

Carmina Collegi

(songs of the college)

or

from scholia to scolia

Words chosen by John R. Harper to fit selected tunes

Semper ego auditor tantum? Numquamne reponam

Juvenal, satire I line 1

The calculus professor's song
Major-General's song, Pirates of Penzance

I am the very model of a modern prof of calculus
With students of all types, the goof off and somnambulus.
I scribble at the blackboard as if guided by divinity
I'm audible to all in the immediate vicinity.
I spend a lot of classroom time on any triviality
While hiding all the tricky parts in clouds of geniality.
In turning out assessments I make efforts to be up to date
Distinguishing incompetence from the merely second rate.
My pedagogic stylings put great stress on the empirical
That anyone learns anything is really quite a miracle.
My course evaluations turn the dean into an angry cuss
I am the very model of a modern prof of calculus.

With deans or irate parents I'm a model of urbanity
And never foul the atmosphere with outbursts of profanity.
I find the wheat among the chaff with deftness that's rabbinical
And never use expressions that are querulous or cynical.
My labors in the classroom rank with some of those of Hercules
But don't uplift the students most of whom just want to be MD's.
At departmental meetings I can always brightly lift a pall
By spouting a few lines of that infernal nonsense "flunk them all."
People say it's time for me to take a long sabbatical
And put my better efforts into something mathematical.
A modern prof of calculus has need for great dramatics
It's very entertaining but it isn't mathematics.

I can learn to treat the students like demanding paying customers
And fend off engineers who do the work of cattle rustlers.
Like a nightclub entertainer I can bask in waves of warm applause
By handing out high grades just like some hyperactive Santa Claus.
Calculus reform's another gold mine for a master chef
In cooking up new schemes to tap the coffers of the NSF.
One fine day when I become a master of the rule of three
You'll say a better prof of calcu-less has never earned his fee.
My pedagogic method, an inventive style of lecturey
Resembles that in use at the beginning of last century.
But linking all these words and stealing rhymes that are miraculus
Is not the sort of thing you get from average profs of calculus.

The chairman's song
"When a felon's not engaged in his employment" Pirates of Penzance

When professor X has finished with his teaching
When he's care'fly set aside his lecture notes
His capacity for whining and beseeching
Is just as great as any average dote's.
Our feelings we with difficulty smother
And suppress the sudden urge to turn and run.
Taking one consideration with another
A chairman's lot is not a happy one.
When administrative duty's to be done, a chairman's lot is not a happy one.

When the dean is not engaged in his employment
Generating memoranda by the ton
He loves a bit of innocent enjoyment
Or spending time just basking in the sun.
But when we're in his office front and center
That famous line of Dante comes to mind
Lasciate speranza voi che entrate (abandon hope all ye who enter)
And be certain that you've covered your behind.
But when decanal duty's to be done, a chairman's lot is not a happy one.

When a student has to answer a test question
Which he claims that he has never seen before
He thinks that he's the victim of deception
And runs up to start pounding on my door.
I don't know what to make of this poor fellow
As he whiningly spills out his tale of woe
Calculus has turned his brain to jello
Perhaps he's better off at Quantico.
Oh, when a student isn't having any fun, a chairman's lot is not a happy one.

**The dean's song
Yellow Rose of Texas**

The dean's job is a hard one but he doesn't have a chance
His purse strings jerked and tangled by our captains in finance.
He wants to be a good guy but feels misunderstood
He has to make decisions which he knows are no damn good.

Grad programs are too costly and the faculty's too large
The dean prescribes excisions just like Madame Defarge.
Colleagues greet each other with rancor spite and sass
Departments are behaving like the folks at Donner Pass.

The dean proposes changes to bring teaching to the fore
The faculty object, preparation's such a bore.
If you spend much time at teaching think of wearing a disguise
Your career will take a pasting as your reputation dies.

The faculty teach classes in their specialities
Far from madid masses of mediocraties.
The dean says lousy teaching should be a big concern
But teaching doesn't matter much if no one wants to learn.

Yes, the dean's job is a hard one, same old fresh hell each year
But someone has to do it, and someone will don't fear.
Anyone who's been here has seen this stuff before
Stick around another year and you'll be seeing more.

Doggerel:

Oh how the place gets out of whack
When costs we first begin to hack;
But after hacking for a while
How vastly we improve our style.

The provost's song
Square-dance music from Oklahoma!

The faculty and provost should be friends
The faculty and provost should be friends
The college may be in a rut
The provost looks for things to cut
But that's no reason why we can't be friends.

Academic folks should stick together
Like survivors of shipwrecks.
Provost wants to save a dollar
Faculty want to save their necks.

Let's all get involved in the process
Don't leave the tough decisions for Big Brother
And if we cast our vote to cut someone else's throat
Our program may be one of those passed over.

Academic folks should stick together
Like the members of the Mob.
Faculty look to make things better
Provost looks for a better job.

The faculty and provost should be friends
The faculty and provost should be friends
The faculty chafes at leadership
The provost strafes them with a quip
But that's no reason why we can't be friends.

Academic folks should stick together
Like the members of a tong.
Provost works to build consensus
Faculty senses something wrong.

A provost is a kind of policeman
A new bureaucratic addition
But a certain kind of fish seeks out this special niche
A kingfish better known as politician.

Academic folks should stick together
Like the members of a clan.
Faculty schmooz and put out feelers
Provost feels like the French Dauphin.

The faculty and provost should be friends
Hey! The faculty and provost can be friends
Faculty think they're Ivy League, provost thinks like Captain Queeg
Provost has his little list of those who will and won't be missed
Faculty will ask for more, provost asks who minds the store
Program growth is a way of life, provost looks for a carving knife
Faculty are bellicose, provost tells them adios
But that's no reason that's no reason that's no reason that's no reason
That's no reason why we caaan't be friends.

The president's song Wabash Cannonball

Listen to the grumble, the rumble and the roar
As another college leader sticks his foot in it once more.
In spite of all the snafus he'll never show dismay
If you never know which way to go you'll never go astray.

For fundraising or fine speeches Prez is not among the pros
But he looks real fine in cap and gown at academic shows.
His megalomaniac antics cause no panic or alarm
As our trustees are put at ease by his bubbly charm.

Where did this person come from at whom we scowl and frown
Why he came out from the ranks of those who fail to gain renown.
So listen to me closely if you want to be a Prez
The Latin tag is backward, it's "de minimus curat lex."

Doggerel:

That presentation gave me seizures
It's impolite to say "oh phooey"
So I take a line of Caesar's
And say "veni, vidi, vomui."

The trustee's song
after the opening two lines quoting a Yale College song,
"When I was a lad" H. M. S. Pinafore

Bright college years with pleasure rife
The shortest gladdest years of life;
Professors were friendly and classes were small
We never had to study anything at all.
Those college years so suited me, that now I am a university trustee.

I arrived at school to receive strange looks
A room, a bed and piles of books.
I knew that life was not for me
So I quickly joined a fraternity.
Fraternity so suited me that now I am a university trustee.

My fraternity took over Todd
License and leaks on the quad.
Every night was Halloween
Topped off with summonses from the dean
Who treated me so cordially that now I am a university trustee.

Senior year was looking bad
My grades were poor, I could not grad
Uate on time. But glad to say
My diploma showed up in the mail one day.
That sheepskin so flattered me that I hung it on a wall for everyone to see.

I never had any business sense
Job or grief with my inheritance.
I praise the school that coddled me
Like a relative of royalty.
I pledge my money so faithfully that now I am a university trustee.

I am a trustee, the meetings are great
We eat good meals and we celebrate.
Afterwards there's lots of booze
With plenty of time for a pleasant snooze.
The only thing we can't get right is a thing called fiduciary oversight.

The only thing they can't get right is a thing called fiscal oversight.

**The faculty council song
Tipperary by Judge and Williams (1912)**

Around the square of tables the faculty convene
All relaxed and casual, all looking very keen
Bluff voices and broad gestures are the way some make the scene
Others edging forward to be closer to the dean;

It's a long wade through the bullshit
Since it's spread deep and far
All the way from crowded lectures
To the smallest seminar
Across the campus or in the palace
Sounds of bullshit fill the air
It's a long long wade through all the bullshit
But we come from there.

The issues are complex the discussion's getting deep
A call for clarification comes from one who's been asleep
Novel ways to put the obvious, at this they are adroit
Each one in his turn, carefully making his strong point;

It's a long wade, etc.

A cranky old professor has been waiting for the chance
To shoehorn the discussion over to his private rants
Against vast enormities this hero takes his stance
The dean extends his arm to give his wristwatch a swift glance;

It's a long wade, etc.

Faculty's been consulted, the proper forms observed
The dean makes some announcements leaving everyone unnerved
Decisions which might matter have been made in other places
The meeting ends, they mill about, commotion masking stasis;

It's a long wade, etc.

The final exam song
“When the foeman bares his steel” Pirates of Penzance
for antipathial choirs

When semester's end is near (tarantara, tarantara)
There is one thing that we fear (tarantara)
From pleading we are hoarse (t.t.)
It's too late to drop the course (t.)
Our voices fluttering like flutes (t. t.)
And our bowels emitting toots (t.)
So we go to meet our fate in a highly nervous state (t. t. t.)

Teachers may look old and toothless
Overweight, unfit and youthless
But the tests are cold and ruthless
You'll be judged by what you know.

So we go to face the music
It's no good to say you're too sick.
And when tested individually
It is clear that we know diddly.

Now that grading time is here (t. t.)
There is one thing that we fear (t.)
On the academic scene (t.t.)
We must please the Dean (t.)
So no matter what they say (t. t.)
All the marks will be A (t.)
When careers are on the line everyone will do just fine (t.t.t)

So it's not our best endeavor
Still our fame will live forever
'Least 'till college ties we sever
We're the academic cream.

Now you've heard the grading story
Making all cum laudatory.
One and all congratulatory
For our teaching we get praise
And we get fancy resumes.

The teacher's song
"bless 'em all" Hughes and Lake (1940)

Refrain:

Flunk them all, flunk them all
The long and the short and the tall.
Flunk all the freshmen who won't learn to write
Flunk all the seniors who party all night.
Make the tests with tough questions that force
The students to repeat the course.
It's no longer in fashion to grade with compassion
Don't pass anyone flunk them all.

Verses:

A coed can study in arms of a buddy
Learning a new kind of play.
Good times are flowing, friendships are growing
While parents are throwing their money away.
It's a time when decisions are made
To either get drunk or get laid.
You'll get your diploma
While still in a coma
Provided tuition's been paid.

The sleepy-eyed masses who show up for classes
Are better off staying in bed.
Lack of attention plus incomprehension
Preclude the retention of anything said.
So the students just sit there and dream
Of how their lives might be supreme.
It's not education
More like a vacation
Spent in the groves of academe.

The frathouse is thumping there's frothing and tumping
According to all the reports.
Decorum is fraying, amidst all the braying
The fellows are playing intercrural sports.
The library's where they hang out
"Quiet please" old teachers shout.
The wisdom of sages
Or work of the ages
Is nothing that they care about.

"Let's order a pizza" it's one of the treats of a
Party before exam day.
Enjoy the sensation of cortex ablation
Avoid aggravation, it's nicer that way.
There's no need to punish the brain
Study will make you insane.
Baffled? Don't sweat it
You'll get partial credit
And if you want more just complain.

The anticipation before graduation
Should be an emotion sublime.
But they're riddled with fears over finding careers
After spending four years mostly wasting their time.
It's shameful to be so perplexed
We are sorry to see them so vexed.
But they've got no vocation
Of use to the nation
So what are they going to do next?

The retirement song
Duke of Plaza-Toro The Gondoliers

Tenure holders such as we
 Make college leaders nervous,
Waiting for eternity
 To terminate our service,
Here last year, here today
 And won't be gone tomorrow,
The annulated
 overrated
 comfortably situated
Ancient Professoro.

Won't go into the night, ha, ha,
At least without a fight, ha, ha,
The annulated
 vegetated
 comfortably compensated
Ancient Professoro.

Outworn quotes from lecture notes
 Fill classroom logorrheas,
Brittle, aged, filemots
 That last as long as he has.
Wunderkind come and go,
 That's fated for the clever,
Look around, it's plain to see,
 Old farts are forever.

They won their rank on merit, ha,
And hold on like a ferret, ha,
The antiquated
 medicated
 scheduled to be hyphenated,
Aging Professoro.

The incorrect "wunderkind" is on purpose to give a pause to the rocking chair rhythm of the other lines and to match the corresponding line in the first verse.