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Bard Free Press, Zine (April 24, 2019)

Bard College

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If you, like me, were an incoming freshman with disabling physical and/or mental conditions in the year 2018, a quick look at the Bard website would give you some information about the school's approach to disability services. Not any specifics--basically just that there is an Office for Disability and the contact email for the one person in that office. No details on what accommodations the school generally provides, how many buildings and dorms are accessible, nor which support systems are available. Still, it provided enough information that I accepted Bard's offer, and got ready to attend in the fall (well, August for L&T).

The accommodations that I requested were, to my shoddy memory, as follows: accessible reading materials (specifically ones with Kindle or audio options), my assistance animal, forewarning on tests, and, a bit later, a clarified committed schedule for L&T. I was denied forewarning, because Disability Support Coordinator Amy Shein assured me that all the dates would be listed on the syllabus given at the beginning of class. I also requested that accessible reading materials be provided and was denied because, as the Disability Support Coordinator said, I couldn't expect the school to provide that sort of thing. Amy advised me to avoid classes that sounded heavy on reading, and said that I should have known coming to Bard that it would be more rigorous than high school. I wish I had explained then that for me it's not a matter of rigor or difficulty; rather, my brain cannot process written information quickly without help and gets overwhelmed. Even if I never took another literature class, my brain would still have trouble processing information. Asking me not to participate in classes I'm passionate about because the school doesn't want to spend an extra five minutes cross-checking its readings for accessibility is pretty cruel. For the record, in the public high school I attended, alternative accessible texts were offered if the main texts were inaccessible. I never had to ask, which is why I didn't have accommodations in high school.

I have also tried to get accommodations for my physical disability. After I committed to Bard, I started going through all the hoops the school put in place to prove I was disabled enough to be worthy of help: I was re-diagnosed for my psychiatric conditions and found and paid for a specialist for my physical disability. As a result of the nature of my disability, it's impossible to diagnose definitively without surgery, and my specialist advised me against having said surgery due to health concerns. Because of this, because I couldn't provide proof of a diagnosis, just five-odd years of treatment history, ER visits, and a specialist's opinion, I was denied any accommodations for physical disability.

My requests on these grounds were access to campus buildings for my assistance animal, prescribed by my doctor as a service animal and task-trained to mitigate my disability, and accessible housing close to campus with as few stairs as possible--that was it. It's been especially hard in terms of my service animal. He's normally with me all the time; we are partners. He alerts to pain flairs before I'm aware of them and helps me deal with brain fog. I can't imagine going to



New York City safely without him, and because of him, I've been able to go to the city alone many times without pain or undue stress. When I asked about giving him access rights to the school, I was told that the law doesn't work that way. But that is how the law works: under the ADA, a service animal is an animal task-trained to mitigate their handler's disability. I'm registered with the school as a disabled person, so they know I at least fit that part, and I can provide a list of his tasks or even videos of him tasking. It's so disheartening to see professors bring their dogs to class and hear students joking about how they want to "register" their dog so it can be just like mine, when, as someone who genuinely needs and has spent hours and hours training their dog, I can't even use him for what he's trained to do. Currently my service dog can only be in my dorm room and walk through the dorm to get outside to use the bathroom. We can't even train in any building owned by the school, or use the school shuttle to get to vet appointments or go grocery shopping.

I've struggled for a long time with my chronic pain condition and asking for help with it. It's invisible, and for a long time I normalized it to myself, and tried to believe that constant pain was normal. To be brushed off so easily by the school really hurt; it felt like they were confirming all my worst fears about myself. The moment this hit me the hardest was the contrast between the first time I met with Amy, when I didn't bring my cane, and the second time, when I did. The first time she denied my physical accommodations, and told me that I didn't qualify with the school, but lo and behold, the second time, she offered to switch me into a dorm closer to campus. Nothing had changed, but now I was visibly in pain, using an aid. It was after that meeting that I really woke up to the unfairness of the situation and that my physical disability should be respected regardless of its visible manifestation.

When you have an invisible illness, people make assumptions about your ability, everyone from doctors to close friends. I get asked all the time when I'm using my cane about what happened, or if it's a fashion accessory, or why I don't use it all the time. People don't really want to know the answer; they already have a much nicer, neater reality of who I am than I can offer them. These assumptions are often painful to hear, or put me in an unsafe position because a friend assumes I am able to do something I am not, but rarely do such assumptions affect anyone but myself. Bard's Office of Disability Services is a rare exception.

Bard College, in my experience, has the odd ableist "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality that often runs parallel to ideals of social Darwinism: A sort of academic survival of the fittest, or most mentally and physically able. Since coming to Bard, I've made it my business to find and speak to

Bard College FREE PRESS



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ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY

WELCOME TO BARD,



PROFESSOR FASO?

as many disabled people as I can. I've spoken to people who have had accommodations since middle school or earlier that were denied them now in college. I've spoken to people who have had teachers call their accommodation letters medical excuses. One of my close friends had the Office of Disability Services break confidentiality and share private information with other members of the administration and my friend's parents without that student's consent. I've met two students who dropped out or took a year off because they couldn't get the help they needed to stay. Maybe that makes the school stronger, but I think that it just promotes the harmful notion that if they really deserve to be at this school, students must work through pain, sleep deprivation, and mental illness. I realized a while ago that a lot of the pain of being disabled isn't the medical condition--it's forcing yourself to function like you are healthy.

I'm sure a lot of people don't understand how difficult it is to have an abled person, someone who can't understand the experience of being disabled, hold ultimate

control and say over how deserving you are of existing in a space. It's incredibly dehumanizing, though nothing new to most disabled people. I went through my teen years being told cramps and other "lady pain" was totally normal, that everyone had it. It was only once I brought it up to my doctor that I found out that being in almost constant pain wasn't a normal thing, that passing out regularly and being unable to walk up stairs without sitting down half way up wasn't a normal thing, that most of my experience of life wasn't normal. I will readily admit that I suck at advocating for myself, given a combination of anxiety and biting imposter syndrome which makes such things incredibly difficult for me, and that's part of why my experience at Bard has been such a mess.

Perhaps the best metaphor for Bard's policy on disabled people is the Office of Disability Services itself. It sits on the third floor of the library, down a little hallway in a back corner, only big enough for one desk, several filing cabinets, and an opposing chair. The accessible entrance to the library is on the ground floor by the

Take Back the Night

ALYSSA MAY WHITE

On Wednesday April 10, students gathered in Bard Hall for Take Back the Night, an event hosted by BRAVE. According to BRAVE Director Rebecca Jane Nidorf, Take Back the Night was first brought to Bard in 2007, making this the twelfth time the event has been hosted by the program. Initially the event took place in Tivoli, with students gathering at the Tivoli Town Hall. The event was moved to Bard Hall after a few years to encourage attendance of students who found it difficult to get to Tivoli. "This event and organization are important to BRAVE as we share a mission: to end sexual assault," Nidorf said.

Take Back the Night is both the name of the event, which takes place not only at Bard but at campuses across the country, and the organization that started the annual occasion. The organization's mission, according to their official website, is to "end sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse and all forms of sexual violence." Take Back the Night events began in Belgium and England in the 1960's, and the organization grew from there. Their website states that one out of three women experience sexual or intimate partner violence, one out of six men experience sexual violence, and less than half of all victims report.

Leading up to the event, The Free Press spoke to BRAVE Councilor Ellie Zimmerman '20 about what it was like to plan the event and how it has been run in the years she has been here. Zimmerman has been a BRAVE Councilor for the past three years, and she has worked and attended Take Back the Night since she started at BRAVE. Typical planning for the event includes senior BRAVE members explaining the event to new members and discussing what BRAVE members can do to facilitate the event. Nidorf usually comes to help the student councilors set up, but she leaves before the event begins to give students the space to speak without feeling the need to worry about an administrative presence. The event typically includes a tea-light walk through campus, with two BRAVE Councilors at the front holding a poster reading "Take Back the Night!" The walk typically goes through Kline and the Campus Center before students return to Bard Hall for the Speak Out portion of the night.

When asked what it was like to attend the event, Zimmerman said, "I always think it's-- I know this is cliché-- but it's honestly really eye-opening because everyone knows sexual assault is a problem,

especially on campuses, but I don't think you really truly realize that or appreciate that until you hear people just give, just, their raw stories and how it's touched people directly or even indirectly." She went on, "As a BRAVE member, it's like, I don't know, it makes me appreciate more what I do because I'm realizing just how many people are affected by this, just how big of a problem it is... I feel especially good about what I'm doing because it's such a common issue people experience."

This year's Take Back the Night event convened at Bard Hall at 6:30 PM, but the councilors waited until 6:45 to start the walk to give people time to trickle in. Those fifteen minutes leading up to the walk were casual and relaxed. BRAVE Councilors announced that they had pizza and snacks that everyone was welcome to, and friends had casual conversation. When it's time to begin the walk, everyone moves as a seemingly-content mass, friends grabbing each other electric candles off the baby grand and grouping around behind the people holding the sign. As the group leaves Bard Hall, it is still light out, but all conversations halt by the time the speakers pass the doors.

As the group walks through the Campus Center and Kline, there are murmurs both of confusion and of recognition. In the mass of walkers, friends group together with friends, some clinging to each other, but the group overall seems to be as one. As the group moves through campus, some people are given words or touches of encouragement from friends they pass. The daylight doesn't seem to matter. By the time the group returns to Bard Hall, it's as if a spell has been cast.

This is where the Speak Out portion of the night began. This part of the event exists in a strange place between the public and the private. What was said that night was public only to those who attended the event, and the words belong to Bard Hall now. There was a sense of community, compassion, and empathy as people spoke. As the event continued, the sun made its slow descent through the sky. It seemed that as soon as all the light left the sky, the Speak Out ended.

If you or a friend need to speak to someone about a sensitive topic like sexual assault, you can reach BRAVE by asking for them through the Security Emergency line, (845)-758-7777.

Bard is constantly questioning its disabled students, waiting for the students to trip up and reveal themselves as frauds so that they can swoop in and remove what small concessions they are willing to make. But to me, if the school is so worried about an exploitation of the system, why not make it obsolete? Educate the faculty in common disability and accommodation methods, create an accessible campus, nurture a supportive environment. Instead of just saying you want a diverse student body, actually mean it, and put actions behind your words.

John Faso to Teach at Bard?

CASSIDY POLGA, BRONWYN SIMMONS, AND ALYSSA MAY WHITE

In recent weeks, the Bard student community has been abuzz with the news that former Republican Representative John Faso was tapped to teach at Bard. Faso, the incumbent who ran unsuccessfully against current Representative Antonio Delgado, was criticized for running a racist campaign in the recent midterms. According to President Leon Botstein, who first broached the idea of hiring Faso, it is likely that the news was spread from a faculty member in the Political Studies Department to students. The President himself first broached the subject with his Chief of Staff, former Bard student and Army Reserve officer Malia DuMont. The possibility of Faso's hiring was not meant to be kept a secret; however, it is still in the beginning stages, and Botstein is not able to confirm when or if Faso will be teaching at Bard. When pressed, he said that Spring 2020 would be the earliest Faso might teach, and that Faso would be hired as a visiting professor to teach only one elective course on government. Faso did not respond to a request for comment.

When students first heard about the possibility of Faso being hired, many believed the decision had already been made and that Faso's impending presence on campus as a professor was a certainty. A post by Bard student Hannah Jo Hutchinson in the Bard Students Facebook group, which appears to be the initial source of the information, stated, "Apparently John Faso has been hired to teach at Bard next year. What the FUCK????". It is unclear how Hutchinson got this information. She could not be reached for direct comment, and when Bard student Nick Fiorellini asked, she simply told him that his professors would confirm it.

An interview with Professor Simon Gilhooley of the Political Studies Department revealed that as of April 17 the information the student body first got ahold of regarding Faso's hiring is misinformation, at least as far as the Political Studies department is concerned. According to Gilhooley, discussions about hiring Faso were still at the most preliminary level possible. Professors were not yet discussing whether or not Faso should be brought to campus. At the time of the interview, they had only discussed what Faso might teach and whether or not he might have anything beneficial to add. The process of this discussion has been paused in the Political Studies department, and the question may or may not be reopened. However, Gilhooley said there are three main questions professors will be asking if they continue the discussion: will this be beneficial to the students, how will bringing Faso fit into the curriculum, and how does the context of a controversial election that many students took part in affect the decision?

Botstein said of the potential decision to hire Faso, "Now that this controversy has developed, I have to defer to both the dean and the politics program. I don't do this myself, although I initiated the matter." In direct conflict with the statements made by both Professor Gilhooley and President Botstein, departing Professor Kevin Duong of the Political Studies department said, "That Faso was coming was presented to [Political Studies faculty] as an

accomplished fact, and then the request to us was to find a way to accommodate him, to find a class for him to teach, because the dude has no expertise." In a rebuke of both the college administration and the impending decision, Duong said, "The fact that it's happening is a perfect symptom of how tyrannically this institution is run."

Students had strong responses across the spectrum to the possibility of Faso being brought to Bard as a professor. Some students who are in favor of bringing Faso to campus are concerned with freedom of thought and diversity of opinion on campus. Other students do not believe that bringing Faso to campus is the way to go about promoting diversity of thought. On the Facebook thread, Bard student Noah Wurtz said, "One thing to think about when making the argument for John Faso along the lines of 'underrepresented voices should be heard' is that it assumed a political binary and that the battle for representation on campus is between liberals and conservatives. While this battle is raging, voices which are actually muted by academia remain unheard, professors of color, women, etc. Out of the 12 or so political studies faculty, two are women and three faculty of color." The number of female faculty and faculty of color was provided to Wurtz in a reply by Bard student Harper Rubin. Wurtz was not the only student concerned with minority perspectives. Bard student Olivia Cucina commented, "Maybe the most upper class of students here will have a wonderfully eye-opening experience of breaking barriers and reaching across the aisle, but it's frankly stunning that so many of you think that every minority student on this campus doesn't live a life surrounded by opposition every fucking day." When Cucina was accused of participating in identity politics, she pointed out that she was speaking from a place of concern for her own wellbeing as a trans student.

Other students do not believe that Faso's views, or the idea of diversity of thought, comprised the main issue. To some Political Studies students, bringing Faso to campus represents a valuable opportunity to learn from someone with practical experience in their chosen field. One such student, Haris Talwar, said he believed students would benefit from taking a class with a professor who had been a "thoughtful practitioner of politics." By thoughtful, Talwar means someone who is smart, effective, and takes the idea of service seriously. According to Talwar, not many professors who work at Bard have been politicians, and bringing in a former politician to work with students would give them a valuable perspective on the job that they are less likely to receive otherwise. He pointed out that prestigious universities often bring in politicians who recently worked in their districts for a provisional class. Talwar concluded, "The majority of the student body, if I had to take a guess, would probably support this move, and especially a majority of political science people I feel like would support this move. I mean, I'm sort of basing that on reactions from some of my classes, but I mean obviously they have more to gain from this. I think that there might be a perception that this is the students versus the administration, and I think that that would be really, you

know, that that's not what's going on here. I think the opposition to Faso's hiring is really loud and they're really passionate... but I would still guess that even though we're not as loud, that we're probably the majority."

The *Free Press* caught up with Botstein to ask him about his interest in hiring John Faso. First, Botstein explained that he had offered the position to Faso simply because of his previous service as a U.S. representative in Bard's district. "John Faso is an extremely professional and hard-working career public servant," said Botstein, maintaining that he offered the same teaching position to Faso's predecessor, Chris Gibson, and plans to offer it to Antonio Delgado, the current representative, as well. Botstein explained that Faso assisted Bard more than his predecessors, intervening in issues of student and employee visas and assisting with extending Pell Grants to students at Bard's Early Colleges. Faso was also involved in the issuance of grant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to Bard. Botstein believes Faso is qualified to teach a course about Congress since he has practical experience, in the same way that a physician would be qualified to teach a course in a medical school. In contrast, Duong said, "I don't think that experience with electoral politics gives you expertise to teach," and characterized Faso's appointment as "a celebrity hire to raise the branding of the college."

When asked his opinion on Faso, Botstein said that while he disagrees with Faso on policy, he has "a lot of respect for him," continuing to say that Faso demonstrated an "old-fashioned evenhandedness towards his constituency," and was "an extremely gracious person and extremely responsible in his public role in representing the district." Botstein went on to state, "I certainly thought his campaign against Delgado mirrored the worst of Trump and Republican politics, but that being said, in a democracy and a free society, one celebrates the ability to dissent without fear, and so I admire the fact that he knew that I disagreed with him, he knew Bard was a deeply invested in values that were not his, and yet he when he got elected he helped us consistently, more than most of his predecessors."

Botstein also emphasized the necessity of diversity of thought, saying, "It would have been pointless for us to have extended an invitation to him had he not been our congressman. The reason he's being invited is not because of his views. It's because of his career and his role in representing this district. [Bard] has to get along with the [surrounding] community, and less than half the community is sympathetic to whatever he represented, and we have to live there. We live in that space. And we have to deal with people who were not offended by him everyday of our lives here." Botstein then acknowledged that Faso's political views were not necessarily legitimate when standing on their own: "We would be legitimately called into question if we sought out someone with those views just at random in order to do this."

When asked whether he himself thinks Faso is a racist, Botstein paused for several long moments in thought, then said, "I prefer not to apply epithets to people, and I resist the debasement of epithets. Was John Faso insensitive on the questions of race? Yes. Did he play a race card in the campaign? Yes. Is that defensible? No. Did that show poor judgement? Yes. Did it contribute to his loss?

Yes. Politics are a dirty business. Does that justify branding him? No, it justifies calling him out on bad judgement and insensitivity. Period."

"Every one of us is flawed, no one is perfect," the President continued. Botstein went on when confronted with the issue of students feeling threatened by Faso's policies, saying, "The student body needs to be assured that if I had thought there was something about John Faso's character or behavior that in any way could be construed as potentially harmful, we would never have extended the invitation."

Lastly, Botstein confirmed that the decision to hire Faso was not yet concrete and still in the negotiation stage. Faso has not yet accepted the offer, nor has a course been agreed upon. Botstein made it clear that if student opinion was entirely against Faso's coming, he would not force the hire through. He also said that student impact has had an effect on the decision-making process. "If there's so little appetite and there's such unrelenting moral condemnation, that's no way to teach. Fighting is no way to teach... I believe the better side of the argument is to provide diversity of point of view and I think more will be gained than lost in going forward with this but I have no interest in defying the overwhelming sentiment of the student body if that's the overwhelming sentiment of the student body... [T]here's a serious issue here of truth telling and protecting all minorities, including minorities of thought, so the atmosphere we need to cultivate is one where I show respect to the people who oppose this idea and think it's a bad idea and think it is both threatening and evil, and I also have to respect the people who think it's a good idea and would provide their education something positive." Botstein said that he would be pleased if Faso's political views were changed after a course with Bard students.

Duong expanded on his misgivings about the potential hire by explaining to *The Free Press* that Bard has a relatively small Political Studies department which is "already massively overworked," and that the addition of visiting professors like Faso who "don't do any of the actual heavy lifting" places further burdens on faculty. Duong also worried that the potential hire was indicative of the way the administration views Political Studies, saying that "they seem to think that a Political Science education consists of nothing but internships in New York City and face time with people who have touched the face of power, and I actually think it's a body of knowledge that requires effort and labor to acquire... I think this has to with the broader deeply anti-intellectual tendencies of both the administration and of Jonathan Becker [Vice President of Academic Affairs and Director of the Center for Civic Engagement]."

The *Free Press* will continue to update this story as more news breaks.

Green Energy at Bard

BRONWYN SIMMONS

In 2008, President Botstein joined the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC)—now Carbon Commitment, which seeks to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. Laurie Husted, Bard's Chief Officer of Sustainability, told *The Free Press*, "I'm very proud that President Botstein has committed to net carbon neutrality by 2035 and has given us the staffing resources to accomplish that. We have a way to go, but are working on it!" Bard College currently gets 20% of its grid-purchased electricity from renewable sources. Each year, Bard receives a 10% renewable mix from the grid, and also purchases Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from nationally-sourced wind farms to attribute to an additional 10%. "We are piloting buying some local kwh from a hydropower plant in southern Dutchess County which might add another 1-2% to that number. We are looking into buying from a large ground mount project on the west side of the river as well," Husted said.

Bard also participates in regional demand response programs, which seek to offset the amount of dirty energy (created by burning fossil fuels) used in peak times of energy use. A peak demand time would be during a hot summer's day around 6PM when many people get home from work and all blast their air conditioners at the same time. Demand response programs engage preemptively to avoid the necessity of turning on older, dirtier power plants to meet the energy demand. If the demand for power is more than the supply can accommodate, either more power plants must be utilized or the customer demand must be reduced. The cleanest option is to reduce customer demand, and if all the individual efforts are aggregated to do so, the equivalent of a "virtual" power plant is created, thus avoiding brownouts and blackouts.

Bard is also an early adopter of geothermal heat-exchange technology in its building construction practices, with every new construction building project since the mid-1990s having incorporated the technology. Bard has a low Energy Use Intensity compared to other U.S. colleges and universities, with about 40% of its total building square footage on campus utilizing geothermal heat-exchange. Bard's solar panel installations (adjacent to the athletic fields and on the South Hall roof) generate 300,000 kilowatts per year. Solar makes up about 2% of Bard's energy use. The roofs of Keene and Tremblay are installed with solar-thermal hot water systems, as well. "Bard has investigated the possibility of on-site wind power, but the Mid-Hudson Valley region does not have fast enough wind speeds to make any project feasible," Daniel Smith, the Energy

Manager for Bard College, told *The Free Press*.

Bard is currently investigating the process of installing a micro hydro "gravitational vortex" system at the Annandale Dam site. As opposed to a large hydropower system, micro hydro uses the natural flow of the current to dictate the amount of power it generates; thus attempting to minimize the disruption of the ecosystem. The most important issue to consider is whether installing a micro hydropower system on the dam is more beneficial than removing the dam altogether. Removal of the dam must be carefully considered, as history, safety, energy production and environmental impacts are all important components in the process. Says Husted of the project, "[T]he micro hydropower plant is a proof of concept—that we can install systems on small creeks in an environmentally and socially responsible way. It's very little production... I think 60,000 kwh might be the number. Another great thing about hydro projects is that they can generate electricity 24/7 as opposed to about 5-6 hours from solar. It would be nice to have a battery associated with that project (down the road)." The electricity generated by the micro hydro would provide enough to fuel 10 to 12 homes with clean energy. In 2015, Governor Cuomo granted Bard one million dollars to fund its micro hydropower plans. "The truly exciting thing about that project is that there are tens of thousands of these old dams around the county (6000 plus in New York State) and some should be repowered while some should be removed. Bard is playing a critical part in addressing that issue. New York infrastructure gets a failing grade, and I'm pleased that Bard has entered the conversation," says Husted, who spearheaded the grant process.

Says Smith, "Since 2010, Bard has actively strived to reduce its energy and carbon footprints. In that time, Bard has managed to stabilize its energy consumption, and is now poised to trend downward, even as the College has continued to add building square footage. This is due to a large mix of energy efficiency measures, including campus-wide lighting retrofits, building envelope improvements and HVAC control upgrades, and utilizing high-performance measures in new construction projects."

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