Introduction to Interview with Robert Costrell

A professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 1978, Robert Costrell has been disturbed by the level of anti-Semitism he has observed on campus. In the following interview, conducted in July of 1995 and augmented in 1996, he discussed the climate on campus, and how the visits of certain outside speakers have worsened the climate for Jewish students and faculty. He also discussed the administration's role in funding these speakers, and what he sees as a double standard in the administration's weak response to these events and their aftermath.

Costrell believes that the recent attempt by the administration to address the problem by hiring a coordinator of Jewish affairs is a solution that may ultimately aggravate the situation, despite short-term benefits. Instead, he proposes that the administration exercise more principled leadership in its use of the bully pulpit and in its advice to student groups drawing on campus funds. In a follow-up interview in July of 1996, Professor Costrell reported some signs of improvement. For the first time in several years, no anti-Semitic speakers were invited to campus.
Interview with Robert Costrell, July 1995 (augmented in 1996)

Since I began teaching at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1978, there has always been an edge of tension at the university which takes on anti-Semitic tones from time to time. Around 1982, when a swastika appeared on my office door, several incidents occurred. The student newspaper, the _Daily Collegian_, has from time to time had a hostile edge, on the editorial page and the special pages devoted to "Multicultural Affairs" and "Third World" or "Developing Nations." Sometimes the anti-Zionism of these pages crosses over the boundaries of common decency, such as glorifying violence against Jews by Hamas. Also, there are occasionally columns or letters to the editor speaking of nefarious Jewish conspiracies exerting undue influence on the country-at-large and UMass in particular, in the classic paranoid style of anti-Semites.

The most recent round of such activity, over the last five or six years, was associated with guest speakers such as Louis Farrakhan [Spiritual Leader of the Nation of Islam] who has been there twice, Leonard Jeffries [a controversial professor at City University of New York who, while chair of the Afro-American Studies department, made public comments that defamed the Jews. The university denied him reappointment to the department chairmanship, a decision which was ultimately upheld in court.] and Tony Martin [a professor in the Africana Studies department at Wellesley College whose book, _The Jewish Onslaught_, has been censured by the college president, and whose courses no longer
receive history department credit, due to the faulty scholarship in some Nation of Islam materials he uses in his course].

These three speakers are black, and some of the hostility does come from some groups in the black community, but by no means all. In fact, the two leading Jew-baiters on campus in recent years have been semi-permanent graduate students from the Middle East and Asia. Another prime Jew-baiter is Hispanic, while another is a white, retired professor. Some of the organizations on campus seem to support their anti-Semitic views. The leadership of these organizations often tends to be self-selective toward a more militant type of student, whereas other people are too busy just trying to get their degrees.

There is certainly a double standard on campus. Things that are said about Jews could not be said about other minority groups. For example, when you have a speaker, Tony Martin, who is the author of a book called _The Jewish Onslaught_, you know that if you substituted various other ethnic groups in the title, such a speaker's views would not be treated as gingerly as his were by the administration. The administration will vigorously defend some sensibilities, but not others.

In these disputes about the speakers, some of the things that are said about certain Jewish faculty can be pretty nasty, particularly in student publications like the _Graduate Student Voice_. For example, whenever a Jewish (or non-Jewish) faculty member criticizes someone like Farrakhan, he or she is immediately labeled a racist, fascist, suppressor of civil liberties, and so
I attended the Tony Martin speech, which had an audience of about 300-400 people. We were all metal-searched. Tape recorders were not allowed. A video was made, but the University acceded to Martin's stipulation that it not be released to the public, even though it was made with University funds. But the speech was broadcast over the dorm's cable system, so a video of that broadcast was obtained and has been circulating among concerned parties. Martin had a team of bodyguards who appeared to be Fruit of Islam, presumably provided by the Nation of Islam. Later on, during the question period, these guards seemed to intimidate at least one of the questioners, cutting him off. As you can see, this was not your usual academic lecture.

In his speech, Martin basically built up this whole conspiracy theory of Jews, "organized Jewry," as he put it. He said there was a "Jewish onslaught" that had been trying to suppress black nationalism for centuries. Amazingly, he took special aim at the Jewish role in the Civil Rights movement, implying that this was somehow sinister. He called it an "infiltration," "boring from within," spying and so on. He painted W.E.B. DuBois as a lackey of the Jews, particularly of his close friend and colleague Joel Spingarn. (1) No mention was made of Schwerner, Goodman, and Cheney, three civil rights workers, two Jewish and one black, who were murdered together in the South. Nor was any mention made of the Rosenwald schools or anything else positive. (2)
Martin's speech was pretty raw stuff. Unfortunately, it was well received by many students. Some of the loudest applause came when he called Hillel the campus "shock troops." The whole thing was very sad, really, not helpful to these students or anyone else. Things actually started to get a bit physical toward the end. I heard there was some jostling, including some Jewish Defense League types. If the speech had gone on another 20 minutes, I'm afraid things might have come to blows.

When Farrakhan spoke on campus [March 9, 1994, to an audience of about 2,000], he attacked homosexuals, then he defended terrorism, then he went after the Jews. The previous November, Farrakhan's spokesman, Khalid Muhammed, had given an awful speech at Kean State College in New Jersey calling Jews "bloodsuckers," among other insults. Two weeks before Farrakhan's visit, Khalid had given another speech attacking Jews generically as "that old no-good Jew, that old imposter Jew, that old hooked-nose, bagel-eating, lox-eating, Johnny-come-lately perpetrating a fraud, just crawled out of the caves ... so-called damn Jew." So Farrakhan came to UMass and said how wonderful this guy is, that "Khalid Muhammed is far beyond what this world makes." Then Farrakhan added some material of his own -- this was right after the Hebron massacre -- he said "not one rabbi" condemned the massacre. But of course, the entire Israeli government condemned it, as well as hundreds of rabbis, including the UMass Hillel rabbi.

In his speech, Farrakhan said, "there is a racism there
[among Jews] that is unbelievable ... a feeling that if anything happens to one of you, a hundred others must die...because you feel that your life is so much more sacred than the lives of ... Gentiles or Asians, Arabs, and Africans." He charged the Jews with provoking the Civil War. He then told the Jews in the audience -- hectoring them, really -- that "Our [African-American] women were your playthings...you ruined a whole nation of people and now you want to hide your hands like you did nothin'."

There had been a controversy about the amount of money [and the portion that came from taxpayers] that was spent on his talk, so Farrakhan revved up his rhetoric by saying "You spending the money, you might as well get your money's worth."

So, after the Farrakhan talk and after the Tony Martin talk, I began looking into the funding of these speakers. Later on, I found out about a concerned alumnus, Dick Gaberman, who was doing the same thing, and we teamed up. We had each written the Chancellor to find out where the money came from, and we got together to follow up on these letters. Free speech is one thing, but this was anything but free. It was very expensive: $3,200 for Martin, $25,000 for Farrakhan. Here are the figures, reported in a letter from the Chancellor.

For Farrakhan, $5,000 of the $25,000 came from taxpayer money, which funded the President's Mission Enhancement Fund. This fund was set up by the President's Office, in Boston, and a slice of it was devolved to a student-run committee, in Amherst, at the recommendation of Chancellor Scott. The stated purpose of
the funds devolved to this student committee was to advance the goal of "embracing diversity and pluralism." The student proposal argued that lack of such funds to help promote diversity and pluralism "contributes to tension that may result in racial discord." The student committee got the money it had requested and then, after a tie vote, broken by the student government president, turned around and gave $5,000 for the Farrakhan speech. This caused some embarrassment to the University. The whole Mission Enhancement Fund was terminated after a one-year trial, but I don't know the specific reasons that were cited for its termination.

The next chunk, about $14,000 of funding for these speakers, came from mandatory student fees, which were funneled to Martin & Farrakhan through the Office of Third World Affairs and other groups. [Note: The Office of Third World Affairs primarily represents American students from selected minority groups.]

And the most curious source of funding, $7,000 for these speakers, was the Cultural Enrichment Fund, which in turn receives its monies from vending machine revenues. The vending machine companies pay commissions to the University. After deducting administrative expenses, $400,000 a year is placed in the Cultural Enrichment Fund. Of that money, $122,000 goes to fund the various ethnic cultural centers, such as the Malcolm X Cultural Center. These centers have a totally free rein to spend these funds on co-sponsoring speakers like these. Of course, these vending machine commissions are an asset of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts --
the contracts are signed by a representative of the Commonwealth. So there is some question of public interest involved here, perhaps more directly so than with the student fees.

Most of the vending machine revenues come from the washers and dryers in the dorms. Every kid -- Jew or Gentile -- who lives in the dorm at UMass-Amherst and washes clothes there pays $1 for a load of wash, and $1 for a dry. Seventy-eight cents of that dollar goes to the Cultural Enrichment Fund through vending machine revenues. This money then brought out speakers to insult and harangue the Jews, including Jewish kids who had no idea where their laundry money was going. This gives "money-laundering" a whole new meaning!

Of course, of this $400,000 a year, only small percentages go to fund these kinds of speakers. The funds are designated for student programming and academic, cultural and recreational activities, the bulk of which are quite benign. Hillel gets some of these funds for occasional events, too.

But the fact that these pots of money are so large makes it easier for groups who bring these speakers to come back to the well again and again to invite more of the same. In fact, the allocation to these groups has been jacked up in recent years as an explicit administration appeasement to students engaged in building take-overs. The various ethnic Cultural Centers, which funded a good portion of these speeches, had their allotment of these vending machine funds raised from $78,000 to $122,000 as a direct, negotiated response to the violent building takeovers of
1992. They then turned around and spent a portion of this money on Farrakhan and Martin. So the administration's attempt to buy ethnic peace on campus backfired, resulting in very strained relations on campus between Jewish students and some members of other ethnic groups.

Let's make some distinctions here. First Amendment rights are critical -- if people want to bring in any speaker, including a hate speaker, with their own money, that's their right. Or if a student stands up and gives some despicable hate speech, that's his right too, as the Courts have repeatedly ruled.

But the issue of funding these speakers is less clear. The Administration takes the position that the First Amendment bars it from exercising any judgment on the educational value of various events to co-sponsor and fund. However, the University has ignored rulings (e.g. by the California Supreme Court (1993, Smith v. Regents of U. of Cal.) that the First Amendment protects students from involuntarily paying fees for speech to which they object. Such opinions commonly quote Thomas Jefferson, "to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical." In California, students are entitled to a rebate of a portion of their student fees on these grounds.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court has ruled that the University of Virginia cannot deny student funds to a religious publication, if it provides funds to other student publications. But in that decision, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor cited lower
court decisions such as California, and invited more cases to further resolve the issue. In other words, the Supreme Court has not said the last word on the use of student fees, and there are no decisions at all on the use of vending machine revenues.

Although some legal issues are unresolved, the Administration can certainly exercise more principled leadership before even getting to the legally contested areas. However, the Administration seems to have been cowed & paralyzed by its inability or unwillingness to distinguish between the First Amendment right of student groups to bring noxious ideas to campus, and those groups' non-existent right to receive administration neutrality about these speeches. Just because a person has the right to free speech does not negate the administration's own right and responsibility to exert some principled leadership regarding noxious speeches and the use of campus funds. (3)

The Administration can exercise principled leadership in at least three ways, without even coming close to any First Amendment uncertainties. First and foremost, the Administration should publicly exercise its own First Amendment rights with regard to noxious speakers, and to do so without any double standard. Second, the administration should exercise its responsibility to privately (or publicly) give student groups sound advice on the use of campus funds, to help ensure that they are used for their stated educational and cultural purpose. A third prong of responsible leadership is administrative review, after the funds'
Unfortunately, this has not been the record of this administration. When Jews have been targeted, the administration has typically responded with very tepid statements. For example, Chancellor Scott wrote a very weak letter to the University community just before the speech of Tony Martin. He acknowledged that he found some of Martin's views "counter-productive," and then urged that "It is essential for us all to come to understand why there is a need [for some students] to invite speakers who appear to convey messages of anti-Semitism." A professor of sociology, John Hewitt, wrote a scathing critique of such weak leadership in an open letter to the Chancellor. The Chancellor tried to come up with something stronger, but could never really bring himself to say much more. By contrast, when members of other groups were targeted, the administration responded much more forcefully -- for example, there was quite unequivocal condemnation for an anti-gay speaker a few years back.

The need for principled leadership is especially acute when University funds are involved. The administration is supposed to oversee these funds and make sure they're used properly. The Cultural Enrichment Fund guidelines state that "programming is tested against the stated goals of the University and its administrative and educational agencies." Surely it's the administration's responsibility (well within the First Amendment) to provide strong, but friendly advice to student groups that it may not be a great idea to spend $25,000 involuntarily raised from
other people on a hate speaker.

After the Farrakhan invitation was issued, President Hooker rather clearly stated that he thought it was an unwise use of the Mission Enhancement Funds. He issued a press release declaring that the invitation did "not promote comity and community," contrary to the goals of the Fund. He also wrote a pointed letter to the Student Government President (who had broken the tie in favor of the invitation) that "In the spirit of these criteria, I would not have chosen to make the decision to invite Louis Farrakhan" and urged the student organizations to take future actions more in line with stated campus goals.

But on the Amherst campus, where the student decisions are made, sound administrative guidance has been sorely lacking. We were specifically told by an administrator who okays a lot of these funding allocations that any speaker whomsoever is fine with him, "even hate speech," a term he volunteered. I read to him the cultural and educational purposes of these funds, and asked him how "hate speech" met these purposes. He was unfamiliar with the fund's purpose. (4)

The student proposal for inviting Martin, that was the basis for securing the funding and co-sponsorship of various groups and university offices, makes it clear that the main purpose of the invitation was to advance and defend Martin's book, _The Jewish Onslaught_. The proposal then lists the invitation's objectives, of which the first is "To provide an open dialogue of communication between the black and jewish communities." One
might have hoped that administrative advisors would point out to these students that such an event would be more likely to breed what was the actual outcome -- mistrust and a breakdown of communications. However, such advice was not forthcoming. (5)

The administration is obligated to conduct an administrative review after the funds have been spent, according to the guidelines for the various funds. The review is formally called an "activity post-audit" (which is separate from the fiscal audits). This audit is supposed to test the program "against the stated goals of the University," which certainly include education, civility, etc. Is the administration prepared to say "Yes, the 'Cultural Enrichment Funds' allocated for Farrakhan did indeed 'culturally enrich' the campus?" If the University had firmly pronounced that the money spent on Farrakhan's first UMass speech did not turn out so well, then perhaps that would have carried some weight the next time someone wanted to invite Farrakhan -- he came twice, you know.

President Hooker, located in Boston, to his credit was in fact quite clear that the Farrakhan money drawn from the President's Mission Enhancement Funds did not enhance the University's Mission, and that the students should act more wisely in the future. But the story has been rather different in Amherst. The reviews in Amherst have been a sham -- they have been pro forma self-evaluations by the student groups that spent the money, rather than an independent administrative review. Not surprisingly, the students' evaluation of the Mission Enhancement
money spent on Farrakhan declared it a great success. I quote from the evaluation: "Farrakhan's spirited rhetoric and message of black empowerment brought the audience to its feet in applause many times throughout the evening." The rancorous decision to fund the speech was described as an invaluable learning experience. The students' evaluation described the committee's overall activities (including co-sponsorship of the Farrakhan speech) as a success at "cross-cultural sharing and learning," between the African-American, Jewish, and other communities. Despite the fact that the evaluation omitted any reference to Farrakhan's Jew-baiting and to the reaction of the Jewish part of "the audience," the Amherst administration accepted it as the official evaluation and never offered one of its own.

By contrast, when some brave student government members proposed a resolution this spring criticizing the repeated use of campus funds to bring in anti-Semitic speakers, the Chancellor sent a letter to the paper, four days later, declaring these students were "wrong" to propose such a resolution. In other words, the Chancellor not only failed to critically evaluate the use of these funds, he actually chastised those students who had the backbone to do so. Of course, these students were saying nothing different from what President Hooker said in his letter last year to the students who invited Farrakhan. So Chancellor Scott was, in effect, rebuking these students for passing the same judgment that President Hooker did.

In addition to the goals of "comity and community," cited by
President Hooker, the activity post-audit is supposed to provide accountability for the University's educational goals. According to the Student Activities Trust Fund Program Statement, "The Student Government Association and the Campus Activities staff work cooperatively to establish and maintain the administrative mechanisms necessary to assure a standard of quality and accountability which supports our educational mission." That is, the Trust Statement promises educational accountability here, not just fiscal accountability. (6) In practice, however, there appears to be no mechanism -- formal or informal -- for any sort of educational accountability.

Chancellor Scott says there is a need to understand why some students want to invite anti-Semitic speakers, but he has never explained why his administration has been unable or unwilling to try and talk these students out of spending University funds on these speakers. In short, the administration's stewardship of these funds does not inspire great confidence (7), especially at a time when UMass student fees are among the highest in the nation.

The university did just hire a coordinator for Jewish Affairs, which I think was a mistake. In my view, a lot of the problems at colleges today are really an outgrowth of the excessive identity politics that goes on on campus, which is very, very divisive. To have an official taxpayer-funded, appointed position for Jewish Affairs strikes me as exactly the wrong thing, even though it was requested by Jewish groups. I would not be surprised if this taxpayer-funded position for Jewish Affairs were
soon to be followed by a coordinator for Arab Affairs, etc. (8)

Some of the campus balkanization gets inadvertently endorsed and perpetuated by these policies. To have a special coordinator for Jewish affairs, I fear, may create resentments where none exist, by non-Jewish people asking why Jewish students deserve special protection at public expense. There are universalist principles of civility from each to all that the administration has a responsibility to promote. Individuals who do not belong to any minority groups also deserve respect, but unfortunately, the trend toward balkanization sometimes gives them the impression that they don't count.

It's also a bit ironic to spend taxpayer funds with one hand in order to combat the problems resulting from an unwise use of funds with the other hand. It's the typical bureaucratic solution: hire another administrator to clean up the mess left by some other administrators. If administration had spoken up forcefully initially, it wouldn't have been necessary to create the position. To have Hillel -- a private organization -- or the Jewish faculty & staff group (which meets from time to time, writes letters to the newspaper and formulates various policy statements) try to combat this thing would, in my opinion, be a better way to go.

I don't want to overstate the situation at UMass. A lot of people at the university just ignore all this stuff and go about their business. If you don't read the newspapers, you might not notice the anti-Semitism that much. I haven't had any real
problems regarding anti-Semitism, except for the swastika on my office door some years back, but of course my name doesn't sound Jewish. There are reports of one case of a Jewish student who withdrew from the University due to the anti-Semitic atmosphere on campus. And some prospective students who are Jewish ask about the climate with some concern.

Last spring was bad in the aftermath of the Martin speech. Every time these hate-filled speakers come, the fallout gets worse. When Jeffries was here, a few years back, there were anonymous posters threatening that if Jeffries is attacked, "we will hold the Jewish community responsible." Also, the head of the sponsoring group wrote to the _Collegian_ that if the Jews didn't like the fact that Jeffries was coming, they should "just shut up." Unlike other instances of incivility, I don't recall any administrative reaction to this one, just more funds for the next speaker his group invited, which was more of the same.

This spring closed with a bang, with a blatantly anti-Semitic letter from an emeritus math professor whose name is Helen Cullen. She said no wonder there had been black-Jewish hostility, "Judaism and the Jewish identity are offensive to most human beings and will always cause trouble between the Jews and the rest of the human race." There was a tremendous response to that letter. The newspaper was filled with replies from blacks and whites, Jews and Gentiles. Hillel sponsored a very successful rally, including strong speeches by the Chancellor and the former president of the Black Student Union, both of which were quite
welcome. But this was the easy one: Cullen is white. The administration took punitive actions in this case, citing an action she took, rather than her letter, in order not to suppress free speech. So the administration can find a way to act firmly when it wants to. But apparently it did not want to when Farrakhan and Martin, who make very similar statements to Cullen's, were invited.

Maybe things will change. Two of the leading Jew-baiters on campus last year (who are not black) held student office and lost in their bids for reelection. Apparently things went too far, due to the kind of race-baiting that went on. The anti-Semitism perse was not an issue in the campaign, but the race baiting was. Perhaps calling everyone a racist in the Graduate Student Senate finally backfired.
July 23, 1996 interview with Robert Costrell

The past year has been a bit of a roller coaster at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. There have been ups and downs and mixed signals, but on the whole it was a good year with regard to anti-Semitism for one simple reason: for the first time in five or six years no anti-Semitic speakers were brought to campus. That is the bottom line. It wasn't clear that that was going to be the case when we got back to campus in the fall, as the student newspaper reported that the vice president of the Black Student Union had put together a list of speakers that he wanted to invite, and at the top of the list was Leonard Jeffries.

I said to myself, "Oh no, they can't even get new anti-Semites, it is the same old ones getting recycled."

A number of factors played a role in preventing a replay of the unfortunate events that happened in the past. There was a continuing dialogue among the various communities, including the black and Jewish communities, a continuing dialogue that involved high-level administrators. Some people believe that the new Coordinator for Jewish Affairs played a constructive role. Even though I still believe it was a mistake to establish that position, the individual filling it has done a good job at what he was hired to do.

The fact that a couple of us had put together information on the funding of these speakers played a role as well. This information was used by others in high-level meetings. Obviously, the administration knew that this information about the sources of
the funding had been put together, and that we had been asking a lot of questions.

An invitation to a particularly egregious speaker was avoided, due to the good efforts of the administration, as well as some influential students and faculty from the African American community who very strongly advised against it. I don't know what combination of those factors carried the day for this year, but it's all to the good.

The Jewish Affairs Coordinator is conscientious in his job. When articles appear which cross the bounds of decency, he responds appropriately. Jewish students write letters, too. But the Jewish community on campus has not been effective in factually rebutting some of the sophisticated disinformation about the Middle East which is regularly placed in the _Collegian_, particularly in the "Multicultural Affairs" or "Developing Nations" pages. As a result, uninformed students don't know what to believe.

A fine example of what is needed was provided by a letter to the _Collegian_ from CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America. CAMERA knows how to do its homework. They tracked down the alleged source for one of the falsehoods and showed how it was perverted in the hands of the _Collegian_ columnist. CAMERA will be conducting workshops in the fall, through Hillel, to train students to do the necessary research to factually combat this sort of propaganda. I believe it will prove far more important to train students to defend the truth with
rigorous research and effective communication than to have more taxpayer-funded facilitators.

Another positive development was that the _Graduate Student Voice_, a newspaper funded by graduate student fees, got a lot better. It had been run by some of the most hostile student leaders on campus. They used it to advance their agenda in a variety of areas, including support of speakers like Farrakhan and Martin, rather crudely attacking Jewish faculty who dared to criticize these speakers, and so on. But these students lost last year's Graduate Student Senate elections, and so they lost control of the paper. The new Graduate Student Senate apparently felt that the _Voice_ had been abused by its previous editors, and so they replaced them.

This year, there was a controversy around the use of student fees for a debate between Charles Murray [co-author of _The Bell Curve_] and Alvin Poussaint [a well-known black psychiatrist from Harvard University] on _The Bell Curve_. A lot of people, from many ethnic groups, were unhappy about the large sums being used to fund this debate. (At least it was a debate, in contrast to the anti-Semitic speakers who had come previously.) Legitimate voices were raised about what is a wise use of these fees.

One of these voices raised in protest was that of an Afro-American Studies Professor. He was not questioning Charles Murray's First Amendment rights to speak, but simply raising a legitimate question as to whether this rather expensive show was a wise use of student money. In the course of his article in the
he also pointed out that he had said the same thing to a black student group when they wanted to invite Farrakhan for $25,000. He said that he remembered a conversation with a group of black students during which he asked them how they could possibly justify spending that much money to bring Farrakhan here. The answer he got was that Farrakhan had "an important message for Black folk." The professor wrote that he responded, "Really, a message worth 25 grand and the aggravation and hard feelings bound to follow? How is the Jewish community likely to feel?" and "How will you feel when someone digs up some hoary old racists and brings them here?"

I called him up when I read this and we had a very nice chat about these issues. So there were some voices across the spectrum here that started to make themselves heard and say maybe this thing is getting a little out of hand.

It is interesting to compare the way the administration handled the Murray-Poussaint debate and the Farrkahan and Martin speeches. The administration's advisor to the Distinguished Visitors Program (DVP), the student group which produced the Murray-Poussaint debate, wrote to the _Collegian_ that "Dr. Murray was never considered as a single lecturer and the debate model was the only format DVP considered...Not as a diatribe with no possibility for response. Not as a one-sided analysis and not as a lecture preaching to the converted." The letter goes on to indicate that the reason for the debate was to "confront virulent ideas" such as "racial inferiority."
By contrast, the DVP helped fund both visits by Farrakhan as a single lecturer. He was not brought to campus to have his virulent ideas confronted, but rather to preach to the converted and to harangue those who were not. In other words, he was invited to give "a diatribe with no possibility for response."

The Chancellor's comments on the Murray-Poussaint debate also contrasted with his comments on the Martin talk. In a letter prior to the Murray-Poussaint debate, he wrote "While I am not pleased that someone who espouses theories of racial inferiority will have an opportunity to air his views on campus, I am encouraged to see...a debate format." A year earlier, Chancellor Scott had tepidly labeled some of Martin's views as "counter-productive," but expressed no public displeasure at his appearance as a single speaker. I don't know whether this is just another instance of the administration's double standards, or whether, perhaps, they've learned some lessons from past mistakes.

At the end of the year, we had another building takeover, this time over the allocation of student fees. The ALANA [African, Latin, Asian, Native American] coalition felt they had been unjustly deprived of their fair share of these funds by a vote of the Student Government. I don't know if it was fair or not. All I know is they occupied some offices and then got what they wanted. The Student Government reversed its vote under duress at 1 in the morning, after a 13 hour occupation of nearby offices. As a result, the Office of ALANA Affairs had its reserve funding raised to $10,000. This is the same office [formerly the
Office of Third World Affairs] which provided the largest single share of funding for Farrakhan and Martin. (9)

Student fees go to the Student Government Association which then allocates them to the various student groups, and this building takeover was in protest of the allocation for the coming fall. A number of student organizations also get money from the Cultural Enrichment Fund, which comes from the vending machine revenues. Of course, it was the allocation from these vending machine funds which got jacked up after the 1992 building occupations and ultimately helped the various Cultural Centers finance Farrakhan and Martin. So this latest takeover brings a certain sense of deja vu, but perhaps this time the money it succeeded in garnering will be more wisely used than in the past.
ENDNOTES

1. Martin said DuBois was "trotted out" to denounce the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, but Martin neglected to inform the audience that the book was a notorious anti-Semitic Czarist forgery.

2. Early in this century, when Southern states provided very little education for blacks, funds raised by the Julius Rosenwald Fund supported a very substantial portion of Southern black education.

3. The administration's commitment to First Amendment rights has turned out to be very selective. In the Fall of 1995, the administration proposed a blatantly unconstitutional speech code. The code would have imposed harsh sanctions on students, faculty and employees convicted of offenses including, "but not limited to" epithets, "negative stereotyping," and unspecified "ritual and unspoken behaviors." It even held people responsible for the speech of their visitors; however, in an ironic turn, the code explicitly exempted hosts of visitors who address "public forums," such as Farrakhan and Martin. In other words, the administration's proposed speech code said that you shall not bring a small-time bigot to campus, but you may bring a big-time bigot. Moreover, the administration quite candidly declared its intention to apply the code with a double standard, depending on the group membership of those at the receiving end of objectionable speech. It was to be applied on behalf of those belonging to groups characterized by their "powerlessness" and "vulnerability" in society, but not to those from any other groups. Thus, First Amendment rights were to be protected for some, but not others. After widespread criticism in the press, the administration quietly shelved (though never disavowed) the code, with a pledge to try again, with another code in the Fall of 1996. (For a fuller account, see Daphne Patai, "There Ought to be a Law," _William Mitchell Law Review_, Vol. 22 [1996], pp. 491-498.)

The Administration's double standard also characterizes its interpretation of the First Amendment implications for use of University resources. With regard to Tony Martin and Louis Farrakhan, Chancellor Scott wrote, in June 1995, "Case law involving First Amendment makes clear that ideas may not be suppressed under the guise of appropriate fiscal management or inappropriate allocation of public monies." However, in February of 1996, Chancellor Scott enunciated a very different policy in support of the decision to pull a Web site with Holocaust denial material off the University computer (it had been placed there to protest German government censorship of the Internet): "It is the University's policy that department heads exercise their judgment in determining the appropriate use of resources ... University resources should not be used for political purposes, namely in this case to influence the policy of the German government. It would be equally inappropriate to have used University stationery..."
for such a purpose."

Chancellor Scott's stated rationale for pulling the Web site, to bar political use of University resources, may be reasonably doubted, since the Chancellor's Office itself has recently donated funds for a political protest march on Washington, aimed at changing U.S. policies on immigration, labor law, health care, etc. This rationale would therefore seem to be a convenient pretext for ridding the Web site of noxious content, Holocaust denial. If so, there is a special irony in Chancellor Scott's disparate treatment of University resources used for the Web site and for Farrakhan and Martin. In the case of the University-pulled Web site, the student actually disagreed with Holocaust denial, but posted the views as a protest of German government censorship of the Internet. By contrast, in the case of the University-funded speeches by Louis Farrakhan and Tony Martin, we have men who are genuinely rather closely associated with Holocaust denial, Holocaust minimization, and/or Holocaust justification. (During questions at his UMass speech, Martin seemed to minimize the number of Holocaust victims, as he had apparently done previously. In 1994 he was invited to address the annual convention of Holocaust deniers, the Institute for Historical Review. According to the IHR, Martin accepted the invitation, but later cancelled out. On Farrakhan, see the American Jewish Committee publications by Kenneth S. Stern, _Holocaust Denial_ (1993), pp. 19-20, and _Farrakhan and Jews in the 1990s_ (update, 1994), p. 26.)

4. In fact, one gets the distinct impression that certain administrators actually egged on this type of thing. Some administrative offices, including Housing Services, actually provided funds. They're advertised on the posters as a co-sponsor for the Martin speech. I doubt that an administrative office such as Housing Services is required by the First Amendment to co-sponsor any speaker who comes along.

Another administrator, to his credit, wrote me that "as an advisor to these organizations, it is my duty to discuss the possible outcomes of any programming, and I will do so in any effort which involves cultural enrichment funds." Surely the top administration has a responsibility to make sure that this duty is understood system-wide.

5. Indeed, at least one such administrator apparently played a key role in exacerbating the ugly fallout from the speech. Two months after the speech, a student columnist wrote a _Collegian_ op-ed, "UMass under siege from all sides." He wrote that a "state-wide coalition of Jewish organizations, we learn, have banded together to put even greater pressure on UMass Amherst to ban certain Black leaders from coming to speak on our campus. The group, including the Jewish Federation of Springfield, the Massachusetts Association of Federations (whatever that is), [sic] the Anti-Defamation League, and our own Hillel, among others, are
calling for UMass to ban certain Black leaders from campus and investigate any groups suspected of wanting to invite them. According to informed administration sources, requests from Jewish lawyers in Springfield made under the Freedom of Information Act included not only a breakdown of groups which funded Tony Martin's lecture in December, but also membership lists of the organization and information on the background of students who were involved. This racist attack on academic freedom bears all the hallmarks of fascist intimidation...an appalling demonstration of the manner in which the University is being held hostage by various malevolent outsiders." (This student, who often writes for the "Developing Nations" page, is of Latin American heritage. So the Jew-baiting can be quite cross-cultural.)

The ADL and the "Jewish lawyer" from Springfield promptly wrote strong letters to correct the disinformation. After a six-week delay, Chancellor Scott finally weighed in himself to set the record straight. As Chancellor Scott wrote, there had been no pressure from any Jewish group (the "malevolent outsiders") to ban any speakers, or to investigate the student groups which invited them. "Neither was there any request from 'Jewish lawyers in Springfield' for '...information on the background of students who were involved.'" To his credit, Chancellor Scott duly pointed out that such inaccuracies "threaten to promote...bigotry."

However, nowhere in his letter did he mention the "informed administration sources" which were the apparent origin of such mischief. (The student later reiterated in a subsequent column that the source of his charge was "a tip from a high level administrator.") As it happens, several months later, the "Jewish lawyer from Springfield" (UMass alumnus Dick Gaberman) and I were in the office of a certain administrator who made the exact same discredited charge, that Mr. Gaberman had sought a list of names of students who invited Martin. As I pointed out that Chancellor Scott had already debunked this charge, Mr. Gaberman pulled out his actual request for information. He had requested the "number of students" in the groups which had received so many funds -- not their names, backgrounds, or membership lists, as had been charged by both the "informed administration sources" and the administrator in whose office we sat. One cannot be sure that these were the same individual, but there can be little doubt that some administrator who should have been trying to prevent group hostility had instead been fomenting it by feeding disinformation to a hot-headed student columnist. In a well-run organization, there would typically be consequences of some sort for an administrator who leaked a distorted version of a letter to the man at the top, which later had to be disavowed by the Chancellor himself. Instead, we found that a key administrator was still repeating such falsehoods months after the Chancellor had set the record straight.
6. As far as fiscal accountability goes, some of the funds provided for Farrakhan, in March 1994, were in the form of loans that have still not been repaid, as of Fall 1995, and the administration says it does not know if the other loans were repaid.

7. According to a 1996 report by the Chancellor, the University currently spends some $10 million/year on "diversity activities," including the Cultural Enrichment Fund. The Chancellor intends to increase this $10 million expenditure by $500,000, even as he recognizes that these expenditures have not yet been systematically evaluated "to see if those funds are deployed in the optimum fashion."

8. The Chancellor's May 1996 "Strategic Action" plan envisions a new "overarching" bureaucratic structure with official representation from each of the recognized identity groups on campus. The existing groups cited include Jewish; Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender; ALANA (African, Latin, Asian, Native American); women; and other minorities.

9. As it has so many times over the years, the administration once again did nothing to indicate any displeasure with the takeover, despite the fact that it was a clear violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Chancellor Scott and a Vice Chancellor came to the occupation to "listen." Based on some of the statements they made, the administration seemed to actually weigh in on the side of the occupiers and against the Student Government. The only person who showed any backbone was a student Senator who resigned after the vote was reversed. As he pointed out, "By taking over an office, you can get more money -- that's the precedent which has been set."