

Fire Professor Eric Rasmusen? Or Fire Provost Lauren Robel Instead?

ERIC RASMUSEN • NOVEMBER 25, 2019 • 2,800 WORDS • 136 COMMENTS



I've taught economics at Indiana University for some twenty-five years (after earlier positions at UCLA, the University of Chicago's Business School, and Yale Law School), punctuated by sabbatical years visiting the University of Tokyo Economics Department, Oxford's Nuffield College, Harvard Law School, and the Harvard Economics Department. Lauren Robel is the Provost of Indiana University-Bloomington campus— a \$1.7 billion enterprise— and she, too, has been here most of her career, as Professor of Law and Dean of the Law School. I am known in the academic world as a conservative; she is known as a liberal.

Last week, I was caught up in an Internet “cancelling” simply for posting a quote by someone else— Lance Welton, from an article in *The Unz Review*. “Geniuses are overwhelmingly male because they combine outlier high IQ with moderately low Agreeableness and moderately low Conscientiousness.” Welton's article, [“Are Women Destroying Academia? Probably,”](#) was in turn referencing an Ed Dutton video entitled [“Do Female Academics Reduce Male Per Capita Genius?”](#). The highly followed @SheRatesDogs account on Twitter posted a screenshot that got [2.5 million view](#) s. The tweeterpeepers were after me. Of course, a quotation is not an endorsement of the quote, or of the article it was in, or of the article's author, or of the magazine which published the article, or the nephew of the editor of the magazine which published the article, but it was concluded that Eric Rasmusen hates women.



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SheRatesDogs
@SheRatesDogs



SIR???

Eric Rasmusen @erasmuse

I just realized--- Women's Studies and Home Ec are the same thing. They are both meant to teach a woman how to live her life. It's just that only one of them keeps its promise.

3:24 PM · Nov 19, 2019

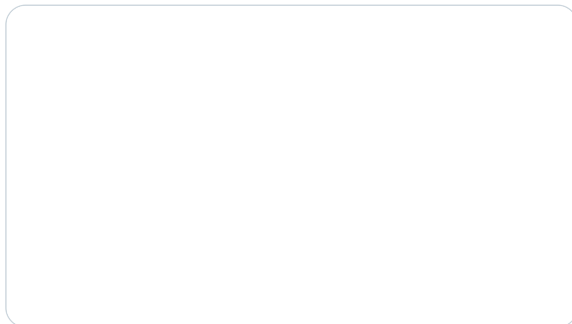


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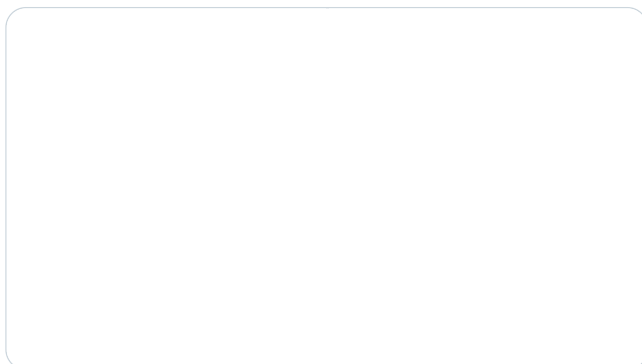


Man you guys know I hate leaving names in, but this can't continue being a thing



SheRatesDogs
@SheRatesDogs

OH???????



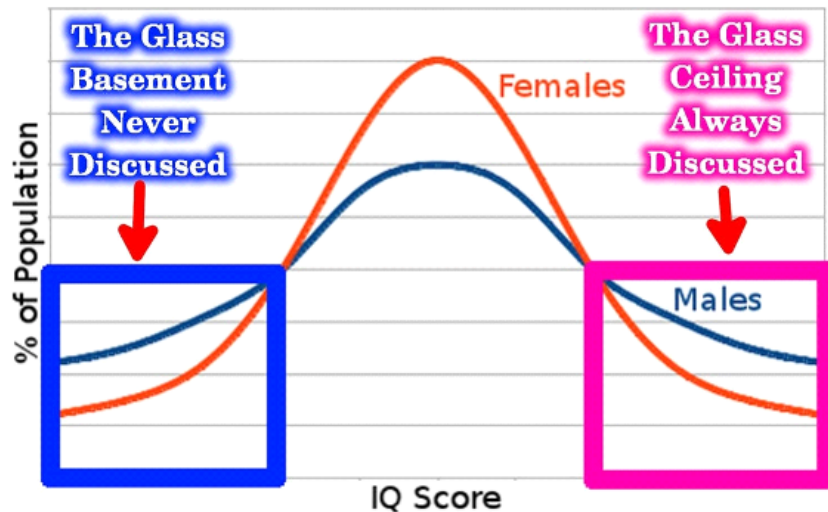
3:02 PM · Nov 19, 2019



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Now, since the quotation discusses low agreeableness and conscientiousness in the context of *males*, it's conceivable how misunderstanding it might make the reader think it was disparaging men. But how can it be construed as "Eric Rasmusen hates women"? In fact, it isn't even really disparaging to men. To understand why, one needs to understand some concepts from academic psychology. Men and women have the same average IQ score, but men have higher variance, as they do on many characteristics. Higher variance means male IQ's are more

spread out, less bunched up at the middle levels around 100, so more men than women have very low IQ's, and more men than women have very high IQ's, but fewer men have average IQ's. As a result there are more male geniuses. Also, note that hardly anyone is a genius— the proportion in the population is only **1 in 1,000 even by the most generous definition**, and 1 in 10,000 or 1 in 100,000 by other definitions. So we aren't talking about men and women in general.



Source:

https://www.reddit.com/r/MensRights/comments/6kthzx/bigger_brains_put_men_a

That most geniuses are men is **so clear from the data** and so obvious to the common man that it wouldn't be worth mentioning. What I found interesting was the idea that geniuses had low Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, words capitalized because they are technical terms, referring to numerical scores on two of the **"Big Five"** personality traits. (The other three are Openness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism.) **Wikipedia** puts it, "Low agreeableness personalities are often competitive or challenging people, which can be seen as argumentative or untrustworthy," and "Low conscientiousness is associated with flexibility and spontaneity, but can also appear as sloppiness and lack of reliability."

Such subtleties are beyond people like the wokefolk, who aren't careful readers, and beyond rags like *The Washington Post*, which aren't careful writers. The *Post* went so far as to say that I was the author of the quote, and not just the quote but the entire essay, though they made a correction later after people pointed out they were denying Mr. Welton his due credit (which I am glad to cede to him).

Such subtleties were also beyond Provost Robel. People have called on her to fire me. She is a law professor and knows it would be unlawful to do that. She did, however, issue **a proclamation**. It started, "Professor Eric Rasmusen has, for many years, used his private social media accounts to disseminate his racist, sexist, and homophobic views..." She listed various political views she claims I hold, but which I actually don't. (I do hold views she would probably find equally obnoxious, but she got her list wrong, as I explain elsewhere in **my fisting reply to her memo**.)

Since she knows she can't fire me, she said, "We cannot, nor would we, fire Professor Rasmusen for his posts as a private citizen, as vile and stupid as they are, because the First

Amendment of the United States Constitution forbids us to do so. That is not a close call.” So far, so good, but shouldn’t “academic freedom” be mentioned too? I know law professors focus on constitutional law, but what about contract law? And if you’re in charge of a college, we’d hope academic freedom would come to mind, at least in your rhetoric.

Wouldn’t we prefer a Provost who defends the First Amendment and academic freedom, rather than treating them as unfortunate constraints? There is a deep problem here. How can one trust authority to someone who focuses on obeying only human law, not natural law— that is, someone who tries to stay within the letter of the First Amendment but doesn’t care about its spirit?

What should Provost Robel have said, in her immediate, time-pressured, response, and as a liberal but fair administrator? Leftwing professor Brian Leiter, a Nietzsche scholar at the University of Chicago Law School offers this as an example of a suitable if mundane statement in his blogpost, [“Another Academic Administrator Who Doesn’t Understand Her Job”](#):



Prof. Brian Leiter

“Professor Eric Rasmusen of the Business School speaks only for himself, not for the University. The First Amendment protects his speech, whether or not the University or members of the public agree with it. The University will continue to insure that all faculty comply with anti-discrimination laws in the classroom.”

In fact, even an unprincipled administrator should value academic freedom, if not as a moral principle, then as a tool for acquiring and keeping good faculty. Let’s think about [the Indiana University Provost’s job description](#):

The Office of the Provost oversees all academic units on the Bloomington campus and coordinates initiatives related to faculty research, creative activity, and professional development; diversity; sustainability; and student success and well-being. The provost promotes a campus environment of expansive inclusivity, rigorous intellectual inquiry, and compassionate engagement with the community in Bloomington and around the world.

From the same web page, let’s look at some other duties of the Provost:

- Energizing research and creative activity
 - Securing funding for the sciences and research in all fields
 - Recruiting and retaining top-quality faculty
 - Managing academic appointments, searches, tenure, and promotion

- Leading the university's globalization efforts
- Overseeing the improvement of academic quality of the student body
- Elevating the campus intellectual climate
- Safeguarding and improving diversity, humanity, and accessibility

How about the first of these, “Energizing research and creative activity”? Clearly, there is potential benefit to society from geniuses, so perhaps research on the nature of “geniuses” could be relevant? How does condemning a professor who posts a topic for discussion encourage such “creative activity”?

“Recruiting and retaining top-quality faculty”? Is the Provost's memo going to make coming to Indiana University more attractive to potential top-quality scholars?

“Elevating the campus intellectual climate.” From its ancient origins, the university has been about training our minds to pursue knowledge and truth together. IU's very motto, much celebrated in 2019 because this is the University's bicentennial, is *lux et veritas*, “light and truth.” Does condemning a professor for quoting someone else's opinion elevate the campus intellectual climate? How about careless and undocumented falsification of a professor's positions?

Finally, “Safeguarding and improving diversity, humanity, and accessibility”. Is diversity improved by punishing professors who are out of the mainstream? Diversity of thought is increasingly important for universities. More and more people are coming to regard universities as ideologically homogenous, unrepresentative of the diversity of their constituents, and unworthy of their time, attention, and money. Are they right about that?

Consider the specifics of my case as an example. The Provost says that “while she may not want Professor Rasmusen on campus, it was important to be frank with students about what the school could do,” and “Somebody with his views — should that person be teaching students? If that was the only question we had to answer, the answer in my mind would be pretty clear.” She thinks hiring me was a mistake. Ideology trumps everything else. I'm one of the better-known scholars at Indiana, even if I'm not good enough for, say, Harvard (I've only held visiting posts at places like Harvard and Yale, not permanent jobs). My credentials are good: I've written a book on game theory that has had a lot of influence; I've written 70 articles; I have Uni High, Yale, and MIT degrees— a perfect score on the LSAT— an Erdos number of 5, and so forth. The Provost said that she didn't know of a single complaint filed against me for my teaching, a pretty good record if I'm really a wild-eyed extremist just itching to discriminate against some helpless student. Nonetheless, she thinks the danger is so great, despite complete lack of evidence, just from what she thinks is going on inside my head, that she'd rather Indiana University didn't have on its faculty a well-known scholar who is the author of a leading textbook as well as numerous esoteric mathematical articles. Is this the way to make Indiana University great again?

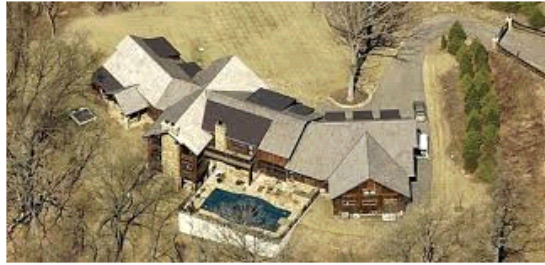
Thus, don't fire Professor Eric: fire Provost Lauren. The university's best interests are not her priority. Ideology as more important than scholarship. Teaching quality is measured by

political viewpoint. Lauren Robel should not be Provost; she should not be Dean; she should not be any kind of administrator at Indiana University.

I do not mean that IU should fire her completely. Lauren Robel has two titles: Provost, and Professor of Law. Even after being fired as Provost, she would still be Professor of Law, with tenure, and I do not think she should be fired from that job. It's even customary for former administrators to keep an especially high salary when they return to being ordinary professors, as they often do. (For Lauren, that wouldn't matter. One of her good points is she isn't interested in money. I heard a rumor that when she became Dean of the Law School she was embarrassed at how much they were going to pay her and didn't want to take it.) Lauren Robel enjoys teaching, I know— she did a little teaching even as Provost and told me how much she enjoyed it. Her views may be reprehensible and vile, even loathsome, but I would trust her to grade conservative students fairly. I just don't think she is suitable as Provost.

Will she be fired? Probably not. I'm not intending to use my Statehouse connections, which are slight in any case, and I don't know any members of the Board of Trustees. A faculty uprising did unseat an Indiana University President some years ago. There was a mass meeting of the entire faculty, from all departments. What I said in that meeting applies here: only the Board of Trustees has the power to fire the President, and Trustees know that the faculty are always complaining about something or other, but what faculty can do is make a bit of noise to get the Trustees to investigate, and if there is really something wrong, they'll find it. (I actually have [an academic paper on that.](#))

Information and attracting attention are the key things. I recall a recent experience where I was on the fringes of an effort to unseat a corrupt megachurch pastor, James MacDonald of the Elgin, Illinois Harvest Bible Chapel. He was a good preacher, with sound doctrine, but greedy and tyrannical behind the scenes. I sent encouraging emails to two bloggers and a journalist who were under fire for criticizing Macdonald for his enormous concealed monetary compensation. Macdonald made the fatal error of suing them for defamation. They were apprehensive, worried whether their insurance would cover it and whether they might lose their houses. I told them they should be glad they'd been sued and under no circumstances should they allow MacDonald to drop his lawsuit. That's because if it continued, they'd have the right to look at church documents relevant to their claims, they'd win the suit, and the court would probably even make Macdonald pay their attorney's fees. I was so sure of this that I gave one of them \$10,000 to help with legal fees (Note to Wokefolk looking for attack points: such a contribution is not tax deductible, but I didn't deduct it). In the end, MacDonald was fired, and the church settled the case and paid all the legal fees. I said the blogger could keep the \$10,000 anyway because he deserved it for all the angst he'd suffered over the years, but he sent it back and said I should use it to help somebody else.



James Macdonald and his house,
<https://theelephantsdebt.com/james-macdonald-house/>

What has this to do with Provost Robel? For starters, it shows how the executive of a big nonprofit who loses his cool can be brought down by little people. Little people should not be daunted. We do win sometimes. Hold firm, and you'll get through it, and you'll be doing the world a favor. Also, it shows that once you start a reform effort, unexpected things can happen, help you'd never expect (the Hand of God helping out? -- yes, folks—Providence.) In this case it was an audio clip obtained by Mancow Muller, a shock jock best known for Chicago's Mancow's Morning Madness. While Pastor Macdonald was chatting with someone after his own radio show, he started making crude jokes—but the mic was still on. **He joked about** planting porn on the computer of *Christianity Today's* CEO and joked about how maybe the journalist I was encouraging, Mrs. Julie Roys, was having an affair with the editor-in-chief. When the Church's board of elders heard the radio show, that was the last straw. They fired Macdonald and cancelled his credentials as a pastor (I like the old phrase “defrocked him”). To see an impressive Christian woman in action, and learn a bit about courage, take a look at Julie's “David and Goliath” conference speech here: <https://julieroys.com/video-an-unmistakable-move-of-god-to-purify-his-church/>

Conversations are never as secret as we think them to be. If the Provost is saying bad things about me in meetings or phone conversations, making private claims as false as her public claims, I hope somebody records it and sends it to Mancow Muller. **Indiana** is a “one-party consent” state meaning only one of the parties in a meeting or phone call needs to know a recording is being made. If you'd like to help, think about that. Of course, my field is game theory, so one reason I'm saying this is that I expect the Provost to read it too, and consciousness of the danger will help her avoid temptation, an even better outcome. But I do think she needs to return to teaching.

So let me now answer my essay's question:

Fire Provost Robel.

The views expressed here are his personal views and are not intended to represent the views of the Kelley School of Business or Indiana University.

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variation. While not obvious, Theorem 3.6 shows that such an f cannot be concavified by any postcomposition.

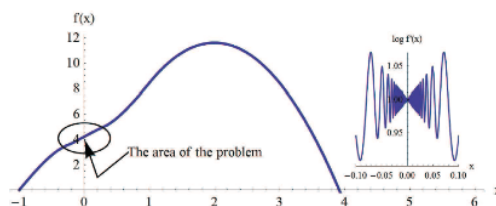


Figure 3.2: A nonconcavifiable strictly quasiconcave function with strictly positive derivatives but unbounded variation.

Recall that the variation of a function $f: [a, b] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is defined as

Source: J.Conv.An.