

Maddy Institute lights the way

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Plato started the exploration into superior political leadership when he introduced his idea of the benevolent philosopher-king.

This ideal leader would have morality founded in education and dedication to truth and justice. The philosopher-king would lead us toward a better civilization with the benefit of every citizen in mind.

Though there are criticisms of this premise, the concept of seeking leaders who are not tainted by corruption from outward sources, such as special-interest lobbying, nor inward sources of corruption, such as yielding to personal vices, will always be applicable to politics.



COLEMAN GUGGENBICKLER

The idea of choosing our leaders based upon their moral fiber seems to be particularly relevant in today's American society. Recent news events have made this especially important before this mid-term election in the wake of numerous scandals involving corruption and poor morality. Neither party can claim innocence.

Remember your idealism

This is a goal of the Kenneth L. Maddy Institute at California State University, Fresno: to help foster a path of ethical leadership for both students and elected representatives to follow.

Through participation in the political process, students gain a greater understanding of our society and the responsibility that policy makers have to their constituents. Equally important is the remembrance of idealism from their own youth that politicians gain from interaction with these students.

The Maddy Institute encourages nonpartisan ethical standards and an interaction between members of our society who are already experienced in guiding our country with youth who foresee a bright future untainted by the all-too-often cynical nature of modern politics.

By doing so, we can create a changing of the guard that not only replaces, but also improves upon the current political system.

The Maddy Institute now funds more than 30 state, local and federal internships for students from Fresno State. Although these internships come from many different academic departments, the current level of funding supplies enough work opportunities for one out of four students from the Political Science Department. This is in addition to research assistant positions offered to students.

Next year the Institute will be working toward increasing the number of internships. The Maddy Institute hopes to expand internship opportunities by around 50% to allow even greater student participation in the political process.

These internships are given to students regardless of their political viewpoints or those of the officials they serve. Past and present government officials receiving support from Maddy interns include Republicans Assemblyman Mike Villines of Fresno and Reps. Devin Nunes of Visalia and George Radanovich of Mariposa. Democrats receiving support include Rep. Jim Costa, Assemblyman Juan Arambula, and Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

By creating a melting pot of viewpoints and ideas, interns learn skills in negotiation and compromise — skills vital to any politician wishing to advance the goals of their constituency.

Kenneth Maddy was widely recognized as a bipartisan leader. He has been admired by the likes of famous California politicians Willie Brown Jr. and Pete Wilson.

Ken Maddy's dedication to candor and the ethically correct choice rather than the partisan choice exemplifies the type of candidates we as Americans should support and cultivate amongst ourselves.

Today at Sen. Maddy's namesake institute, we hope to continue his tradition of bipartisan work in the interest of the public well-being. By ignoring the dividing force of partisan rhetoric and concentrating on issues that every American supports such as cleaner air quality, legislation transparency and greater voter participation, the Maddy Institute serves as a means to help keep California and the United States the envy of the world.

The turning point that we stand upon as citizens of both this great state and great nation makes it all the more important that we form a nonpartisan front to improve our lives as Americans as well as our reputation in the world community.

Lead, don't follow

All too often, our country is divided into red and blue. Many speakers encourage Americans to go to the polls and engage in straight-ticket voting. Please remember on Tuesday to vote as a citizen participant involved in the political process, not as a follower of the opinions of pundits and political marketing. Yielding the power of political choice entirely to a single political party always has and always will give support to authoritarianism, not the ideals of representative democracy and federal republicanism we hold so dear.

In memory of Kenneth Maddy and in the words of founding father John Dickinson (a member of the Democratic-Republican Party): United we stand, divided we fall.

► Coleman M. Guggenbickler is a senior economics major at California State University, Fresno. He is a research assistant for the Kenneth L. Maddy Institute.