

November 26, 2007

Regents VP grills universities on lack of issue-based classes

By Howard Fischer
Capitol Media Services

"What universities need to do is undertake their primary mission of fully educating our students so that they realize that they have challenges ahead," Ernest Calderon said Monday. "It'll be their generation that probably has to solve these challenges."

Calderon told a conference on climate change that the gap in education became obvious in his efforts to recruit a college graduate to help market his new law firm.

So far he has interviewed 17 students, all Arizona college graduates with grade point averages of 3.4 or better. He took the opportunity to query them about global warming.

"I have had one that said it's something about the icebergs melting and the water coming up," he said.

"These are your finest," he told his audience, specifically noting the presence of the presidents of all three universities. "You must be proud!"

Calderon did not limit his criticism to administration.

He said faculty members have been worrying more about time off and salaries than ensuring students get the well-rounded education they need.

"You have the power now, faculty, to make a change," he said. "Teach something in this university that every student has to learn."

Calderon said all incoming students should have to take at least one course on issues - and not just global warming.

He said most students are ignorant of the tenets of Islam despite the religion's rapid growth.

And he said students also should have at least a general background in other pressing subjects, like DNA.

If nothing else, Calderon said that course, which would include both faculty and guest lecturers, would provide a basis for students to ask questions during the rest of their college education about how what they are being taught relates to these issues.

All three university presidents were cool to the idea of a specific course.