Conspiracy theorists may go bananas over the latest evidence of collusion between higher education and the Obama Administration, but it may just be a case of birds of a feather working together, albeit more closely than ever.

“The fact that university faculty and administrators swooned over Obama in 2008 is no secret,” Lloyd Green writes in The American Conservative this month. “According to the Open Secrets campaign-contributions database, Columbia University employees donated more than $460,000 to the 2008 Obama campaign.”

Harvard donated more than $573,000 in the same cycle, including the $4,600 given by Elena Kagan, who went on to serve as Obama’s solicitor general and now sits on the Supreme Court.” Green was opposition research counsel in George H. W. Bush’s successful presidential campaign in 1988.

“The story was pretty much the same out west,” Green notes. “Stanford donated nearly $450,000 to Obama.” Green also worked in the Justice Department during the first Bush Administration. He reviewed the book, The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns by Sasha Issenberg in the October issue of AmCon.

“But academic involvement in Democratic politics was more than a matter of money,” Green pointed out in his review. “It was a matter of personal conviction, talent, and culture.”

“According to The Victory Lab, the Obama campaign came to rely on the Consortium of Behavioral Scientists—in Issenberg’s words, a ‘Fight Club’ of 29 psychologists, economists, and law professors dedicated to sending Democrats to Congress and electing a Democrat president.” The Fight Club’s tactics may sound eerily reminiscent to their students.

“Consortium members dared not utter the group’s name in front of strangers,” Green wrote. “Like the title of Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein’s 2008 book, Nudge, the consortium’s favored techniques involved peer pressure and behavioral modification.”

“The candidate was a product and the electorate was a lab rat.” By the way, Thaler and Sunstein were members in good standing of the “Club” or consortium. “Consortium members peppered Democratic leaders with memos that...
November, 2012

Dear Reader,

By the time you read this, the president may be re-elected, or not. We have found ourselves covering this presidential race to a greater degree, perhaps, than we have any other because the academic fingerprints on it have been greater than others.

For openers, the revolving door between this administration and academia have spun at a dizzying rate, a trend we have documented extensively in this newsletter and on our website—www.academia.org. Additionally, the signature policies of this administration, such as Obamacare, have largely been crafted in academia by academics.

Thus, it is hardly surprising, that, outside of the media drumbeat for them, there have been more than three cheers for it from the Ivory Tower. For example, as Bethany Stotts reported on our site on February 2, 2010, MIT economics professor Jonathan Gruber told the U. S. Senate Finance Committee on November 3, 2009: “As this testimony makes clear, small business has little to fear, and much to gain, from health reform. A reformed insurance market with efficient exchanges will offer both lower health insurance costs and more premium stability for small firms.”

Well, three years later, both the number of uninsured and the cost of health care premiums have both gone up. Expensive failures are not the only thing academia has in common with the Obama Administration. Like academics, it seems that this crowd mostly likes to Question Authority when they aren’t the authorities.

We take the novel position that questioning authority is a good idea no matter who is in charge, especially in the Ivory Tower. This we endeavor to do on your behalf and could not do without your support, for which we are most grateful.

All the best,

Mal Kline,
Executive Director
stressed what behavioral science could do for politics,” Green wrote. “Issenberg reports on a meeting between consortium leaders and Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton, among others, at which the senators were advised to stress voters’ sense of loss and to avoid speaking to their aspirations. According to the consortium, gloom and resentment could be turned into a winning hand. The Obama campaign came to rely upon the consortium in shaping its message and getting out the vote.”

Even given the longstanding urge of academics to treat Democratic presidents the way the Catholic Church once treated saints, the academic Left may have been a bit hasty when it rushed to canonize the current occupant of the White House. “When I still taught there, I’d walk past classrooms at Georgia Perimeter College and hear Obama’s speeches played for students,” Mary Grabar remembers. “Professors took entire classes to watch his inauguration in the assembly hall.” “They had Obama-Biden campaign material tacked up on the doors of their offices.” Grabar currently teaches at Emory.

“For fall semester 2012, freshmen at Emory University can fulfill composition requirements by enrolling in ENG 101: ‘Barack Obama’s Fighting Words: Interpreting Rhetoric in Historical Contexts,’” Grabar reports. “The course promises to focus on Obama’s ‘most important speeches between his 2008 and 2012 presidential bids’ and to compare them to speeches of ‘other historically significant figures,’ like Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jeremiah Wright, and Hillary Clinton.”

“Required ‘textbooks’ include Obama’s two autobiographies and a collection of his speeches, titled Words That Changed a Nation: The Most Celebrated and Influential Speeches of Barack Obama and Power in Words: The Stories behind Barack Obama’s Speeches from the State House to the White House.” Nor are the Peach State’s universities by any means alone in their enthusiasm for the audacious dreamer in chief: “In the spring of 2010, the University of Kansas, Lawrence, offered ENGL 340, ‘Barack Obama and the African American Rhetorical Tradition,’ Grabar observes. Moreover, one does not have to wait until one’s college years to become immersed in Obama studies. “The eighth-grade McDougal Littell Literature textbook, published in 2008, had a 15-page spread on Obama,” Grabar relates.

Grabar has co-authored, with Brian Birdnow, a guide book for students entitled “A New Beginning or a Revised Past?” The guide features an extensive analysis of the president’s famous Cairo speech, in which he attempted to put America’s mid-East policies on reset. Birdnow is an adjunct professor of history at two Missouri institutions—Lindenwood University and Harris Stowe State University.

The Cairo speech is a particular favorite of professors, even as the Obama Administration’s own approach to the Mid-East is yielding, at best, mixed results. “Three years after outlining his vision for better relations with the Arab and Muslim world, President Barack Obama finds his administration struggling to find its footing and a unifying strategy to deal with the fallout of the Arab Spring that dislodged dictators and touched off seismic shifts in the region’s politics,” Lesley Clark of the McClatchy Newspapers wrote in an article which appeared in Stars and Stripes. “Civil war rages in Syria, where Iran has moved in to help dictator Bashar Assad while the United States has stood back.”

“In Libya, where the U.S. did help oust a dictator, four Americans were slain last week in an assault on the U.S. consulate. And in Egypt, where the U.S. helped oust a longtime ally, protesters stormed the U.S. Embassy, breaching its walls and burning American flags.”

“The death at the Benghazi consulate of Ambassador Christopher Stevens has thrust foreign policy into the presidential race, sparked concerns over the quality of the administration’s intelligence-gathering and raised questions about the risks of sending U.S. diplomats into troubled areas to promote democracy.”

Stars and Stripes is “the U.S. military’s independent news source, featuring exclusive reports from Iraq, Afghanistan, Europe and the Far East.”
We had previously written that with his “rate my professor. com ratings” wiped clean, no negative evaluations of President Obama’s tenure as a lecturer at the University of Chicago exist. Now, the intrepid staff at The Washington Examiner has actually dug up negative trendlines of his years there.

“Within a few years, he had become a rock-star professor with hordes of devoted students,” Time magazine claimed in 2008.

“Most scores on his teaching evaluations were positive to superlative,” the New York Times claimed in 2008. “Some students started referring to themselves as his groupies.”

“When Barack Obama arrived at the Law School in 1991, faculty and students alike sensed that he had a bright future ahead of him,” the University of Chicago Law School's alumni site, The Record, rhapsodized online in the spring of 2009. “As the first African American president of the Harvard Law Review, he was clearly an accomplished scholar with a fine mind and his choice of careers.”

“And once he began teaching, his strong oratorical skills and his ability to communicate complex ideas made his political ambitions appear credible. Craig Cunningham, ’93, one of the President’s first students and a supporter of his teacher’s political ambitions, felt that Obama was brilliant, talented, and had the potential to be a great leader.”

“That may have been true during his first two years, when he ranked first among the law school’s 40 instructors, with students giving him a rating of 9.7 out of a possible 10,” Richard Pollock reported in The Washington Examiner. “But law student evaluations made available to The Washington Examiner by the university showed that his popularity then fell steadily.”

“In 1999, only 23 percent of the students said they would repeat Obama’s racism class. He was the third-lowest-ranked lecturer at the law school that year. And in 2003, only a third of the student evaluators recommended his classes.”

“His classes were small. A spring 1994 class attracted 14 out of a student body of 600; a spring 1996 class drew 13. In 1997, he had the largest class of his tenure with 49 students. But by then, his student rating had fallen to 7.75. Twenty-two of 40 faculty members ranked higher than Obama.”

An ironic non-sequiter dropped into Jodi Kantor’s otherwise glowing NYT profile is, “Before he helped redraw his own State Senate district, making it whiter and wealthier, he taught districting as a racially fraught study in how power is secured.” Ms. Kantor does not elaborate upon this tantalizing bon mot.

Moreover, as Kantor recounted, in a 1996 interview
with the school newspaper Obama said of President Bill Clinton’s efforts to work with Republicans, “On the national level, bipartisanship usually means Democrats ignore the needs of the poor and abandon the idea that government can play a role in issues of poverty, race discrimination, sex discrimination or environmental protection.”

It turns out that the future-president himself, while eschewing efforts to rise above partisanship, was not always acting in the best interests of the poor, even while staying firmly in Democratic Party circles. “Robert Stark, director of the liberal Harold Washington Institute for Research and Policy Studies, told the Examiner that the demolition effort required to clear the way for the new affordable-housing projects advocated by Obama was disastrous for low-income blacks on Chicago’s South Side,” Pollock reported.

“Obviously, when you’re talking about the demolition of housing, there has been a great deal of controversy because poor people were not given an opportunity to come back to the housing that replaced the demolished housing,” Stark, whose institute is based at Northeastern Illinois University, told Pollock.

Pollock recounted that in 1994, Obama the lawyer defended “the Woodlawn Preservation & Investment Corp., controlled by Bishop Arthur Brazier, a South Side Chicago preacher and political operator.”

As Pollock relates, “Things were so bad that the city’s outraged corporation counsel declared that ‘the levying of a fine is not an adequate remedy’ and asked the court for a permanent injunction against WPIC, appointment of a receiver and imposition of a lien on WPIC to pay for repairs, attorneys’ fees and court costs.”

“But Obama did his work so well that in the end, on March 3, 1994, the court simply fined WPIC $50. Only then did Obama tell the court of the forcible removal of tenants in the bitter cold.” 19 below zero to be exact.

Malcolm A. Kline is the Executive Director of Accuracy in Academia.

Obamacare Reality Check

In defending Obamacare, an academic may be missing the obvious, like giving the law credit for what was already in place. “A lot of people may have noticed their flu shot was free this year, but might not have credited it to the Affordable Care Act, so I think a lot of the effects may have gotten unnoticed,” Tim Jost, a professor at Washington and Lee University, told Paige Winfield Cunningham of The Washington Times.

Cunningham identifies Jost as “a specialist on the health care law.” He may indeed have read it backwards and forwards.

As well, things may be different in his part of Virginia—Fairfax County—than mine—Prince William County. Nevertheless, we have been getting free flu shots from CVS long before the Affordable Care Act was enacted, even prior to Barack Obama’s presidency.
DO FEMALE DEMOCRATS LOOK LIKE MEN?

After reviewing the facial features of female legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives, two UCLA researchers concluded that “female politicians with stereotypically feminine facial features are more likely to be Republican than Democrat, according to the Blaze. In fact, the correlation increases the more conservative the lawmaker’s voting record,” according to the study’s author Colleen Carpinella, a UCLA grad student in psychology.

“I suppose we could call it the ‘Michele Bachmann effect,’” noted Kerri Johnson of the study that’s due to run in a forthcoming issue of the peer-reviewed Journal of Experimental Psychology. Ms. Johnson is “the study’s senior author and an assistant professor of communication studies and psychology at UCLA.”

The study involved feeding facial images of female legislators into a computer modeling program that calculated the variations in feminine characteristics.

When UCLA undergraduates were shown photos of the lawmakers and asked to guess which party they belonged to, their answers were “98 percent more likely to be accurate for women with the highest rankings for femininity.”

However, when the students “guessed that a politician was Democrat, their judgments were 58 percent less likely to be accurate.”

As to why these conclusions were so often the norm, one possibility is branding.

“The Democratic Party is associated with socially liberal policies that aim to diminish gender disparities, whereas the Republican Party is associated with socially conservative policy issues that tend to bolster traditional sex roles,” said Johnson.

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CONSTITUTION DAY DISSENTERS

Given the influence of the left on college campuses these days, it’s not surprising that this year’s Constitution Day activities that call for “civic education and commemoration” were marked by critics raising their voices against our founding document instead.

College Fix contributor Danielle Charette, a student at Swarthmore, reported that Harvard professor Alexander Keyssar used a speaking engagement at her school to express some anti-U.S. sentiments, including his major gripe that “the dirty little secret of democracy in America is that not everyone believes in it.”

Keyssar’s lecture focused on points from his book, “The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States,” and “tied today’s voter ID laws, passed largely by Republican legislatures, to the Jim Crow-era,” while the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were barely mentioned.

Meanwhile, Georgetown law professor Michael Seidman said during a guest lecture at Drake University that “we should give up on the idea that we have an obligation to obey the Constitution of the United States,” according to the Times-Delphic student newspaper.

Seidman, who referred to the Constitution as “outdated,” opined that countries without Constitutions “have better civil liberty records than America,” adding that “the Constitution prevents beneficial discussions from taking place in the United States.”

Meanwhile, “an article by The Heritage Foundation’s Bronson Stocking took aim at recent Constitution Day event at UC Berkeley, noting that “… the University of California, Berkeley was celebrating the signing of the Constitution with a panel discussion on the topic of ‘the history, growth, and future of America’s prison-industrial complex.’ The title of the event, ‘The Constitutional Crisis of Imprisonment: Mass Incarceration and the Future of America Democracy,’ suggests the direction that planners had decided to steer the conversation. It’s unclear if students emerged from the ‘discussion’ about ‘the prison-industrial complex’ with a rich understanding of the U.S. Constitution.”

Of course most Americans honored the Constitution in more traditional ways, from passing out copies of the founding document, to reading parts of it out loud, to hosting fun and creative game shows and other lighthearted events to brush students up on their knowledge of the historic document.

The problem, of course, is inadequate education, which was pointed out in an Intercollegiate Studies Institute’s Civic Literacy Report that demonstrated the
dismal knowledge of America’s founding and history among today’s students. In fact, the average college student flunked the 60 question multiple-choice test, administered in 2008. “Of the 14,000 surveyed, freshmen at elite institutions like Yale, Cornell and Princeton actually out-scored the seniors, suggesting a brain drain as students move toward their degrees at the Ivy League and elsewhere.”

COMMUNISM ON PARADE?

As most of you know, there has been a steady increase in the level of indoctrination on America’s college campuses these days. But at least they usually confined the brainwashing sessions to the classroom.

However, when Todd Starnes of FoxNews radio saw the unusual halftime show performed by the band at a high school near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, he couldn’t believe his eyes. They show, titled “St. Petersburg 1917,” was a “musical commemoration of the Bolshevik Revolution, replete with hammers and sickles, military uniforms, and red flags.” He immediately called someone who would react to this situation – Paul Kengor, professor of political science at Grove City College, executive director of The Center for Vision & Values.

In a piece for Townhall.com, Dr. Kengor noted that the superintendent of the school “genuinely pleaded innocence.” “It’s a representation of the time period in history, called ‘St. Petersburg 1917,’” she said. “I am truly sorry that somebody took the performance in that manner. I am.” She continued: “If anything is being celebrated it’s the music…. I’m just very sorry that it wasn’t looked at as just a history lesson.”

Kengor, who noted that as a history lesson, I give it a giant, red “F,” said he believed that the fact that the superintendent didn’t understand the gravity of this incident simply showed that educators had failed to teach the horrors or Bolshevism and communism, especially to recent generations of young people.

Examples abound.

Kengor said that a former student named John told him that after teaching about the famine in the Ukraine, Stalin’s purges and the Hitler-Stalin Pact, he was reprimanded by his supervisor, who said: “Look, John, I want you to ease up on the Red-baiting and commie-bashing. Besides, these students are going to get a decidedly different view on communism from me.” She promised to teach “a softer side of communism.”

Another student of Kengor’s named Sean, told him of the elite Christian private school he attended, where the newly hired teacher, fresh out of a major university, told the students he was a “Christian communist,” and that anyone who is a Christian should be a communist.

Another student told him of a teacher who “convinc ed the entire class” that Marxism was a “wonderful” but “misunderstood” idea that simply had not been tried correctly. “He absolutely brainwashed us,” she told me bitterly.

Unfortunately, this is only the tip of the iceberg, because these are the professors who write the textbooks used by high schools. The greatest abuse is the sins of omission. “Right-wing” dictators like Cuba’s Batista and Chile’s Pinochet are treated far more harshly than Fidel Castro, who generated many more victims and is still in power.

“In short, we now have an entire generation of Americans born after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the USSR. They didn’t live through the mass repression and carnage that was Soviet communism. They need to learn about it, just as my generation learned the evils of Nazism. Unfortunately, they are not. And so, we shouldn’t be surprised when they merrily march to the triumphal sounds of the Bolshevik Revolution.”

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To show what college and university English Departments are really teaching, Accuracy in Academia compiled The REAL MLA Stylebook, filled with quotes from a recent convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA) where thousands of English professors gather to push their politically correct, radical agenda. Outsiders who attend this event expecting to learn more about Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare are in for a rude awakening when they discover that panels are more likely to focus on topics such as “Marxism and Globalization;” “What’s the Matter with Whiteness,” and “Queering Faulkner.”

This book is must-reading for anyone interested in learning more about the mindset of faculty members who are tasked with teaching the great works of the English language to our nation’s students.