

# Establishing a Fear-Free Culture of *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*

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## Abstract

*This paper will describe how a culture of fear can prevent free learning and teaching. The author will take the position that a classroom should be a place to establish a culture of learning. *Lehrfreiheit* will be operationalized as teacher freedoms and *lernfreiheit* will be operationalized as learner freedoms. Next, a short history of academic freedom and modern applications will be discussed. The author will explain five fear generators (1. Pugilism, 2. Anti/intellectualism, 3. Short-termism, 4. Hierarchism, and 5. Perfectionism) considered in this paper. Each of the fear generators will be discussed both in terms of how they encroach on teachers' *lehrfreiheit* and how they encroach upon students' *lernfreiheit*. Descriptive examples will be shared indicating that fear has created cultures that are antithetical to the underlying foundation of academia and education. Fear thereby, inhibits student learning and faculty members' ability to provide free instruction designed to facilitate learning. The paper concludes through suggestions for challenging a "culture of fear" in order to maintain a culture of learning. Finally, the paper will assert the argument that basic academic freedoms are indeed suppressed through fear generators.*

## 1. Introduction

*Lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* are philosophical foundations for academic freedom that will be detailed in this article. The author will explore five fear generators and apply examples of how fear can negatively affect an academic culture of *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit*. The author will conclude with a final discussion explaining why both teachers and students should establish a culture of *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit* and include strategies to develop a culture of free learning and teaching.

## 2. *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*

Commanger [1] provides definitions and a historical context for *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit*. *Lehrfreiheit* means the freedom to teach and *lernfreiheit* means the

freedom to learn. Combined, the terms are the basis of modern interpretations of academic freedom.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Willem von Humboldt brought the concepts to public attention [1] through the creation of a university in Berlin that's tenets were founded upon *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* [2]. Humboldt's university was unique because it was not loyal to either government or religious rulers, common throughout Europe [3]. Humboldt's university became popular throughout Europe due to the commitment it had established for preserving educational freedoms. It became especially fashionable amongst foreign academics that wanted to visit and study various disciplines with no political loyalties. Those foreign academics, then, adopted the concepts of *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit* and returned to their home universities.

Two world wars and rise of totalitarian regimes (fascism and communism) throughout Europe threatened Humboldt's philosophies and caused a backlash against academic freedom. And, many universities that had espoused *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* began to create antithetical policies. Colleges/universities throughout the Americas were, however, beginning to form organizations that would advocate for academic freedoms on a new continent. One such organization founded in 1915 was as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Thereby, concepts of *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* were being preserved in North American universities during these threatening times [2].

*Lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* became popular throughout the world and established a basis for academic freedom. This author speculates that majority of students welcome the freedom to learn while most educators welcome the freedom to teach. The reader will be alerted to the dangers a culture of fear can have on freedoms to learn and teach. This author submits that in order to establish an academic culture based on *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit*, one must challenge fear generators.

## 3. Fear Generators

A culture of fear in academia can be described as exploiting biases in order to achieve incompatible goals.

And, academics/educators are not immune to a culture of fear claims Holt [4]. Efron [5] asserts that fear causes roadblocks to one’s successes. If a culture of fear exists at school, both students and educators can feel that their work is meaningless.

A culture of fear can hinder *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit*. Mellon [6] has described five major causes of a culture of fear that can be applied to *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit*: 1) short-termism, 2) perfectionism, 3) anti/intellectualism, 4) pugilism, and 5) hierarchism. Each of these fear generators have been used to subdue freedoms. This author has provided descriptions and examples of the fear generators in Table 1.

Table 1. Mellon’s fear generators [6]

<i>Fear Generators</i>	<i>Example Lehrfreiheit</i>	<i>Example Lernfreiheit</i>
1. Short-termism	Administrative short-term goals and cuts limit long-term planning leaving academics feeling helpless and initiative decreases.	Students view the class/assignment as short-term with no future application.
2. Perfectionism	Administrative push for flawlessness leaves academics depressed, afraid of making mistakes, and inability to be creative (take risks).	Professors pressing students on their failings leads students to the inability to complete tasks and take a creative risk.
3. Intellectualism/Anti-intellectualism	Administrative press for intellectual decision making while disregarding emotional decision-making leaves academics with a severe lack of motivation.	Indifference to student emotional discussion and behavior in class leads students to disregard their pathos when making decisions or completing assignments.
4. Pugilism	Encouraged competition amongst	Encouraged competition amongst peers

	peers (i.e., internal grants) leads to the image that someone is always a “loser” for engaging in discovery.	(i.e., project grades) leads to the image that someone is always a “loser” for learning.
5. Hierarchism	Necessary decisions often get delayed for upper administrative approval.	Students feel as if they do not qualify to make decisions because they are too low in the process.

In the following sections, the author will discuss and provide a more in-depth discussion of each of the five fear generators in relationship to *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit*.

### 3.1. Short-termism

When long-term goals are unavailable to maintain focus then a fear generator is produced from short-termism. Short-termism can cause fear in both educational faculty and students thereby affecting both *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit*. Examples of short-termism will be provided in the following sub-sections.

**3.1.1. Short-termism Fear (Faculty).** Faculty can experience fear from short-termism. One common example of short-termism would be if faculty/educators are hired on a limited contract. If a faculty member is hired as “non-tenure track” then that faculty member acknowledges that their instructional employment is temporary. Often, educators that have temporary positions with a finite termination date focus on obtaining lasting employment elsewhere rather than focused on the goals/needs of the current position [7].

Young [8] describes how faculty members are commonly hired as adjuncts at a large private school in Virginia, subverting the entire tenure process. Faculty, then, have short term education goals as they anticipate unemployment in the near future. The concept of “tenure” was created to combat “short-termism” in the educational professions. Ludlum [3] describes the importance of “tenure” by explaining two injustices that afforded no job protection for professional educators: 1) The president of the University of Utah recommended the firing of 17 faculty members in 1915 that disagreed with the board trustees and 2) Governor Bilbo (MS) terminated approximately 1/3 of all public college/university professors in 1930 to save the state monies. Ludlum [3] further explains how academic professionals needed some form of job protection so that

long-term teaching/learning objectives could be preserved. The concept of tenure however, is not complete with career protections. Galloway [9], for example, reports that even tenure will not save faculty at a public Northeastern U.S. University because entire programs of study (e.g., Geography, Russian, and Religion) have been removed. If the program no longer exists, then there is no reason to retain even tenured faculty attached to the eliminated programs. Therefore, fear, even if tenure is applied, can remain when administrators continue to find ways to generate fear through short-term subversion.

Through the elimination of academic programs, administrators are sacrificing commitments once made to *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* since students no longer have the freedom/choices to explore learning from other content disciplines and faculty no longer have the long-term teaching goals to design deliberate practice. Not all colleges/universities have established programs in every possible discipline; but, there is no foreseeable academic advantage to removal of an established and resourced disciplinary curricula. When faculty are attentive to short-term goals, instead of long-term objectives, then faculty are fearful that their work is of little value to continued student learning.

**3.1.2. Short-termism Fear (Students).** Short-termism can also lead to fears in students. Short-termism occurs frequently intra-class/curriculum when assignments have little meaning other than accomplishing a short-term objective. If an assignment is given in Economics class dealing with only one month of stock trading, but the student does not see any future application of said assignment; Then, it is likely the student would view the assignment within the scope of just one single month. There may never be any voluntary revisit to the assignment. Thereby, the student views the economics assignment as “short-term” and questions the overall value of the assignment (possibly the entire curriculum, if multiple short-term assignments are utilized).

According to Griffith [10], short-term and high-stakes exams also cause fear in students. These exams include college entry/exit exams. Students do not see the value of preparing for these types of exams long-term [10]. This author asks, why do educators place “high-stakes” on any test that is short-term as it sacrifices *lernfreiheit*?

Celleni and Blanchard [11] describe certain curricula that has been reduced as a result of “short-termism.” Students are incapable of fully engaging in the freedom of learning if the curriculum itself has been condensed. In the U.S. there are currently about 103 higher education programs that register between 300-599 hours of engagement [11]. If a common class averages three credit hours taken over a 15-week semester; And, the average student takes approximately five courses per

semester; then, only one or two semesters worth of study would accommodate most of these short-term programs [12]. Marion [12] concluded that most college students’ curricula is becoming shorter. A shorter curriculum means less “deliberate practice,” as identified by Ericsson [13], needed to develop expertise and reach long-term goals. Any time that curricula is shortened, *lernfreiheit* is affected as students no longer have the curricular options and/or ability to develop necessary experiences [13]. A smaller curriculum limits the ability to engage in the free learning process [12] and can create fear amongst students since they do not envision the ability to fully develop and/or refine needed skills.

### 3.2. Perfectionism

Perfectionism fears occur when people are afraid of making mistakes. Busch [14] claims that perfectionism makes people afraid to engage in risk-taking. Fear is enhanced when there are punitive measures for not being perfect. Jeremy [15] indicates that signs of fear from perfectionism manifests itself in many ways including: a) avoidance of anything that can lead to failure, b) indecisiveness, c) procrastination, d) isolationism, e) reassurance seeking, and f) excessive organization. Holt [7] explains “perfect” is often operationalized with ambiguity and leaders apply their “one-and-only” ideal of perfection utilizing vague metrics.

**3.2.1. Perfectionism Fear (Faculty).** Placing irrational significance on achieving excessive standards is how Madigan [16] defines perfectionism. Perfectionism fears in academia can occur when ambiguously operationalized measures are applied to the evaluative processes such as tenure. As an example: One administrator may set a criteria of publication numbers (i.e., two articles) while another administrator may set a minimal amount of page numbers per article (i.e., minimum of seven pages), and still another administrator may set a criterion of number of words (i.e., 5000 words). Such ambiguous metrics often ignore the value of the faculty members’ contributions (and the energies expended) in lieu of ill-defined and unrelated measurements. If faculty “A” made two presentations at professional conferences, but they were national audience rather than international audience and faculty member “B” made (only) one presentation but it was at an international audience; Would the administrator attempt to compare the “value” of both? Administrators could become even more absurd by attempting to quantify “value” by comparing: faculty member “A’s” 30 attendees at each presentation (n=60) to faculty member “B’s” 45 attendees at one presentation. The administrator, in this scenario, may overlook that faculty member “A” attracted a total of 60

attendees (as opposed to 45 total) or prepared/conducted two scholarly presentations in order to “favor” faculty member “B” because the audience was international rather than national. In examples such as the one presented, administrators will succeed in devaluing the work of one faculty member rather than seeing the value of both faculty members due to ambiguous metrics.

Not only do faculty fear being removed because they feel their work fails to meet the vague criteria set forth by administrators; But, they also fear possible disciplinary actions over not reaching an ideal of “perfection.” Cole [17] points out that 69% of U.S. college students surveyed (n = 3000) support disciplinary action against faculty, staff, or fellow students for using language that they deem offensive (restrictions on free expression). Faculty, therefore, feel fear because they are unable to focus on teaching/inquiry/service, but rather they have to be attentive to idealistic perfectionism. Administration have applied their operationalization of “perfectionism” without any attention to either academic enrichment or freedoms in order to force behavioral compliance on the faculty. Likewise, there are reports of students demanding faculty removal from institutions because they have not reached the students’ ideals of “perfection [17].”

McWhorter [18] alludes to this issue by describing that “cancel-culture” has reached the highest level of academe. Educators are no longer allowed to express ideologies that deviate from the “norm” without experiencing fear of expulsion or termination. Too many ideological groups are demanding punitive measures against faculty that do not share the consensus [18]. Educators, then, are facing suppression from the ideological majority with the fear that there may be career consequences. And, the result is that academics holding minority principles will eventually conform socially to avoid said consequences. Therefore, *lehrfreiheit* has been encroached upon by idealistic perfectionism.

**3.2.2. Perfectionism Fears (Students).** Jeremy [15] has noted a significant increase of perfectionism attitudes has occurred in college students since the 1980’s. And, an increase of fear in college students due to perfectionism could be affecting *lernfreiheit*.

Students can also experience fear from perfectionism vaguely operationalized by ideals. For example, such fear has been reported in Virginia [8]. Students reported being fearful to speak against the university president’s policies and political beliefs. In Young’s [8] editorial, the university president was described as penalizing students for speaking publicly about their political beliefs if contrary to those held by the university president. Expulsion has been reported if students expressed (political) ideologies that differed from the

president’s. The president’s idealistic perfectionism thus created a severe culture of fear amongst students. That fear prevented student *lernfreiheit* from being maintained.

The afore stated scenario describes fear from idealistic perfectionism as defined by someone else. But, a more evident form of perfectionism in students occurs when students, place too much significance on meeting their own (unreasonable) expectations [16]. Jeremy [15] expects to see students isolate themselves and begin procrastinating on finishing assignments or even disengaging in the learning process. If students in one’s class experience fear from perfectionism, Busch [14] suggests to: a) Foster understanding of expectations; b) Encourage students to strive for excellence rather than perfection; c) Help students develop a mindset of continual growth and learning; d) Explain and reinforce the notion that no one is perfect; and e) Build a relationship of support. This author would recommend following Busch’s [14] guidelines in order to prevent student discouragement from learning.

### 3.3. Intellectualism/Anti-Intellectualism

If emotional decision making is ignored in order to only focus on cognitive problem solving then intellectualism is occurring. Anti-intellectualism, then, is the complete disregard of academic or evidenced decision-making and instead focused on decision-making based on how one feels. Holt [7] has described intellectualism as making an appeal to *logos* (intellect), while anti-intellectualism would be making an appeal to one’s *pathos* (feelings).

Intellectualism, more commonly, is process oriented. Intellectualism would follow the scientific method even if the results of that scientific method could potentially be damaging to established social constructs. A parent, for example, who parents through intellectualism would be apt to tell their children that Santa Clause does not exist because the evidence does not support the existence of Santa Clause. Conversely, then, a parent that chooses to tell a child that Santa Clause does exist and that they “have to believe” would be parenting the child in a form of anti-intellectualism that affects the child’s emotional state. This example can be seen in the holiday motion picture *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* (1947): Maureen O’Hara can be seen parenting her child (Natalie Wood) with a form of intellectualism (i.e., Santa Clause does not exist); While, John Payne insists that the child believe in Santa Clause despite any scientific evidence (anti-intellectualism). Both can have effects on *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit*.

**3.3.1. Intellectualism/Anti-Intellectualism Fear (Faculty).** Both intellectualism and anti-intellectualism can create fear amongst educators by leading to a form of socialized conformity. Furedi [19] discusses how certain subjects can become marginalized or controversial topics can become unwelcomed/forbidden at institutions. Several schools, for example, have banned the theory of human evolution. Likewise, environmental sciences (specifically dealing with climate change) have become victims of anti-intellectualism. For instance, an Environmental Studies professor/researcher may fail to report collected data that challenges the overall disposition of the Environmental Studies department and/or “social” mission statement of the department/college [4].

Although controversy was once a welcomed fundamental aspect of academic enrichment [19]; Now, controversy appears to be more concerned with social “well-being.” Therefore, out of fear, many college administrators have instituted policies that either ban or guide instructors on how they should approach certain topics. For example, a private university in Cincinnati, OH instituted policies that are designed to guide academic employees through controversial topics [19]. Such guidelines apprise educators that they need/should be attentive to assigned readings, the vernacular they use in lectures, etc., in order to prevent possible mental health trauma of a student. Thereby, academics are arguably being coerced to believe that they may harm the students’ “mental health” if they address certain topics. Academic relations between educators and students may be hindered due to this fear. “Walking on eggshells” is how one can describe educator suppression of academic content in order to be attentive to non-academic issues. In such a scenario, *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* are victims of anti-intellectualism and exchange of academic ideas has been suppressed by a culture of fear.

Braver [20], questions if free expression still exists in school and if schools have become places of intolerant ideas? Braver [20] claims that colleges have become victims of intellectualism. Unlike Furedi [19], Braver [20] would seem to indicate that exchange of emotional expression has become repressed with complete and unwavering focus on the intellectual concepts. “College campuses today aren’t places for a civil exchange of ideas, but an intolerant world of political correctness [20].” Braver [20] and Furedi [19], however, agree that *lehrfreiheit* suffers.

Colleges and universities, as a result, are creating policies intended to make people “feel comfortable” instead of enhancing intellectual development. Certain theories and philosophies may be prohibited from further discussion in educators’ courses because it may challenge someone else’s pre-determined social belief

system [7]. Thereby, fears from intellectualism/anti-intellectualism continue to encroach on *lehrfreiheit*.

**3.3.2. Intellectualism/Anti-intellectualism Fear (Students).** Like educators, students feel fear from intellectualism/anti-intellectualism. Over half of U.S. college students, reports Braver [20], are afraid of stating their beliefs in class. If they disagree, they think that their grades/scores/etc will suffer. Further, Braver [20] claims students’ emotional needs are being accommodated on college campuses without any regard for the students’ intellectual needs [20].

As an example of intellectualism, students fear that their comments will be judged as a form of “incompetence” by teachers or peers. When a student fears that their competence is being judged, they frequently refuse to engage further in the learning process. Therefore, students limit their own engagement in the learning process because they are frightened by the image of incompetence they may portray amongst their peers. In contrast, students also fear anti-intellectualism and allow for it to encroach on their *lernfreiheit*.

Elias [21] suggests that anti-intellectualism could be a potential factor that would lead students to cheat. Students who cheat are not only engaging in unethical academic conduct, but also limiting their own *lernfreiheit*. A student that engages in academic misconduct such as plagiarism or purchasing papers, according to Elias [21], may be influenced by fear due to anti-intellectualism. In such a scenario, students have placed value on “success” rather than “learning.” They believe that “short-cuts” around the actual process of study will lead them to success. Interestingly, some students actually have a disposition valuing these “short-cuts” and do not value the process of learning through deliberate practice [13].

If a student feels fear from both intellectualism and anti-intellectualism, then they are inhibited from fully engaging in the learning process. Inhibitions about engaging in the learning process cause students to refrain from developing through needed deliberate practice.

### 3.4. Pugilism

If educators and students are continually encouraged to compete against one another, fear from pugilism develops. Constant competition ensures that there are constant “losers.” Consistent losses create fear preventing further engagement. Fears generated in both faculty and students caused by pugilistic relationships are explored.

**3.4.1. Pugilism Fear (Faculty).** Faculty, encouraged by administrators, continue competing against each other for merit pay raises, internal grant funds, major/minor declarations, etc. Therefore, intra-faculty pugilism is occurring. Unfortunately, these types of relationships do not foster the collegial and academic goal setting that are expected of educators. Adversarial behavior can often be attributed to non-academic discourses. Kaufmann [22] indicates that social disagreements have led to strained academic relations. Only nine percent of American faculty, for example, identifying as politically conservative feel “free” to voice their views. Concurrently, 40% of polled American administrators would not hire a new faculty member if they knew that a potential faculty member had voted for a candidate not favored by the administration. Likewise, 45% of administrators polled in the U.K. admitted similar sentiment about hiring a Brexit supporter [22]. Thereby, pugilism over social discourses prevents successful academic endeavors encroaching on *Lehrfreiheit*. Holt [7] suggests some of these pugilistic faculty relationships are not just propagated by government politics but often by academic administrators. With the image of providing a service, administration often deflect faculty focus off of academic issues and onto campus behavioral/social issues such as campus symbols (mascots), campus housing, dining, how to teach/attend class during a pandemic, etc.

Cynically, the same administration that initially drew attention and fostered pugilistic relations also tend take credit for resolving the non-academic issues [7]. Therefore, the very administration that often instills a culture of fear looks to later be the peacemakers creating a never-ending circular process of propagating pugilism. *Lehrfreiheit* or freedom to teach is affected by faculty fear caused from pugilism.

**3.4.2. Pugilism Fear (Students).** Pugilism can also lead to fear amongst students. Frequently, for example, law and medical schools will rate students within their class. Class rankings can make students fearful of engaging in *Lehrfreiheit*. A legal injunction, reports Rojas [23], was filed against a Texas high-school because the student was ranked third, therefore costing her a coveted Salutatorian (2<sup>nd</sup>) or Valedictorian (1<sup>st</sup>) rank. The student claimed that Grade Point Average had not been tabulated correctly nor did it reflect her academic achievement in high school. The ranking system is being legally disputed because it could cost this student a scholarship [23]. Pugilism caused between students due to class rankings is questioned by Murphy [24]. In recent years students have been denied college admission for being ranked in the top seven percent, however, some colleges cut at six percent [24]. Some states (FL & TX) automatically admit

Valedictorians and Salutatorians to state colleges without attention to differences in curricula or academic rigor. A student, for example, could be denied college admission or scholarship monies because s/he was ranked third at high school “A” which involved a more rigorous curriculum. However, a poorer academically performing student would be admitted because they ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> at high school “B” which has a less rigorous curriculum [23].

Pugilism from specific content areas can also cause fear in students preventing them from fully engaging in *Lehrfreiheit*. Band teachers, for instance, often rank students in class by “chair” (i.e., First Chair Trumpet, Second Chair Trumpet, etc.). Science Fairs also rank students internally. Science Fairs according to Schank [25] perpetuates the notion that students “lose” or are “losers” for engaging in the scientific process. Further, the winning criteria often has little to do with the scientific process and can often be determined by “presentability [25].” Sawchuck [26] even claims scientific hypocrisy when science fairs allude to a “finality” of scientific research rather than a continual process. Continued competition (pugilism) could prevent students from further learning engagement.

### 3.5. Hierarchism

If one delays necessary decision making through “line of reporting/chain of command,” then fear from hierarchism may occur [6]. Victims of hierarchism often hear statements similar to “If it were up to me,” “I do not make that decision,” “Let me check with my supervisor,” or “Let’s consider all proposals to a solution.” The responsibilities of the decision-makers, therefore, are not necessarily clear. Or, the decision-maker does not want to shoulder the responsibility of making a necessary decision. This author will discuss fears occurring from hierarchism in the following subsections.

**3.5.1. Hierarchism Fear (Faculty).** An over-abundance of decision makers can lead to hierarchism. Will [27] provides an antidotal example of hierarchism that gives the illusion of democracy within academia: If non-faculty (staff) are given voting rights on “faculty” committees, then a “stacked-deck” decision making philosophy is being employed by an administrator. Another example is when a decision-making body (i.e., committee) is appointed by an administrator instead of being elected or selected by the entire faculty. A further sensation of democratic decision-making appears to have occurred. But, in reality since the disposition of the appointed members was known prior to both the administrative appointment, the outcome was likely predetermined.

The Manhattan Institute, over ten years, recorded an increase of administrators by 125% at California colleges, while only seeing a 33% increase in growth of students and a 24% increase in growth of faculty [27]. Such a disproportional growth is described by Will [27] as “academic bureaucrats.” Several of these new “academic bureaucrats” have ill-defined responsibilities and intentionally vague administrative titles. Such positions have been described as “vanity positions” with minimal responsibility but afforded much decision-making authority [4]. Academic enrichment is usually not the focus or purpose of such positions. Instead, they often exist to manage the social “behaviors” of the educators and students. For example, in the U.S. upper administrators could be hired in order to manage/coerce the disposition of student and faculty social cultures (i.e., dress code, holiday celebrations, etc.) without regard to the established academic culture (i.e., curricular design, textbook selection, etc.). If the hierarchy determines the social “status-quo,” educators that do not conform may be hindered in their academic *lehrfreiheit*.

Patloglou [28] suggests forming a “holocracy” to address faculty fears arising out of hierarchism. A holocracy would include every member (regardless of rank) of an educational faculty into the decision-making process and provide educators with the autonomy to make decisions with dynamic and innovative input from the “bottom-up.” This author believes that traditional hierarchies should be addressed or faculty will see their *lehrfreiheit* eroded.

**3.5.2. Hierarchism Fear (Students).** Noam [29] argues that students’ *lernfreiheit* should be the focus of education. Modern technologies (i.e., videos, internet websites, radio/tv, etc.) have changed the disposition of the modern student to challenge the traditional hierarchy of teachers acting as “keepers” of information. Teachers, claims Noam [29], are now being viewed as “curators” of information rather than “keepers” of information. Students have traditionally found themselves in the lower end of a hierarchy due the “keeper of knowledge” viewpoint.

“Lower-classmen” (by the very vernacular utilized to describe them), especially feel fear from hierarchies as they have been identified as “lower.” In many cases “upperclassmen” have priority. For instance, seniors may be given the opportunity in a class to select a more desirable topic in which to research thereby creating an intraclass hierarchy. Or, “upperclassmen” may have an advantage when selecting academic advisors, internship preferences, on-campus housing, etc. More common are the privileges that are not related to academia but could create fear due to the hierarchical nature such as “upperclassmen” being afforded parking permits over “underclassmen.” Such a scenario could potentially

create fear in off-campus underclassmen students that are worried over finding transportation to classes.

Unfortunately, in the U.S. many non-athlete students feel less valued than their athletic peers. Currently, at the author’s university, the administration allows for athletes to register early, without any regard given to course/curricular need. One side-effect of such a policy, is that courses fill to capacity with athletes thus preventing non-athletes from registering. This author has questioned, if non-athlete students have the same freedom to learn? Noam [29] claims that the ultimate purpose of education is to benefit the student; However, in the afore mentioned scenario there is no visible benefit seen by the tuition-paying student fearing the ability to take a needed class that is already full due to registration preference (bias) provided athletes. Colleges and Universities, due to the traditional hierarchism that is already in place, are fostering fear.

#### 4. Discussion

Efron [5] suggests that educational institutes should be should be places of “harmonious co-existence” which is established through a “culture of learning.” Individuals should be free to learn (*lernfreiheit*). If education adopts a culture of *lernfreiheit*, then students are free to explore multiple educational discourses. Faculty would also have the freedom to pursue learning (or study) through inquiry.

Educational institutions that have established a *lehrfreiheit* culture provide the opportunity for engaging in multiple instructional strategies. Likewise, students are free to learn from experienced instructors that will provide them with the appropriately designed learning experiences.

#### 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

This author concludes that there is evidence that fear has created cultures that are antithetical to teaching/learning freedoms. If teachers and students are fearful of the learning process, then it is likely that the student will fail to achieve learning objectives.

This author has provided five suggestions for challenging fear generators and creating a fear-free academic environment:

1. This author would recommend developing long-term educational goals. Short-term goals can be used as steps in the process of accomplishing long-term goals. Curricula, courses, and assignments should all have a long-term purpose to accomplishing educational goals.
2. “Excellence” rather than “perfection,” should be sought by educators. This author further recommends that faculty and students begin operationalizing their own criteria for goals

instead of allowing for others to construct the criteria for their *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit*.

3. This author recommends that administrators acknowledge that individuals make decisions through an appeal to their ethos, pathos, and logos. Thereby, an entire education community is a merging of both intellectualism (cognition) and anti-intellectualism (affect), so that *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit* are not balanced too heavily toward one aspect.
4. This author suggests that students and faculty resist pugilistic fighting over non-academic issues and maintain focus on the outcome of developing expertise through deliberate practice. Academic enrichment is the common goal of both educator and student.
5. Students, educators, and administrators should consider adopting a holocracy for governing teaching and learning. Both *lernfreiheit* and *lehrfreiheit* would benefit if every vested individual has input on teaching/learning decisions.

## 6. References

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