That doesn't count.

I finally found an editorial in a student paper calling for more support for conserva-



OPINION
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tive ideas. Written by a senior with decidedly non-liberal views, he made his case with quotes from around campus. I didn't bring the column home, but here's what I remember from it:

"My roommate describes himself as a moderate, just so he'll have friends."

"[Our school] tends to attract a lot of liberal students. I don't have a problem with that."

"Conservatives definitely do not have outlets for their views on campus. That's something they will have to work out for themselves.

All eight of them."

The question of political balance came up from a parent during a presentation. One student on the panel said that she wasn't a liberal, but her opinions were absolutely valued in class. So far so good. But was she a conservative? Yes, because she was "not ready to put a fork in Bush ... yet." I couldn't tell if she meant a dinner fork in his leg or a trident in his hand. Either way, I think it made the parent's point.

Every educated parent who is not liberal must face the uncomfortable reality that the nation's elite universities are. So are its elite newspapers and its elite makers of popular culture. On the other hand, America's military elites, on whom we depend for survival, are disproportionately conservative. So too are our business and entrepreneurial elites, who are primarily responsible for America's prosperity.

That's what's really the problem: The increasing segregation of whole sectors of American society based on politics. We are becoming a divided nation, not a united one.

Here's my solution. If you're a liberal, send your son to West Point. Maybe he'll become a general and advise the commander in chief. Conservative? Send your daughter to the best east coast school she can get into. Maybe she'll edit *The New York Times*. Don't be afraid of your kids encountering different ideas along the way. Based on what I saw during my brief stay on campus, America's youth will do just fine.

After all, if they can handle coed bathrooms, they can handle anything.

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