

MSCF Minute



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Obstacle or Opportunity

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Early this summer Joe Nathan, Senior Fellow at the Center for School Change, wrote a [column about concurrent enrollment](#). In the article Dr. Nathan grossly misrepresented statements made by a college president in order to call into question the quality of college faculty instruction. Even in the revised version of the column, which was created after he was challenged on the misrepresentation, the dig against faculty is evident.

When I read the column I was livid. I wrote a response and considered sending it as a special summer edition of the MSCF Minute. I figured it was time to tell everyone the concurrent enrollment truth I know. After taking ten deep breaths and considering the potential consequences of my scorched-earth response, I decided not to publish it. Instead, I spent a good deal of time wondering how someone could arrive at the viewpoints offered in the column.

Now I know.

In a more [recent column](#) Dr. Nathan addresses what he labels “remedial” courses. If I understand my developmental faculty friends correctly, the deliberate use of the term “remedial” speaks volumes in and of itself. The frame in which Dr. Nathan’s comments are offered is equally revealing.

On multiple occasions in the column, Dr. Nathan uses the phrase “avoid remedial courses.” Avoid? Really? Is avoidance the goal of a higher education? Apparently for some it is. Maybe this is where an important distinction is clearly established.

If you view higher education as an obstacle, then you will seek to “avoid” courses. You will view higher education as simply a means to an end and look at it as a series of hoops you need to jump through. If you view higher education as

an opportunity, then you will seek out and view each of your courses, especially those designed to meet you where you are and move you forward, as an opportunity to learn. That, by the way, is developmental, not remedial.

If you view higher education as an obstacle, you will frame faculty credentials as an unnecessary barrier. If you view higher education as an opportunity, you will view faculty credentials as a sign of expertise in, and commitment to, a discipline.

If you view higher education as an obstacle, you will frame everything in terms of cost. Then, you will use cost as an excuse to gut the essence of the offering. If you view higher education as an opportunity, you will first see the tremendous benefits it offers. Then, you will look for ways to address price issues in ways that don’t do violence to the offering.

If you view higher education as an obstacle, you will constantly be seeking a way out. If you view higher education as an opportunity, you will constantly be seeking a way in.

As frustrated as I am with Dr. Nathan’s viewpoint, I also find it very instructive. I now more clearly understand the link between viewing higher education as an obstacle and having no regard for the essence of it. I now more clearly understand how someone could willfully misrepresent the facts as a means of “avoiding” standards and quality. I now more clearly understand why I have such a gut-level reaction to Dr. Nathan’s writing. I now more clearly understand that he views higher education as an obstacle, while I view higher education as an opportunity.



NEW WEBSITE FEATURES

To help better inform members, two new features have been added to the MSCF website. Both of these additions will hopefully provide a more efficient way to communicate with members.

First, there is now a "[Calendar of Events](#)". This will show committee meetings, legislative activities and other MSCF business. Second, to help reduce the amount of emails that go out and to archive information, we have created an "[MSCF Updates](#)". This will now be hyperlinked within the MSCF Minute email when new information is added or you may access them through the website at any time. We still want to provide members current and relevant information without clogging up inboxes.