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Notable & Quotable: General Studies at Northwestern

‘College professors . . . more or less quashed the appointment of a retired three-star Army general for being too American, or something.’

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From the New York Post’s Kyle Smith, May 31:

Cooking up a scheme with Tina Fey’s Liz Lemon on a 2008 episode of “30 Rock,” Alec Baldwin’s Jack Donaghy says, “We might not be the best people.” She chimes, “But we’re not the worst.” Then both of them say, in tandem, “Graduate students are the worst.”

Graduate students develop, or metastasize, into college professors—the kinds of college professors who, at Northwestern University, more or less quashed the appointment of a retired three-star Army general for being too American, or something.

Gen. Karl Eikenberry was tapped by the university to lead its new Buffett Institute for Global Studies, a position he seemed easily to have earned by having actual knowledge of the globe.

Eikenberry was ambassador to Afghanistan. He was deputy chairman of the NATO Military Committee in Brussels. He has lived in Hong Kong, China and South Korea, and taught in Rwanda.

Yet faculty and grad students led a revolt against the appointment, assuming that being a military man automatically meant Eikenberry was a warmonger (actually, he has expressed deep misgivings, while serving as ambassador from 2009 to 2011, about the extended nature of President Obama’s military adventure in Afghanistan: Would President Obama be denied a Northwestern appointment for being too militaristic?). They also sniped that, having served the US overseas, Eikenberry might actually think in terms of US interests, and we can’t have that. . . .

Amid the hostile climate, Eikenberry, who had bought a house near the Northwestern campus, withdrew.

Eikenberry does not have a Ph.D., which some professors declared to be disqualifying. But Eikenberry’s position wasn’t to be academic: It was an executive and management one. He wasn’t expected to spend



Former U.S. Army Gen. Karl Eikenberry in 2011 in Afghanistan, where he was U.S. ambassador at the time. *PHOTO: EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY*

his time producing obscure papers on microtopics for publication in unread journals. He no more needed a Ph.D. to run a global studies institute than you need to have a Ph.D. in government to lead the United States of America. (Note that Obama doesn't have a Ph.D., either: How many universities will be scrambling to offer him a gig next year?)



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