

## We Should Be Ashamed of Lowering Standards

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Outside of my work at TecMed Inc., I spend countless hours hidden away in a basement classroom teaching college students the art of communication and leadership. As an academic, I spend many hours assessing not only the quality of student work, but assessing the overall quality of research that my peers produce, which sets the standards for academic scholarship. Outside of introducing curriculum embedded with theory and practice inside my classroom, I find myself in this constant state of assessing where, as a college educator, my ethical core is. Higher education faculty are in the midst of a war where learning outcome mandates and pressure to integrate pedagogical tools are placed against true student learning and student learning outcomes. As a faculty member, I constantly question how the political mandates of my institution reflect, or impede, my ability to truly empower students put in my charge. As an academic, I strive to promote the knowledge, as set forth by my peers through academic review, which is central to student learning.

However, as an employee of the state, I realize that job security requires me to answer to the rules, mandates and curricular outcomes outlined by my hiring institution. Obama's 2010 push for an increase in graduation rates for college students created a push-down on college faculty, such as myself, to streamline teaching (in terms of content and pedagogy), therefore eliminating much of our academic freedom, to increase the number of students who could successfully pass

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our classes. More students passing individual classes suggest an increase in graduation rates.

In other words, in higher education, from the community college students on my roster to the doctoral candidates in my research classes, the expectation is to reduce academic standards, as suggested by academic peer review, and get more students through the system and into a graduation gown. The implications for this are horrifying to anyone who has a true value for education and the U.S. educational system. Once deemed as the most competitive and valuable higher education systems in the world, our college campuses have turned into a political arena to make the U.S. population appear to be smarter because there are more college graduates.

Hiring organizations commonly report that U.S. college graduates are not prepared for the workplace as it is. This begs the question as to what is really happening within our college campuses and puts into question how much we actually value education and the citizens pursuing it. If current graduates are not meeting hiring expectations and are not prepared for their touted career path, yet mandates are suggesting to further reduce graduation requirements to increase graduation numbers, I struggle to see where these two dichotomies meet. Hiring trends should tell academic administrators that more rigorous standards should be outlined to increase the value of college graduates and their educational titles.

However, quite the opposite is happening. More students are being funneled, unprepared, into the workplace – creating a disconnect between education, the work place and the employable population. Logic tells us that college standards should be increased to increase the value of an education. Yet, politics tells us the opposite. Reduce standards and increase graduation rates. The false façade of an educated population overwhelms. Not taking the time to look at what is happening within college classrooms and exploring the pressure faculty members have to conform to lower standards to ensure tenure and professional longevity means that as consumers, we are openly permitting the ‘dumbing down’ of our society.

Many of you, at this point, might be asking, “What does this have to do with the medical technology climate?” Or, “Why does this matter for the healthcare industry?”

The answer is simple.

As higher education appears to be at a perilous tipping point in terms of creating quality, meaningful and effective learning environments, the crossover into the healthcare and medical device environments is astounding. Let me explain.

In February of 2014, the FDA proposed new guidelines to promote more accurate and timely data for blood glucose monitoring standards within clinical healthcare environments. As medical practitioners, patients and patient advocacy groups have long known, the need for improved and more stringent guidelines to protect patients are imperative. It is widely recognized that tighter standards would increase patient safety and improve patient outcomes. Tighter standards would also

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lead to lower hospital costs. The pushback from industry was immense. Not only would increased mandates on blood glucose control negatively impact current industry market share, the major concern voiced was that there was no known technologies that could meet the new proposed guidelines.

So what?

We would like to think that the demand for improved technology was the gunshot that would kick off the race toward developing technologies to save lives. If experts can vouch that current technologies and blood glucose monitoring standards are not stringent enough to do what they should be doing, an increase in expectation is logical. However, that is not the case.

Instead, recommendations have been made to retain lower accuracy and precision standards while loosening the acceptable range for patient blood glucose concentrations, which results in a lower standard of patient care.

Like higher education, instead of actually looking at the overarching issue at hand and fixing the issue at its root, the response is to demand (under the threat of financial penalties) better outcomes without raising the bar to improve results.

Decrease expectations. The easy way out. Cutting corners.

Corners, which in the end, negatively impact the economy, the industry and devalues the lives true improvements might save.

In fact, by lowering standards, we are effectively giving many patients an early dance with death.

As a consumer and an educator, the idea that the U.S. population and our leaders are openly lowering standards, even at the peril of our precious population, to make life easier, is overwhelmingly frustrating. The U.S. is a country that is founded on growth, innovation and creating opportunity for our population. Yet, current trends in our leading industries, are telling us that is not only OK to settle for substandard, but it is acceptable, and even recommended, to lower our standards and our expectations.

I have the opportunity to be an active member of both higher education and the medtech industry. I have the unique perspective to see the growth and development of ideas and critical thought from unique perspectives that ultimately tie into the future of our country. Yet, in both arenas that are embedded in research and innovation, current leaders are telling us to slow down and settle for mediocre, even substandard outcomes. It is frankly depressing and quite un-American. Our job is to continually push for improvements. In higher education, the solution to the downward spiral of outcomes is to re-empower the faculty to teach what they know in the ways they know to be most effective. In the healthcare industry, the solution is to re-create a platform where innovation, high standards and saving lives is integral. The solution for the downward spiral is not hidden or unavailable. The solution is that as consumers, we demand better results. As we pursue higher

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learning in education, the opportunity to develop much needed technology will become even more expansive. In current medical technology trends, changing how to integrate new technology into the market place makes sense. The technology the recent FDA proposals outline already exists.

TecMed Inc. innovators are fighting to bring their revolutionary blood glucose monitoring Intellectual Property to market as I write this. Their IP not only meets current standards, it meets proposed standards. Why decrease expectations, wave the white flag and abandon the battle for exceptional outcomes, from our educational systems and medical contexts, when the opportunity to exceed current trends is not only viable, it is at our finger tips. Let's stop the apathy and push to bring the U.S. back to traditional American values of hard work, exceptional outcomes, dedication to expansion and development and a relentless fight for the top. What we are allowing to happen now is both shameful and appalling. It's time to flip the script. Who's in?

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