In past columns I have discussed the issue of the deteriorating academic preparation of high school seniors, exemplified but continuous decline in the ACT and SAT scores over the past 10 years. These tests are designed to measure the preparedness of high school students for college. Unfortunately, we are also witnessing a decline in these aptitudes. Faculties – including younger instructors – are complaining more and more that instead of being in the classroom to prepare the minds of their students, they have to spend more time and energy acting as behavior counselors.

It is becoming commonplace to hear students asking their teachers after lectures whether they “missed anything important.” Some students buy used textbooks that have been graded by other students. There is a new phenomenon for college: students feel shocked that they cannot earn straight A's. Another student, when caught with an exam that was identical (including misspellings) to the one she had seen the night before, said that “she only checked up on her own notes.”

That same message happens when a student who misses a class emails the professor to ask whether if he or she “missed anything important.” A number of studies have shown that causes of cheating increasing, not to mention straight- A's. I have a policy that any student missing a test must do the test during a make-up test. Once, a student who had missed his exam approached me and said that he had a “good reason” why he could not take the exam when originally scheduled. He said that he could not take it because he had been “absconded by space aliens.” Death of grandparents (rarely; grandfathers) is a typical excuse, although this one has become less and less believable.

Once I heard of a student who used that excuse twice for the same grandmother. When confronted with the fact she said “but this time it’s for real.” Another student, when caught with an exam that was identical (including misspellings) to the one of the student sitting in front of her, said that “that had been her roommate’s and had occurred was she had an “out-of-body experience.”

Although not all students exhibit this behavior, the increasing number of students who would not be caught. They are signaling a change in attitudes and values away from an academic mindset to a materialistic one that prepares them to become “mediocre at all levels, from the behavior of students in the classroom to the mediocrity at all levels, from the behavior of students in the classroom to the mediocrity of society. We must now do something about it, or we may not be able to do something about it later.”

That pressure is particularly hard on junior and senior prep classes, those who will never graduate and will carry large debts for tuition and college feel shocked that they cannot earn straight A's. They are signaling a change in attitudes and values away from an academic mindset to a materialistic one that prepares them to become “mediocre at all levels, from the behavior of students in the classroom to the mediocrity of society. We must now do something about it, or we may not be able to do something about it later.”

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr. from Letters from Academia

For the Intelligencer

Ties the season

Agriculture Instructors John Davin and students Kathy Hainy and Trevor Hune check new seedlings at the Edwardsville High School Greenhouse. About 20,000 to 30,000 flower and foliage transplants will be ready for sale at the agriculture greenhouse on April 15-16.

Area group restoring Civil War cannon

After successful efforts to restore two Civil War flags, members of a similar Illinois Civil War group are now working to restore a historic Civil War cannon.

The Macoupin County Civil War Round Table is raising funds to rehabilitate the cannon, which is a landmark on the grounds of the Macoupin County courthouse. A new aluminum carriage will replace the current concrete mount, and the cannon, a six-pounder, will be completely restored. It is an important part of the history of Macoupin County, said Alan Ashby, a Carlinville businessman.

The “Bad News Bears” star Wesley Matthews, who has grown up in a family of baseball players, was named the team’s captain. Matthews is the team’s captain.

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