# 151 Norming Essays: Assignment 1 – Purpose of College

27 October 2018

The Literal Purpose of College

In his speech, “Lighting Your Way to a Better Future,” Nelson Mandela, a powerful leader who helped build democracy during apartheid in South Africa declared that, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” The world depends on its democratic citizens every day. Many academic scholars such as, Andrew Delbanco, Phyllis M. Wise, and Brenda Hellyer argue that the people who constitute this nation have one important task, and that task is to gain certain skills necessary to maintain a stable democracy. They emphasize that many of these skills can be obtained through college courses. These higher education leaders argue that college is not only the foundation to a successful future. They agree that college stresses critical thinking, the exposure of diverse perspectives, and working collaboratively in order to foster a democracy.

According to many academic writers, institutions allow students to develop a sense of critical thinking, which is essential in regards to fostering a democracy. How can members of society construct distinctions between right and wrong or this and that? Well, writers argue that they need to think critically, or in other words, deeply analyze and synthesize. Carolyn A. Martin, President of Amherst College, notes the importance of evaluating information. She mentions how college prepares you “for the complexities of a world that needs rigorous analyses of its problems” (qtd. In “What is”). Expanding on this thought, Andrew Delbanco, a Professor at Columbia University, makes it aware that there are various “distortions and deceptions” in today’s world, such as “political appeals” (29) that the people need to be mindful of. *Merriam-Webster’s* informs the nation that an appeal is the power of arousing a sympathetic response. In politics, after the results of a debate, the citizens usually blame the politician- well, Delbanco blames the citizen for being only “appealed”-- or attracted -- to what they specifically like to hear from the politician. In a political dispute many people are inattentive towards the real issue. They tend to focus more on impractical values rather than “utilitarian values.” For example, what the population should recognize is the consistency, honesty, and dependability within a certain politician. If the politician does not possess these traits and they propose that the price of gas will reduce, many citizens will overlook the negative aspects and vote for that politician. What the citizens fail to realize is that a proposed idea is not certain. Delbanco furthers his focus on democracy by noting that “it should be obvious that the best chance we have to maintain a functioning democracy is a citizenry that can tell the difference between demagoguery and responsible arguments” (29). This clearly advises the whole population to realize that the primary problem may not be the politician. Instead, he insists that it is the fault of the people in our society for wanting to discern only what they feel is morally correct, rather than what is ethically correct. Anne Colby, a professor at Stanford University, along with several other colleagues, asserts that “[... students need] to develop their own judgements [...on certain] issues, and then to act on their judgements” (197). When dealing with these issues, it is important that one constructs a very careful opinion. To improve on certain complications within our democracy, students take core curriculum classes, as well as required courses in college to allow themselves to skillfully conceptualize in a distinctive manner, or as Brenda Hellyer, Chancellor of San Jacinto College, calls it “learn new ways of thinking” (qtd. In “What is”). She mentions how students learn to expand “their horizons,” which generally allows them to “encompass a broader world” (qtd. In “What is”). Their horizons meaning, their critical thinking process and a broader world meaning, a world of many different ways to solve one problem.

Furthermore, by attending classes such as Psychology, Statistics or English, students learn how to develop diverse thinking processes. For example, In English you may learn critical thinking by rigorously annotating sources that you have read. In statistics you have to examine certain diagrams and determine what they mean. In psychology, you must understand Nature vs. Nurture and differentiate the two meanings. College courses allow a students mind to function in a countless number of ways. Students can then use what they have learned and take, as Martin specifies, “synthetic approach[es]” (qtd in “What is”) toward conflicts in today’s society, which as writers argue, will predominantly construct a powerful and secure democracy.

In addition to critical thinking, scholars feel the wide exposure of diverse perspectives is crucial in order to foster a democracy. Phyllis M.Wise, Chancellor of the University of Illinois, believes that “In a global economy where our interactions are no longer bound by geography, cross-cultural understanding and communication are essential” (qtd. in “What is”). She indicates that our republic must understand the cultures of ourselves and others, and that citizens must interact in a socially acceptable way in order to enable a stabilized democracy. If the people took their time to understand before they rushed into judgement, they would come to more agreements. Scholars like Wise herself, stress that communication and the understanding of someone else’s beliefs are required to maintain a well-rounded democracy. Classes such as history and anthropology allow students to understand cultures and cultivation. Charles G. lief, President of Naropa University, states “an educational journey must be one through which students emerge as fuller human beings more deeply connected to one another and to the bigger world” (qtd. In “What is”). Well, obviously to become “deeply connected to one another” the people must grow to understand each other through the help of college. This means, acknowledging one’s reasoning. Lief emphasizes that the Education we receive from college “transforms ordinary knowledge into wisdom and cultivates compassion and service to others and the Earth, preparing students to change the world for the better” (qtd. In “What is”). To connect to the bigger world, society must accept that there are multiple ways one can solve any problem. The people must be open to the different perspectives in the world to alter it for the better, and treat those differences as if they were useful to expand on their own reasoning. For example, Delbanco recognizes how “some believe that abortion is the work of Satan, others think that to deny a woman the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is a form of abuse” (29). This clearly focuses on how democratic citizens conceive their information differently, and have their own unlike ideas towards certain conflicts. One opinion may alter the mind of someone else positively, but that same opinion may piss someone else off. In college, students learn how to voice their opinion in a respectable manner. Students become familiar with their surroundings, and they adjust to the fact that it is okay to have different ideas, as well as disagreeing. The core curriculum course, Public Speaking, which many students often must take, mainly focuses on that particular idea. In addition, English courses also allow students to express their feelings on paper. They become less biased by having in class discussions, and hearing what other students in the class may have to say. Writing argumentative papers enables a student to be open minded towards other perspectives. In order to respect the different perspectives of one another, students must work together.

Working collaboratively is often pressured on to college students, many feel that this can help foster a democracy. When students utilize their ability to critically think, and open their mind to the views of others, Wise believes it becomes easier “to work collaboratively across disciplines and cultures” (qtd. in “What is”). As mentioned earlier, in specific classes, students learn more about the culture of others, allowing them to work cooperatively with each other. In this case, in all types of college courses, whether its; Art, Music, Engineering, or even Nursing, students are likely to have to work with one another. Walter M. Kinbrough, President of Dillard University, states that “Colleges are places where students learn and grow through intellectual collisions in and out of class, with professors, staff, and peers, and where the community comes for similar experiences” (qtd. In “What is”). Being able to comprehend one another is the foremost essential tool when discussing social issues, when elections have to be made, or as simple as just having a basic conversation with someone else. If we always relied on ourselves, we would not rise as a democracy. Instead, we would become more conflicted as a nation.

To conclude, scholars are certain that college is more than a degree. They agree that college is the gateway to promoting the development of society. In order for a democracy to expand and strengthen, students attend college to obtain skills such as: critical thinking, understanding diverse perspectives, and learning how to work collaboratively. Mark Edmundson, an award-winning professor of English reinforces that students will need to “struggle, [...] strive, [and] be strong” (qtd in. “Who Are You?” ) in order to “leave-take.” They must understand that there is no limit to intelligence.

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26 September 2018

**College**

College can vary substantially from person to person, it’s an environment where individuals discover what their skills and weaknesses are, a place where new people are met and new ideas are put on your plate. Students learn and understand that all humans come from different backgrounds and have different stories. This goes to show how big the world has become and prepares graduates for their future career by becoming a well rounded, critical thinker.

Struggling isn't a bad thing, it brings out weaknesses and occasionally strengths that you didn't know existed. It underlines what needs to be worked on and perfected. An excerpt from Edmundson, Mark. “Who Are You And What Are You Doing Here? A Word To The Incoming Class.” *From Inquiry To Academic Writing*, edited by Stuart Greene and April Lidinsky, Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2018, pp. 405-415, says “You’ll need to struggle and strive, to be strong, and occasionally even to piss off some admirable people. To get a real education, you may have to be aggressive and assertive”. This is a very powerful quote and it speaks volumes. Contrary to what the reader was expecting, it goes to change the way you think. When you piss off someone who is admirable and important it sounds like a negative thing, but can show them what kind of person you are and the boldness your capable of.

Being bold shows an employer initiative and how the individual isn't timid of taking charge and doing what they feel is needed to continue moving forward. Another quote from Mr Edmundson is “The quest at the center of a liberal arts education is not a luxury quest; it’s a necessity quest. If you do not undertake it, you risk leading a life of desperation- maybe quiet; maybe, in time, very loud - and I am not exaggerating. For you risk trying to be someone other than who you are, which, in the long run, is killing” (Edmundson 410). He goes to exhibit how important it is to be yourself, don't risk trying to front a fake person whom you are not. He continues to say how in the long run it will kill you as a human being, pretending to be someone who you aren’t will drain you and your spirit. “Education is about finding out what form of work for you is close to being play - work so you do so easily that is restores you as you go” (Edmundson 414). Edmundson argues that college helps you grow into your individual self that fits into society, he also talks about finding a career that you truly enjoy, and not just for making money. My Grandfather always told me something similar to this, He has had a few handfuls of jobs throughout his life and the one that made him the most money he dreaded waking up for every morning. He used to sell books and travel all over the country, he would be away from his family for weeks at a time and even though he made buku-bucks doing it he ended up leaving and finding lower paying work closer to home.

Building humans who are constructive and contribute to the society we live in today is a major priority at college campuses all across the globe. Carolyn A. Martin, President of Amherst College, notes the importance of college in fostering democracy. She believes that “College is preparation for the complexities of a world that needs rigorous analyses of its problems and synthetic approaches to solving them.”(qtd, in “What is”). Carolyn notes the purpose of fostering democracy to solve “The world's problems”. Phyllis M. Wise *Chancellor of the University of Illinois* “data suggest that today's graduates will have three different professions during their lives.” (qtd “what is”). This quote just goes to prove how being open minded and a well rounded human will benefit you with the different professions throughout your life.

An individual who is unable to overcome simple everyday tasks outside their scope of practice will have a hard time moving on with the objective or subject at hand. This is the importance of being a well rounded individual. Being well rounded can save someone's life, do you know what to do if someone passes out in the middle of a public place and has a seizure or heart attack? Knowing basic cpr can save someone's life in a pinch. Michael V. Drake Chancellor of the University of California at Irvine says, “The roughly 4,500 degree-granting institutions in the United States include public and private, religious and secular, very large and very small institutions with a correspondingly wide range of missions.” Michael Drake is right about how every college vary’s. They all have different goals in mind, some want to be top in the country for sports, some want to be known for Academics, others are just in it for the profits. What people don't understand is that college is a community builder, when they build huge universarys out in rural america the surrounding areas flourish, town populations grow substantially and the income in that town goes with it. Colleges aren't doing you a favor by giving you a degree, they are a business and they are one hell of one, But this is why you must milk it for all it's got. Use every resource and help they offer to the max, get what you paid for. Don't let the cow milk you. This also goes for county colleges as well, there are a substantial amount of young adults that are choosing the community college route. Brenda Hellyer chancellor of San Jacinto College “In the fall of 2011, approximately 13 million such students attended 1,132 community colleges around the country.” More kids graduating from high school realize that they can save a ton of money (Or their parents money depending on who you ask) by going to these county run schools and getting the exact same education for 1/3rd the price. Hell, thats what im doing. I know a handful of graduates who went away to huge forty thousand, even fifty thousand dollar a year schools that are coming home after their first semesters, some people just can't handle the heat of a huge school with 50+ person lectures and the pressure of expectations.

Mr Phyllis M. wise stresses how important respecting and understanding differences in humans are. “to teach students how to learn, how to find information, and how to work collaboratively across disciplines and cultures.” (qtd “what is”). In the working world where you came from and what you did to get to where you are doesn't make a difference to the value of the dollar that's held in your hand. College is a waste land and if you don't know how to navigate could get you caught in the crossfire, or just be wasting money for no good reason. This is why it is important to understand how college works so you can work the system. Becoming a well rounded human and getting ready for your future career is what you should focus on during your years at a big university or a small town community college, whatever works for your future. To make the college campus your key to the locked door of a career, it takes patience, practice and dedication.

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08 October 2018

College: Road to Self Discovery

Education is the key to the future. To many people, college is seen as a place to further their education and earn a degree. Most of the students in college are only there because they know that earning a degree will allow them to get a better paying job. There are many debates on what the purpose of college is, and everyone seems to have very different opinions. Although most people feel that the purpose of college is to earn an higher education, many presidents of different colleges believe that college is a place for students to discover themselves and grow as a person. This is shown by their emphasis on teaching students life lessons, helping students find their callings, and making sure students are involved in extracurricular activities.

The purpose of college, according to many presidents of universities, is for students to learn life lessons. For Phyllis M. Wise, the Vice President of the University of Illinois, college is a place to prepare students for lifelong learning. She writes, “Good universities find a balance where students are free to form their long view of the world while at the same time acquiring the knowledge and skills to pursue a rewarding profession… These aren’t job skills- these are life lessons. And these are the lessons college must teach”(Wise). This emphasizes on the fact that colleges should not be teaching students lessons that will only help them in one career. Since the goal of college, according to Wise and many others, is to prepare students for lifelong learning and skills, they should be learning life lessons that they can use in any profession that they choose to do. For Wise, college should prepare students for life by teaching them “a body of knowledge”(Wise) and the soft skills students actually need in life, instead of focusing on an education for a certain profession. Michael V. Drake, the Chancellor of the University of California at Irvine agrees with Wise. He writes, “At the University of California at Irvine, we want our students to grow and mature, to learn and develop, both academically and personally”(Drake). This shows that multiple presidents of colleges believe that the purpose of college is to not only to grow academically, but more importantly, to grow personally. This personal growth will allow them to have the skills that they need in order to succeed in life, no matter what career they choose to pursue.

Many presidents of colleges believe that the purpose of college is to help students discover who they are by helping them find their callings. Carolyn A. Martin, the President of Amherst College, believes that college is a place for students to develop their intelligence in many forms. She explains that, “College is for finding a calling, or many callings, including the calls of friendship and love. It is for the hard work of experimentation, failure, reflection, and growth. It is about the gains we make and the losses that come with them”(Martin). This emphasizes on the fact that they believe that college is not just a place to earn an academic education. It is an environment where you can learn what you truly want to do and how you want to live out your life. It is also an environment where you can meet friends and even a lover.

According to Martin, college is the perfect place to make new friends and discover the type of people you want to be around. There is a huge diversity of people in college and students meet people that they never thought they would become friends with. Martin believes that these people can teach you things about yourself that you never knew. She also believes that college is supposed to teach you that it is okay to fail because out of every failure comes a lesson and a strength.When students fail at something, it teaches them how to work harder so that they can succeed the next time. Like many other college leaders, Martin agrees that college is a place for self growth and discovering who you are and what you are meant to do. Brenda Hellyar, the Chancellor of San Jacinto College, agrees with Martin. She writes, “What is college for? It is about personal and intellectual growth, about finding new dimensions of understanding, and about gaining knowledge. It is about learning and exploring”(Hellyer). This shows how Hellyer believes that college is the perfect place to grow, not only intellectually, but personally too.

According to many presidents of universities, it is very important for students to get involved in extracurricular activities while in college because it will help them grow as people and discover their talents. John C. Hitt, the President of the University of Central Florida believes that college is a place for people to discover themselves through clubs and sports. He writes, “College is also a place to learn about yourself. Student government and choir were means for some of my friends to mature. For me, it was football. As an offensive lineman, I learned the power of persistence, the rewards of hard work, and the hard lesson that one doesn't always win”(Hitt). This emphasizes that students should really take advantage of the extracurricular activities and get involved because those are the places where students truly learn about who they are. Instead of solely focusing on the school work, Hitt believes that students should play sports or join clubs because they teach people lessons that they would never be able to learn inside a classroom. Students who join extracurricular activities and sports will also have the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends. These friendships could last a lifetime. Since the purpose of college, according to Hitt and others, is for students to discover who they are, sports and other extracurricular activities are the perfect place for students to do so.

In conclusion, there are many people who debate about what they think the purpose of college is. Some people believe that college is a place for students to further their education and prepare themselves for their future career. Others believe that it is a place to make new friends and have fun. According to many presidents and chancellors of different universities, the purpose of college is for students to discover who they truly are and to grow as a person. These presidents emphasize the importance of teaching students life lessons. They believe that students should learn lessons that will not only help them in one career, but help them in any career that they choose. They also emphasize on helping students find their callings and making sure that students get involved in extracurricular activities. Students who get involved will learn skills and lessons that they would never be able to learn inside a classroom. Although college is a great place for students to improve their education, it is also the perfect place to learn skills and lessons that they will be able to use throughout their entire life.

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