

Episode 44 – Apparatchik – Bonus Episode!

Welcome to Grad-post! I'm your host, Brian S. Mitchell, and we're here to talk about life before, during, and after graduate school, and whether an advanced degree is right for you. I'll draw upon my experiences as a graduate dean and research mentor, as well as my network of students, colleagues, and experts to bring you the most complete information on graduate education that I can.

You remember my rescue pup, Bayou. She's a good girl and devoted follower. She'll follow me anywhere. She's followed me up mountains and down valleys. She's do just about anything for me.

I learned a new word for her today. Apparatchik. A-P-P-A-R-A-T-C-H-I-K. It's term borrowed from Russian that originally meant a member of the Communist Party but has now been generalized to mean simply a devoted follower. Some of you in political science will be saying "Geez, Graddean, how could you not know that word?" Well, I guess for the same reason that you may not know the word "devitrification." It just hasn't come up in my everyday readings. Until today. I ran across this term in today's [University World Report](#) feed.

What does apparatchik have to do with graduate education? Well, you may now have to go through an apparatchik if your graduate education is funded in any way through the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, or any other federal funding agency. You see, there will now be [political appointees approving grant funding at all federal agencies](#). That means that if you are an evolutionary biologist studying species diversity, or an economist – yes, NSF funds economics research – and you're studying equities markets, or you are a materials scientist studying inclusions in crystallographic planes, your funding may not be approved by the Apparatchik as they "use their independent judgement" because the grant does not "advance the national interest." Aren't Apparatchiks aware of homonyms? Maybe. But terms are being relegated to very narrow uses on a daily basis. Just google the word "woke" and compare how many times it's used as an adjective rather than a verb. I'm not hopeful that these Apparatchiks will be well-versed in scientific terminology.

It's nice to have devoted followers like Bayou, even if she's an apparatchik. But I wouldn't want her reviewing federal grants.

Thank you for joining me today. All of the links provided in my podcasts are available on my website at grad-post.com. There you'll find additional information and resources to help guide you to an advanced degree.

Every degree will still count. You may just have to go through an Apparatchik to get it.

Links

https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20250820100526403&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GLNL0843

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/improving-oversight-of-federal-grantmaking/>