

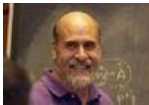
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## News

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### Ward Churchill Redux?



April 10, 2009

The professor writes something that rubs a lot of people the wrong way. That prompts administrators to look closely at his research methods, and they find errors that lead them to discipline him. No, not [that case](#). This one is unfolding at Bowdoin College, and like many such situations, it evokes "[Rashomon](#)" in the conflicting versions of events recounted by the two sides. (Having some video of the events at issue would help, as will become clear.)

One of the few facts on which both parties agree is that Bowdoin is poised to punish a longtime professor of economics, Jonathan Goldstein, based on an investigative committee's findings that he engaged in research misconduct (failing to cite sources) and used confidential data in the draft of a paper on his Web site last fall about the relative emphasis on intercollegiate athletics at Bowdoin and 35 other liberal arts colleges. The two sides also agree that the primary bone of contention in the situation is that Goldstein sought to distribute the paper to high school students and families visiting Bowdoin's admissions office last fall.

On just about every other aspect of this case, Goldstein and Bowdoin officials differ wildly.

helmets and the intergenerational supply of loggers in Bowdoin's home state, Maine; in one case, an idea literally fell from the sky, as two pieces of paper dropped from the rafters as he was renovating his house led him to write about how women and members of minority groups were represented in "tobacco cards" (think baseball cards) that were distributed in packs of cigarettes in the late 19th century.

Goldstein said that changes he perceived among his students at Bowdoin -- especially through surveys in which they reported studying less and spending more time on extracurricular activities, particularly sports -- prompted him to look at the interaction of intercollegiate athletics and academics. That issue tends to be of particular concern to professors at colleges and universities that play big-time sports, and faculty whistle blowers over the years have generated controversies at [the University of Georgia](#) and the [University of Tennessee](#), among others. But concerns about the balance between athletics and academics can be acute at Ivy League and other highly selective institutions that compete at less-visible levels of college sports, too -- that tension was the subject of [a pair of books](#) co-written by William G. Bowen, Princeton University's former president, in the last decade.

Last summer, using data drawn from a study conducted by Franklin & Marshall College, Goldstein posted on his Web site a paper that, among other things, ranked 36 private liberal arts colleges on a set of factors that "undermine or regulate the relative priority of the academic mission over athletic objectives -- athlete-supercharged Millennial-induced grade inflation, percent of athletes, and the level of competitive experience of the [athletics director]."

The paper ranked Bowdoin dead last, but with other institutions "with strong academic potential, but that fail to live up to that potential ... due to the pervasive nature of athletics and the failure to regulate athletics resulting in negative feedbacks on the

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recommendations over to President Barry Mills to accept or alter. Hood, the Bowdoin spokesman, says that the college's lawyers had concluded that the dean would have violated the Faculty Handbook if she had stepped out earlier in the process, despite the two panels' interpretations to the contrary.

— [Doug Lederman](#)

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