Discourse, Power, and Ideology in the Academy: A Re-reading of Rick Scott's Degrees to Jobs Summit

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This article examines Governor Rick Scott's 2016 *Degrees to Jobs* Summit, treating it as a collection of discourses with significant cultural and political power to shape the way that students, faculty, administrators, and the public all interact with and view the purpose of higher education in Florida. I localize this discourse primarily within the State University System of Florida's Strategic plan and university performance standards. Principally, I argue that the *Degrees to Job*s discourse impacts student agency, self-conception, and choice within the academy, specifically within the humanities disciplines. My analysis deploys critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Huckin et al.) to scrutinize the situational circumstances and "rich features" (Barton) of the discourse as well as post-structuralist notions of power and knowledge, as framed in the work of Foucault and Bourdieu. This essay also examines the special challenges presented by this discourse for English and Rhetoric & Composition classrooms in Florida, as well professors, administrators, and students within those spaces.

In June of 2016, Governor Rick Scott of Florida hosted his inaugural *Degrees to Jobs* Summit, wherein administrators, politicians, and business leaders were invited to discuss the state of higher education and the economy in Florida. Scott framed the event's call-to-action in the following way: "Since December 2010, the hardworking businesses of our State have created over 1,056,000 new jobs. To continue this success, *our higher education system must focus on preparing students for these newly created jobs*" (emphasis added). This language represents a cultural appraisal of how the purpose of higher education is viewed and considered in the state of Florida: language such as "preparing students for these newly created jobs," "every school has a job to do," and even the word "workforce" function as an attempt to define the value of higher education by its ability to produce graduates who will meet the demands of the state economy.

What is notable about Scott's summit is not only in how it relentlessly affirms the link between higher education and the present demands of the economy, but rather in how it privileges this definition of education—a means to gain the skills needed to succeed in the Florida workforce—above all others. Other purposes, like the role of the university in helping students become critical, civically engaged members of our society, are not prioritized in any speech at or about the Degrees to Jobs Summit. This framing of the purpose of higher education is anchored in the standards set forth by Florida's centralized education authority, the Florida Board of Governors. In their *2025 System Strategic Plan*, the Board of Governors lay out the mission, purpose, and state objectives for Florida's twelve

institutions of higher education. In this fashion, the Florida Board of Governors' text and the wider Degrees to Jobs discourse operate as a system of tandem, interconnected discourses that bear and influence the people around them toward a narrow, exclusive, and overwhelmingly vocational definition of higher education.

In this article, I analyze how the Degrees to Jobs discourse creates a new epistemological reality that narrows the ways students see themselves with respect to their own education. This vision encompasses a whole set of values which, once inculcated, determine how students make choices within the academy, as well as what choices are available to them. First, I explain the methodological structures and critical voices that inform my analysis. I then analyze the Board of Governor's "2025 System Strategic Plan" as well as the "Methodology for Updating Programs of Strategic Emphasis in the State University System of Florida, Board of Governors 2012–2025 System Strategic Plan" (hereafter known as the "System Methodology") and identify the discursive relationships and maneuvers by which they function. Of all the texts associated with Degrees to Jobs, these two form the clearest roadmap for how the Board of Governors seeks to structure and judge the operational objectives of each university. Together, they provide an important glimpse into the logic and ethic of Degrees to Jobs, while orienting us towards how it performs its epistemological work. In this analysis, I examine the ways the discourse conditions students and departments within its totalizing, commercial ideology of education in Florida, compromising their institutional agency, while discouraging alternate visions of what higher education can mean for Florida's public universities, particularly for those in humanities and English classrooms.

Critical Frame

In this analysis, I engage post-structuralist notions of power and society argued by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, which well represent the multiplicity and breadth of structures underlying and extending through Degrees to Jobs. Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, bears directly on how students cultivate certain values, why institutions promote certain ideas to their students, and what vocabulary students and institutions use to describe the issues around them. This occurs because, as Foucault describes, power, by means of the discourse, "produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (*Discipline* 194). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault states that discourses form, order, and create systems of knowledge (194). These result in new epistemes and "relations of power" (207) that help configure a means of interacting with the world. Foucault writes that these relationships are sustained and furthered by entrenched ideological forces that change and shape the way individuals view and interact with these systems in their everyday lives (195).

Bourdieu builds on Foucault by describing how these rituals of power become codified socially within the academy. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu describes the ways in which a whole system of tastes is arranged within individuals by the discourse: "In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge, or concepts, that is, the words,

that are available to name visible things, and that are, as it were, programs for perception" (2). Central to this process are Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *cultural capital*, in which people's values and identities are shaped and molded by discourse. Bourdieu writes of "the relationship between tastes (which denote stratified, culturally and socially derived preferences) which vary in a necessary way per their social and economic conditions of production, and the products on which they confer their different social identities" (104). Through coded "rituals of power" (Foucault, *Discipline* 194), the discourse preserves itself, imprinting the "rules of good behavior" (Bourdieu 132) that determine how students will behave not only at university, but also in their lives.

These critical faculties are essential to understanding how humanities classrooms—such as English—find themselves positioned against Degrees to Jobs. In "English Studies, Work, and Politics in the New Economy," James Berlin describes the power of economic demand to affect the way the university defines its own function and bears on our society (216). He separates economic demand into two distinct stages: Fordism and post-Fordism. A Fordist system is one in which labor is "de-skilled and fragmented into a set of mechanized movements" (216). In this paradigm, the role of the laborer is to learn to execute these movements as best as he possibly can (217). In a post-Fordist system, work is decentralized and open, requiring a broader, more versatile skillset. In the case of both, however, economic demand places the impetus on workers and students to shape themselves in the image of what the economy presently dictates. Degrees to Job operates by channeling this economic pressure through its member universities onto students. The result is an ideology around education in Florida with a starkly Fordist core, whose commercialized framing of education dictates how knowledge is ordered, distributed, and taken up by the Florida University System and its students for the benefit of the commercial and political forces which shape it.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Situational Rhetorical Analysis

To explore the Board of Governors' texts, I use critical discourse analysis, as defined by Huckin et al. in their piece "Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric and Composition." CDA is "fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language" (Wodak 53, qtd. in Huckin et al., 107–8). CDA's method of analysis provides insight into these texts because of the attention it gives to how ideology, power, and culture collectively direct and shape a text's meaning. This method engages critical investigation into "social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use" (Huckin et al. 107). Its focus on the social situation, and its relationship to people and society and its problems, make CDA ideal for this type of study.

This article examines the observable consequences and features of the Degrees to Jobs discourse network. As Barton states, "Reading the data closely and repeatedly inevitably reveals features that coalesce into patterns" (27). These "rich features" are points, patterns, and relationships within the text which demonstrate how Degrees to Jobs maneuvers discursively to create epistemic pressure on students. The "rich

features"—or salient features—I am looking for are those that deal with

- exhortations to a particular definition of an idea through the use of classification and connotation;
- the shaping of the target's relationship to knowledge through the use of modal words and phrases;
- the establishing of supposed facts; and
- other lexical maneuvers taken at the textual level, such as framing, coherence, naturalization, and heteroglossia.

I derive these through an examination of text-level features and functions, as well the text's context, agents, actors, and exterior audiences. Together, these rich features display the mechanics of Degrees to Jobs and help us to understand how its texts operate rhetorically to shape students, universities, and state actors towards its ideological priorities for higher education.

The Board of Governors Standards and Strategic Plan

The State University System of Florida Board of Governors administers and controls the standards to which Florida universities are held and by which their successes are measured. The State University System of Florida is unique among State university systems nationally due to the sheer demand placed on it. In a state of over 20 million people, the system runs only twelve public universities, only ten of which are considered full universities (Cornelius and Cavanaugh 154). An enrollment of over 330,000 and relatively few campuses to accommodate them puts considerable pressure on each individual institution to maximize capacity and efficiency. The Degrees to Jobs discourse also occurs within a national movement in higher education to increase accountability and efficiency in terms of graduation rates, degrees conferred, and students served (Cornelius and Cavanaugh 153). Situated in this moment, the Board of Governors has an especially strong vantage point from which to perform epistemological work concerning Florida's universities. For my research, the Board of Governors' strategic plan genre is of specific interest because of its multilayered nature. The System Strategic Plan becomes an ideal place to examine the dialogic orientation of Degrees to Jobs, in which power is exchanged, transfused, and spoken through a multiplicity of actors—ranging from the state government, university administrators, education stakeholders, to students themselves—to a variety of ends. This language emerges clearly through the Board of Governors texts, demonstrating how the System Strategic Plan functions as a "ground zero" for issues of identity, power, and freedom (both for universities and students) within Degrees to Jobs, and constitutes a salient point in which these potential consequences can be examined.

Put forward in 2012, the *2025 System Strategic Plan* (SSP) lays out a vision for the State University System of Florida's operational priorities through 2025, forwarding a series of assumptions and directives about what the mission, purposes, and ends of higher education in Florida should be. The SSP establishes specific relationships between commonplace educational entities—such as "research", "innovation", "community" and "teaching"—that overtly and indirectly create new knowledges about how higher education is supposed to

function. The key relationships the Plan puts forward are written through the stated goals that form its crux: "Scholarship, Research, Innovation" (14), "Community and Business Engagement" (15), and "Teaching and Learning" (13). The Plan is significant insofar as it is written by one entity (The Board of Governors) to be observed and enacted by twelve (Florida's public universities). Normally a university strategic plan is authored by the university to guide *its own* actions and priorities. In contrast, the "System" strategic plan is authored by the Board of Governors to guide not its own actions, but those of twelve other institutions. Therefore, the key dynamic of this strategic plan is not the process of a university setting its own goals, but rather an outside actor imposing action upon twelve other individual actors who are made patient to the Board of Governors in the process. Discursively, this arrangement fixes the power relationship between the system and universities as one of subordination. The system plays the role of panopticon, surveilling its member universities while ensuring their compliance, "assuring the ordering of human multiplicities" (Foucault, *Discipline* 218) in such a way that benefit it. This role is carried forth in tone, language, and rhetorical devices employed by the "System to accomplish its goals" (Florida Board of Governors, "2025 System" 7).

It is important to consider that the Board of Governors chooses to open its strategic plan by invoking its Constitutional mission to "operate, regulate, control, and be fully responsible for the management of the whole university system" (Article IX, Section 7(d)). Thus, from the start, the Board of Governors frames its relationship to the university system in stark, definite terms that are more evocative of tropes traditionally associated with Fordist business practices than those of a higher education institution. This affirms the heteroglossic nature of the text, wherein multiple voices are layered and spoken through simultaneously (Bakhtin 288–89). Business-minded language and measurements like "operate, regulate, control, and be fully responsible for" permeate the Plan. The word "efficiency" is used seventeen times to describe the twelve institutions, as well as "productivity" serving as one of the criteria through which the proposed priorities are justified. Student-focused language such as "guide" or "support"—ubiquitous in the strategic plans of individual universities such as Florida State University ("Goal V") and the University of Florida (4)—is almost entirely missing from the SSP. Its language instead sets up a strict Fordist hierarchy between the system and its member universities, in which universities are expected to produce clear operational outcomes which meet the demands of production (Berlin 217). In this, the directive the System invokes leaves little room for institutional maneuvering and suggests a hierarchy in which the role of the individual institutions is to support the mission and objectives of the System take priority over those of the twelve-member institutions.

The System then grounds this primate-subordinate relationship in another invocation of the Florida Constitution, focusing more specifically on the actual ends to which the relationship will be pursued, stating that its function is "to achieve excellence through teaching students, advancing research and providing public service for the benefit of Florida's citizens, their communities and economies" (Article IX, Section 7(a)). Here, we are introduced to the tri-partite mission of the State University

System for the first time, and the relationships that will form the backbone of its strategic plan: achieving research excellence, teaching students, and providing public service, for the benefit of Florida's citizens, communities, and economies. This mismatch of routine goals, bordering on clichés of educational rhetoric, with the Fordist language of their beneficiaries tries to lexically naturalize Fordist sentiments by placing them in relation to known and familiar educational traditions.

Research is an important stated goal of the State University System. It is one of the three pillars on which the System's mission is built, and an expectation that forms a very large part of its strategic plan. Yet research in this document is always referenced in relation to its value for business and commercialization. The "Scholarship, Research, and Innovation" section of the Plan states that "The component of the State University System's tripartite mission that is unique to universities is the ability of its scholarship, research, and innovation to transform economies and societies" (14). The goals the System has for supporting research on university campuses specifically pertain to increasing the number of patents and start-up companies that emerge from that research, fostering "entrepreneurial campus cultures," and increasing the "quality and impact" of research with respect to commercialization efforts (14). The lexical relationship is perhaps clearest in the second part of the System's vision statement: "In light of the velocity with which the 21st century is moving ahead, however, the Board of Governors recognizes the need to view this public mission through a clearer lens and with a sharper focus on teaching and student learning, research and commercialization, and community and business engagement" (11).

From this, we have three interconnected discursive pairs that are fundamental to the working of the strategic plan and connected to its epistemological aims. The epistemic purpose of this maneuver is to frame the value of research—and researchers—squarely within the realm of commercialization. The value of research as academic endeavor is not discovery nor inquiry nor solving problems, but rather how research contributes to and expands the Florida economy. The System makes it very clear that it is incumbent upon Florida institutions of higher education to ensure that they are "transforming and revitalizing Florida's economy and society" (10) through research. In the mission statement, this command is prefaced using the modal verb *will*, exerting the full force of the centralized authority that the system claims for itself in the introduction.

One implication of the equation of research value with commercial potential is privileging certain disciplines. This aligns with the System's stated emphasis on STEM degrees and its desire to develop and support those across all goals. This hierarchy also extends through the STEM disciplines, encouraging research with clear commercial potential while marginalizing that with other purposes. To this end, the Strategic Plan states that "The Legislative Affairs Committee is considering strategies that will demonstrate the Board's commitment to STEM education and the commercialization of university research discoveries" (7). In this light, the repeated use of the binary "research and commercialization" results in a form of naturalization for the reader, in which whatever prior conceptions the reader had about the value of research are

formed to fit the definition put forward by the Board of Governors.

In contrast, the strategic plan's use of "economy" and "marketplace" make specific references to the Florida infrastructure. The Plan states that "Through its research programs, the State University System is now playing a critical role in expanding and diversifying Florida's economy" (14). Additionally, "This System Strategic Plan serves as the Board's commitment to enhancing the quality and reputation of the State University System and to focus its academic resources to lead Florida's efforts to expand the state's knowledge and innovation economy" (13). Because the plan is so specific about what *marketplace* means, and so generally treats *community*, that "community" *subsumes* "marketplace," defining itself squarely in terms of the economic. This subsumption is also accomplished through the foregrounding of "community" or "society" in the sentence order. In most cases, "community"—the vaguer term—comes first, with "economy," "businesses," or "marketplace" coming last in the pairing.

Further, the Strategic Plan's vision states that, "As Florida and the nation face economic competition on an unprecedented scale, the State University System must prepare graduates to excel in the global society and marketplace" (Florida Board of Governors, "Strategic Plan 2012–2025" 11). Lexically, this structure attempts a transitive relationship between two terms that do not mean the same thing—*society* and *marketplace*. By pairing one general term (society, with its multiplicity of interpretations) with a specific and grounded one (marketplace), the door is opened discursively for a blind equivalence. Because "society" is never explicitly defined, it can be made to mean whatever it is that the author—or the audience—dwells within it.

The third major relationship the *2025 System Strategic Plan* creates is between *teaching* and *learning*. The actual form and function of these roles are effected through insinuation and indirect lexical links in the text. The real crux of their relationship is found in what the Plan appears to want the students to learn and the teacher to teach: the Plan demonstrates that "teaching" and "learning" are valuable insofar as they are effective towards helping the System meet its goals for reaching national pre-eminence, as well as producing an increased number of STEM graduates. Throughout the entire text, the system states that it is incumbent upon universities to prepare students for their role in the "knowledge economy" (16). As Berlin states, the "knowledge economy" is no less vocational in its focus, but rather represents a "radical restructuring" (218) of the work force in which centralized hierarchy has been shifted in factor of flexibility. The emphasis on cultivating skills for the benefit of production remains in place. In *The Uberfication of the University*, Gary Hall goes further, making the point that there may not be that much difference between the hierarchy of production of today's economy and more centralized antecedents:

> For these companies, and the micro-entrepreneurs who labor for them—and who in the past would have been known as employees—are operating in an open market that is relatively free from the ability of state regulators, the labor movement, and trade unions not only to put a limit on the maximum hours those employed in these new kinds of jobs work in a day or week but also to specify the

> minimum wage they should receive, the number of days off they need, and the paid holidays and free weekends they are entitled to… maybe, given the lack of workers' rights and degree of externalized risk, it's like a very old kind of job: a Victorian, nineteenth-century job. (n.p.)

This rapidly changing work environment changes the role of teachers to top-down dispensers of knowledge, where their primary charge is to clearly and efficiently deliver the sorts of skills needed to perform in the modern economy Hall describes. The following quote in the "Planning context" section of the 2012–2025 Strategic Plan demonstrates how teaching and learning are connected in view of the demands of the "knowledge economy" in the eyes of Degrees to Jobs: "State universities have prioritized the coordination of academic program delivery to optimize resources, to expand efficiencies, and to respond to workforce demands for graduates with specific knowledge and skills. Specifically, university goals are being set to increase the number of graduates with degrees in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields" (7).

Right away in this text, the rhetorical frame helps to define and ground the type of teaching that the Board of Governors is advocating. The use of managerial phraseology such as "optimize resources" and "expand efficiencies" so that graduates are better prepared with specific types of skills again echoes the business rhetoric that lines Board of Governors discourse. The exact types of "skills" instructors are expected to optimize are informed by the priorities of the text, which state that the aim of teaching is to increase the number of STEM graduates universities are producing, and thus support the state's business and economic objectives (10). Therefore, codified pressure is placed on institutions by the Board of Governors to cultivate, recognize, and support faculty who can provide instruction along these lines: "Florida must increase the educational attainment levels of its citizens and increase the entrepreneurial spirit of its workforce. To accomplish this, the state universities must respond by becoming more efficient in awarding degrees and focus on improving its portfolio of research and intellectual property to outside investors" (12).

First, note the possessive presupposition employed in the use of "entrepreneurial" in the first sentence. There is no intrinsic reason why the citizenry of Florida (as opposed to other states) should be considered especially entrepreneurial in mindset. By asserting it as a given truth, the Board of Governors is justifying why entrepreneurship, as a set of educational priorities, should matter to students and universities. The passage also returns attention to efficiency—in this case in teaching. According to this characterization, in line with the ethic expressed in the previous two examples, successful teaching and learning can be judged along the lines of how efficiently students learn the skills they need to learn to succeed in the knowledge economy, as well as how well teachers teach it to them. Teachers play a distinctly Fordist role in this paradigm, performing a specific, repetitive role as parts (students) roll down the line (Berlin 217). How successful teachers are in teaching is graded and evaluated against how successful they are at performing the maneuver, and how well it shows up in their students' performance.

These key relationships in the *2025 System Strategic Plan*, and the discursive rich

features that mark them, find their way into the standards to which the twelve institutions are accountable, contributing to the discourse by reiterating an ethic of quantitative measuring: "To ensure each university is striving to excel and improve on key metrics, there must be a financial incentive. That financial incentive will not only be new state funding, but an amount of the base state funding reallocated" (SUFBG, *Board* 2). Here a lexical agent-patient relationship between the Board of Governors and its twelve institutions is reinforced along the lines of an investor/ investment dynamic. In laying out this edict, the Board asserts that the existence of universities is mainly valuable insofar as they can accomplish these metrics and prove their worth to the system.

According to Board of Governors, the factors which define a successful university are no more complex than those articulated in performance-funding metrics. These metrics, such as six-year graduation rates, degrees awarded in targeted (STEM) fields, and the median wages of graduates employed in Florida *(Performance Based Funding Model* 1), serve as the basis on which state funds for higher education in Florida are allocated. The Board of Governors places its universities in a position where they must cater to these metrics to remain financially and operationally competitive. The choices universities make in response to these metrics may limit how students see themselves and assert their agency within the institution. According to the above standards, it is not enough to simply graduate employees, they must be employed in Florida (1); it is not enough to graduate and retain students, they must be graduated in disciplines of strategic emphasis; it is not enough that students graduate, they must do so on a state-mandated time-table. If a university fails to meet the marks set by the system, it is considered a failure. In this way, the state places the burden on universities to create an environment where students are pressured to make specific choices about their education in line with their universities' adherence to the system's metrics.

Epistemic Implications for Student Choice

Fundamentally, the Degrees to Jobs discourse seeks not only to control the lines along which students make choices about their education, but to make students desire and value its aims as their own. As Foucault states, one of the principal objectives of panoptic power is to form the behavior of its subjects: to "judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose upon them the methods [it] thinks best" (203). Through the enactment of these choices presented by the discourse, students are, in turn, sustaining the discourse as the only legitimate line of action. For Althusser, this is a consequence of how Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) operate. In shaping these attitudes and creating a structured sense of propriety in their subjects, an ISA engages in "not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order," so that "they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class" (138). When students enter the university, which is shaped and formed by a given discourse, they become agents of its sustenance, acting on its behalf. After a while, students *learn* the discourse; they begin demanding of their university the things that the discourse has been pressuring their institution to do since before they were

there. For example, the phrase "increase the value of your degree" is littered throughout the Florida State University strategic plan. Students begin to see their own value as students linked to how well they perform the function now expected of the university. Thus, a social hierarchy is built within the academy, whereby students are shaped to act along the lines of the discourse. This hierarchy bears on students, challenging their self-concept and imposing the values and beliefs of the more dominant classes (the State, commercial interests, university administration, and those entities through which the discourse manifests).

This epistemic pressure placed on students by the Board of Governors discourse is clearly seen in the rhetoric of the "skills gap." The *2025 System Strategic Plan* makes the argument that students need to learn specific "skills and aptitudes" needed for success in a "global society and marketplace" (10). At the Degrees to Jobs Summit, Liz Grasso repeated this notion when she stated the need for students to learn certain "communication and soft skills." This especially becomes salient in terms of how universities choose to present their academic programs to students. The University of Central Florida's undergraduate biology program frames its value for students in terms of its ability to help them "satisfy professional school (e.g., medical, dental, optometry, pharmacy, veterinary) admission requirements" while completing their degree (*About UCF Biology*). Likewise, the University of North Florida College of Business frames itself to students purely in terms of the vocational value defined by the Board of Governors, stating that "Students with a strong business education position themselves to excel in a multitude of different types of career opportunities" (UNF, "College of Business").

State and university campaigns such as "Finish in Four, Save More" operate through these same maneuvers. When Scott, in support of "Finish in Four," states that "Florida's students should have every *opportunity* to earn a degree without bearing the burden of excessive costs and fees," a special emphasis is placed on the word opportunity. This emphasis is performing the same epistemic supposition of the academic-department genre, which, through a repeated equation of what the discourse desires and student "success," aims to shape how students view it for themselves. To the same effect, Senate President Joe Negron comments that "we also want to increase opportunities for students who work throughout college to gain real world experience in their field of study that will improve their job prospects following graduation" (Barillas). What takes place in these two examples occurs frequently throughout the discourse. Made the text's patient, students are elevated to a position where their needs (or the supposed needs assigned by the discourse) are treated as paramount, while simultaneously being robbed of their power and voice to express those needs. The result is the emergence of a tight ideological paradigm within which students are positioned make choices pertaining to their own academic agency and freedom. The discourse does not itself force anyone to choose anything. Rather, it codes an entire system of interests throughout the interfaces and relationships students use regularly to make their academic choices—whether it is media, websites, parents and friends, or university academic advisors. These specific texts produce—and socialize—relations of knowledge through avenues the student has

little choice but to interact with. Through repeated exposure to this system of knowledges and being pressured by its priorities, the student becomes subject to its presuppositions (Huckin 160).

The discourse's focus on entrepreneurship and commercialization thus constitutes an attempt to "responsibilize" the relationship between students and universities, to one in which the student bears more of the burden for their own choices while still being shaped in the image of the discourse. For Foucault, this responsibilization constitutes an attempt to reframe the social obligations of the state in such a way that the individual views potential consequences, such as employment or lack there-of, as primarily their own responsibility (*The Birth* 143–44). This is useful for Degrees to Jobs for two major reasons. First, in the past eight years, the State University System has seen an increase in enrollment without a commensurate increase in State funding for higher education (accounting for inflation) (Graves). In this way, responsibilization works towards its goal of maximizing efficiency of production within its individual universities. In "Academic Capitalism," Ourania Filippakou and Gareth Williams describe this in the following manner: "This new regime of re/deregulation allows the government to step back more and more from actual involvement in state activities, which now devolve to agencies, institutions, or regions (Dean, 1999) but still to steer them. These require the individual behavior of academics to be re-shaped, and the relationship with the state to be re-thought" (77).

The second major effect is compounding the epistemic reshaping of how students appraise the value of their education in line with the desires and dictates of the discourse, inculcating a mindset in which students expect less from the academy while simultaneously accepting more of the responsibility for succeeding or failing within Degrees to Jobs. This way, the discourse transforms the university into a "continuous, individualizing pyramid" (Foucault, *Discpline* 220), de-emphasizing the cultivation of fluencies in critical literacies and thought not directly applicable to the furthering of its aims.

Furthermore, students experience increased social pressure to justify how their choices at the university are—or have—translated into job prospects. Per the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, this pressure has contributed to the increase in double majors, which allows students to accept pressure to pick a "strategically emphasized" degree while pursuing another in line with the student's individual interests (Selingo). Even then, the discourse colors the relationship between these two majors. For a Business/Sociology double major, the value of the former is immediately recognized and affirmed by friends, family, and the wider university community. The latter, however, must still be justified, often along the lines of the discourse whose pressures helped to shape the student to make that choice in the first place. If a student does desire to pursue one of these degrees undesirable in the eyes of the discourse, they enter a culture in the academy that is pointed entirely in the opposite direction of where they are going. They are made to feel, by the university community—specifically other students—that their choice is bizarre or irrational because it is less vocationally focused. They face increased pressure to justify their choice strictly on the lines of the discourse: its ability to find the student a

job and contribute to the Florida economy in the same way that a science or business major is imagined to.

Implications for English and the Humanities

Such pressure can in turn easily lead to a like pressure on less vocationally focused disciplines, such as English and the humanities, to justify their existence as disciplines along the same front. This potentially places pressure on students to do the same. Students may want to choose one of these "less desirable" majors, but find the perceived social and economic risk too great to attempt the venture. Pressures from family and society to choose a degree with a clear vocational trajectory compounds the effect. These pressures are especially salient for students who come from poor or working-class backgrounds, where the necessity to earn a degree with clear vocational transferability is felt much more sharply (Pinsker). However, even in the very broadest sense, when students grow up hearing from teachers and parents that they must do well in school to "get a good job," and are judged by standards meant to measure skills that will allow them to perform well in those jobs, then it is to be expected that the legions of students entering Florida's universities would view the opportunity as nothing more than a four year "boot camp" for employment.

This vocational emphasis pushes students into a space where it is not academically or socially advantageous to venture outside the direct requirements of their discipline. In this paradigm, the ethic of a liberal arts education is defeated. Cultivating critical thought and perspective necessary to be an engaged member of society takes a back seat to learning "soft skills," as universities must frame the value of such courses. If the point of learning is simply employment, then there is little incentive for an engineering major to take classes that won't directly pertain to engineering employment. Classes then become little more than steps which must be ticked off to earn a degree. In *The Uberfication of the University*, Hall frames this in the following manner:

> It is all too easy to imagine fewer and fewer academics being prepared to take a chance on teaching the kind of critically inclined arts and humanities courses that run the risk of being rated as difficult, complex, or otherwise economically unproductive and unviable: say, because they are challenging the status quo (rather than merely servicing it) by exploring *alternative* social, political, and economic visions of the future that are indeed about *more* than work, consumption, and the generation of large profits for someone else to own privately. (n.p.)

The English classroom—and humanities disciplines generally—find themselves existentially threatened by the Degrees to Jobs discourse precisely because, as Hall states, their activities are critically inclined rather than vocationally focused. The English classroom is well-suited to perform what Berlin calls "economic democracy." In opposition to the "radically individualistic and hierarchical modes of production and work relations" found in Degrees to Jobs-style discourses, Berlin's notion of economic democracy calls for "new forms of cooperation in production, distribution, exchange, and consumption that encourage democratic arrangement throughout the workplace" (224). In contrast

to Degrees to Jobs, knowledge in an economic democracy is not ordered to suit the demands of any one economic system. Rather, knowledge in Berlin's vision functions in concert with an understanding of social, political, and economic environments to empower students to question and criticize the very means by which knowledge is allocated and attained (223). The English classroom serves as a space in which knowledge, education, and society can be criticized, examined, and pursued outside of the narrow vocational vision of Degrees to Jobs and the Board of Governors.

This critical disposition not only renders the English classroom impractical for Degrees to Jobs, but a threat to its epistemological ends. In Berlin's vision, the English classroom is place where a new, inclusive educational habitus is created. He posits English as a space where the "radically collaborative" nature of post-Fordist society can be upheld, and the objective actors of the economy and educational landscapes can be remade through the education of consumers whose interests do not end with self-advancement, but extend to a wider understanding of the conditions and systems where their behavior occurs (224). This vision moves beyond mere ethical posturing. As Berlin states, the English classroom has served as the support and stay of certain ethical and political positions since the great depression. Instead, the English classroom as Berlin imagines it must move beyond its traditional role as a "powerful ethical force in influencing the private experience of individuals" and move to "prepare students to critique the conditions of their economic, political, and cultural involvement" (225). To this end, the aims of the English classroom are not necessarily vocational or even anti-vocational but rather to inculcate critical literacy in students as individuals and members of a wider community. The practice of critical literacy allows for the exploration within the academy of the "*alternative* social, political, and economic visions of the future that are indeed about *more* than work" that Hall describes. This is opposed to the totalizing commercial focus of Degrees to Jobs, which seeks to subsume all other manners of interacting with education into its fold.

The allocation of knowledge in line with critical literacy establishes the English classroom as a space whose primary function is not merely about acquiring academic or vocational knowledge, but gaining the critical abilities needed to effectively engage with the diversity and complexity of contemporary life. Once this space is set, the English classroom can become, as bell hooks states, a "space of radical responsibility" (12), where the "will to be self-actualized can be affirmed" (18). This movement occurs in a larger assemblage of individuals, all performing it together, in a manner that places community right at the forefront of such self-examination. This activity presents a serious threat to the effects of Degrees to Jobs, in building students' critical awareness of their relationship to their subjectivity as constructed and represented by Degrees to Jobs. Where Degrees to Jobs seeks to condition students within the mold of its epistemological priorities, the self-actualizing focus of English can empower students to grapple with the ideological forces around them, understanding the ways in which they are impressed, and responding in whichever way most fully affirms their agency as students. This process enables a

student to become what Bronwyn Davies calls a "speaking/writing subject," who "can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject, can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others" (46).

However, such activity requires the will, on the part of the student and community, to self-actualize, to see the value of an educational exercise that will yield benefits for society beyond its transferability to an employment context. While this still occurs in English and humanities classrooms, it occurs in an academic environment where humanities departments are split between their devotion to cultivating critically literate students and the necessity of satisfying the demands of Jobs to Degrees discourse. For example, the University of Florida Department of English's undergraduate degree description touts how the English degree helps "[prepare] students for diverse careers in law, publishing, advertising, media and business, teaching and advanced degree work" (UF, "Undergraduate"). Likewise, adopting directly the language of production Berlin positions the English classroom against, Florida State University's English department claims to "aspire to train every student, at every level, how to get more from what they read, and how to achieve more with what they write" (FSU, "English"). For departments and professors, adopting the Degrees to Jobs discourse is simply a means of ensuring their survival in an academic environment where success is measured against the values of Degrees to Jobs. The alternative, as Hall posits, is to be "unlikely to acquire the kind of rating and reputation score that is needed to retain a gig as an academic in a platform capitalist higher education market" (n.p.), or as John Holmwood says, be found "metrically inadequate" by the discourse. It is against this reality-shaping pressure that the process of critical liberation described by hooks, Alexander and Royster, and Berlin struggles to occur. This struggle is fixed not simply by entities such as the Florida university system's Board of Governors, but through English departments and administrators whose perpetuation of the discourse further limits the power students have to define themselves against it.

Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that the problem Degrees to Jobs poses is not that it merely promotes a vocational vision of education. There are a great many students in Florida who, for myriad reasons, pursue higher education for its vocational transferability. Their choice should not be demonized. The crisis Degrees to Jobs presents lies in how its texts work discursively to craft and enforce a totalizing system of values within Florida higher education that simultaneously marginalizes divergent visions of interacting with and conceiving of it. What emerges is a philosophy of education in Florida wherein efficiency takes the place of depth, standardization takes the place of choice, and employment takes the place of academic freedom. The danger posed by this effect lies in the victims this new epistemic set creates. For Degrees to Jobs to perform its function, it must be near totalizing in the formation of its subjects while eliminating multiplicities which might threaten the control the discourse exerts (Foucault *Discipline* 212). Rick Scott's pronouncement that anthropology

degrees are a waste of time and not worthy of government investment when contrasted with STEM degrees that, in his estimation, better prepare students for Florida jobs (Lende), paints a vision of a future that Hall warns against: one in which humanities programs (or any discipline whose economic viability is not the clear focus) are not only unsupported, but actively marginalized by those in power. If Degrees to Jobs can fulfill itself according to the marks laid out by the Board of Governors texts, it will be much harder for professors to teach, for students to nurture their own academic desires and interests, and for departments to form their own operational visions free from Degrees to Jobs—not only in the humanities disciplines, but across the academic landscape in Florida. Diversity in the academy will be slowly flattened, as all non-commercial purposes and goals in education are subjected to the discourse.

Such flattening is exactly what Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhode's politics of subjectivity aims to resist. By emphasizing the multiplicity of experiences and identities that can exist in the college classroom, the totalizing effect of Degrees to Jobs can be challenged. In its place, a space can be created in which lost agency can be reclaimed, by students as well as faculty. Through this lens, the English classroom is about claiming and defining the individual voice, an aim that Alexander and Rhodes call "the desire to create spaces for 'free expression,' so that students from diverse backgrounds can communicate to us, to one another, and to themselves their different truths" (433).

In Berlin's vision, places like the English classroom have the versatile potential to function as spaces in which students can simultaneously be prepared to be effective workers in the "post-modern" economy, while still having the means to engage with a plethora of other concerns related to the goals of education (224). Through this space of "free expression," English classrooms can become places in which the Degrees to Jobs discourse can be examined, analyzed, and subverted. Despite significant challenges, university English departments must embrace their role as places where the consequences and problems of discourses like Degrees to Jobs can be deconstructed and openly considered. In doing so, English classrooms can remain havens of critical multiplicity, open thought, and personal freedom for students and universities in Florida and nationwide.

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