Medieval And Modern Universities Essay, Research Paper

Medieval and Modern Universities

Sean Rundle

Medieval and Modern Universities are institutions of higher education. Universities were originally established as a way to foster a new generation of leaders and still today, hundreds of years later, universities are still based on the same basic purposes as they were in medieval Europe. Although universities of each era are a little different in disciplines or classes, and research purposes, they have the same purpose and goals; to foster a new generation of leaders and produce a well-rounded educated citizen.

The subject areas that are covered now are different from those of medieval universities but the main purpose and goal remains the same. Medieval colleges had such classes as rhetoric, astronomy, geometry, and theology. Modern universities focused more on science, engineering, math, history, and social sciences. These may seem like totally different subject areas, but they still teach the same basic learning skills in order to produce a well-rounded citizen and foster the growth of new leaders. The UCSD Catalog states:

Revelle College stresses the broad character of general education. A structured liberal arts curriculum establishes a strong education foundation for any major. This curriculum develops three main skills, which are essential for a well rounded education: learning to use the language of scholarship and science, learning how to think creatively, and learning how to learn (UCSD General Catalog 2000, pg. 15).

This mission statement shows that the purpose of our modern

university is not to just learn information but to learn how to use the

language of scholarship, learn how to think, and learn how to learn.

The same principles applied to medieval universities as well. The

purpose was to make a better person out of yourself.

People flocked to Paris in the twelfth century to hear the lectures of teachers such as Anselm of Laon, Peter Abelard, and Alan of Lille. Students went to the lectures because they wanted to make themselves more rounded and to have an edge on everyone else. They were not forced to attend these lectures, exactly like our universities now. However, the universities did have a set of regulations that needed to be followed. The universities in medieval time had authority figures running the schools. The university had a chancellor who shall swear in good faith on his conscience, at the time and place according to the state of the city and honor and respect of the faculties, that he will not bestow the licentiate to teach theology or decretals except to the worthy (Medieval Europe, 340). The chancellor had control of the students and could determine who got to learn the ancient secrets of theology. This is just like the universities now. They are very hard to get accepted into and not everyone gets the chance to gain the knowledge of the college experience. The students that are lucky enough to gain the knowledge of our universities have an advantage of the rest. They become the leaders of our society and are more rounded than the rest of the population.

The universities of medieval as well as modern times not only focused on teaching subjects, but also researching subject areas as well. The medieval universities used research in order to make rational investigations of God, and rediscover knowledge. This helped the students become educated on their society and history and be able to maintain the rules, liberty and laws of their society. This allowed the students to emerge as leaders of their society and to become well-rounded citizens. The modern university also used research to help students become leaders of their generation. The modern universities used research to cure diseases, gain technological improvement, and increase quality of life. Only a limited few at the university get to participate in these research projects. They gain knowledge about all the subject areas and gain an edge of the rest of the citizens. They can then go out into society and lead everyone else by explaining their knowledge and putting it to use in day to day experiences. The research purposes of the modern and medieval universities not only helped to make the society as a whole better, but also helped the individual students gain leadership qualities by being able to conduct the research and then being able to go out into society and use their knowledge.

I have explained above that medieval and modern universities are different in many ways. They have totally different subject matters and research purposes. The medieval universities tended to concentrate on theology and religious based subjects, and modern universities tend to concentrate science and technological subjects. The research of medieval universities was different to investigate God and religion and rediscover old knowledge, where as modern universities created to make improvements and increase the quality of life. One may argue that these differences make the university systems different. However I believe that although the areas of research and teaching are different they still helped the students achieve the same goal, to emerge as leaders of their society and become well-rounded citizens. The universities just used the knowledge of their era to teach the same leadership qualities.

The university system has always been established to help the top students of the society to take the last step in becoming the leaders and most educated citizens of their civilization. The medieval universities concentrated more on religion and the modern universities concentrated more on sciences, but the end outcome was the same. The students who attended the universities used the knowledge they gained and became the leaders of their society. Medieval and Modern Universities

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