

Student

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English 101

08/10/2017

Final Essay Outline: Debate

I. Introduction:

Characters:

- A. Donald Sanders. A MIT educated engineer who is in favor of increasing funding for stem fields and is in favor of trying to get more and more talented students to study a STEM major. Mr. Sanders is well educated, and during the debate will offer little in the way of solutions but will be the first to present his views on the “Problem” that there is not enough focus on Stem. Donald is slightly confrontational.
- B. Riley Peterson. Studied philosophy and communications in college and has a Masters in communications study. He is in favor of students pursuing what they feel will make them happiest. He is a best selling author of Self improvement books and an internet personality. He is well educated but slightly aloof.
- C. Jerome Sanford; A liberal arts professor at Stanford who studied political science and World religions at Vanderbilt. He is in favor of increased funding and public interest in humanities studies at universities. During the debate he presents solutions to the problems at hand and while firm, he is willing to offer compromise.
- D. Erika Thorsdottir; Has a Phd in Biology with a focus in human genetics. Teaches part time at UCLA and owns a commercial genetics testing company. She is somewhat neutral in the debate, however tends to favor the importance of STEM over Liberal Arts education. Presents the idea that the humboldtian model of higher education has begun to fail and presents the option address the issue in k-12 schools by suggesting lower education do more to focus students towards STEM or Liberal Arts when they are younger, particularly Junior High and High School.

Background information.

Our Five characters gather to have a long form, open debate about the education system in America, more specifically whether or not the US education system, economy and society benefits more from focusing on STEM studies or the Liberal Arts

II. Body

- A. Sanders suggests that due to the lower volume of STEM graduates the US has produced in recent years that America is no longer the technological powerhouse it once was. Sanders states that because other countries are catching up in terms of innovation, the US economy will suffer.

Evidence

“UC Berkely Econ professor estimates each high tech job creates nearly five jobs in a local economy” (Conrad 2) **Sanders uses this fact to show STEM creates jobs*

“The number of bachelor's of science degrees in engineering awarded over the past 15 years has barely grown, and master's degrees in STEM have increased at about half the rate of non-STEM master's degrees. Also, almost half of doctoral STEM degrees are now awarded to foreign nationals.” (Atkinson 29) * *Sanders uses this fact to show that STEM graduates are not increasing in the US but they are increasing in other countries which may lead to less reliance on the US for innovation and a slowing or dip of the US economy.*

Sanders will then equate a healthy economy and high employment rate to societal happiness.

- B. Sanford: Makes the point that Majoring in STEM is not a necessity to obtain employment and to be successful. Sanford then refers to Deval Patrick the 71st Gov of Mass. Who was an English major (Rotella 2)
Peterson Interjects, stating that persuading students to enter STEM fields as opposed to what they truly want to study will not lead to a fulfilling life in school or outside of school when employed.
Thorsdottir reinforces that Sanders was not equating majoring in STEM fields to personal happiness but the general well being of society.
- C. Sanford, stating that the group is getting ahead of themselves by discussing the economy and society, when the real problem is within the education system and refers to how humanities enrollment has not recovered from a steep drop in the 70s and 80s and also how humanities is taught versus stem. Referring that Humanities tend to be part of a general education rather than a scholarship.

Second Point

- A. Sanford Makes his point as stated above that the diminished enrollment in humanities and diminished focus in scholarship has led the humanities to become part of general education which had to liberal arts departments downsizing and closing.

Evidence: “It is true that the number of students in the United States majoring in the humanities is down from its peak in the 1960s, but the crucial drop occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s, not in the last decade, and that drop was from an unprecedented historical high. Since then, enrollments have been fundamentally stable.” (Meranze 2) * Used to reinforce low enrollment rates.

“this authority was rooted in teaching rather than scholarship, and general education rather than professional training. As a result, the humanities and interpretive social sciences were placed in a structurally subordinate position from which they never fully emerged.” (Meranze 3) *Used to reinforce that Humanities is seen by the education system as supplemental education and not something to focus on.

Peterson: Making a point that this is likely do to societies/ Gov. influence on students to enroll in stem fields for economic reasons as well as the decreased level importance placed on Humanities

Sanders: States that society placed more importance on STEM because that is what *is* most important.

Sanford(in reply): states that without the study of humanities engineers and scientists would lose sight of what is important to study and to focus on innovating.

Thorsdottir: States that the education shouldn't be favorable to either field of study, and introduces her plan to rethink the Humboldtian education model as it stands today recommending that more focus be put on finding out students interest and aptitude for STEM or humanities in middle school and high school and tailoring their education at that level to their interests and aptitudes. She makes the point that this will lead to more innovative and talented STEM students and more humanities majors focused on a higher level of scholarship than just the basic education they've been receiving.

Peterson: Acknowledges the idea and agrees that it is intuitive and would lead to more personal satisfaction in college and beyond.

Sanders: Makes the point that people that age don't know what they want to study so they shouldn't be put on such a strict path of study moving forward. States that children are often drawn to the mystical and abstract and this will lead them away from STEM fields.

Peterson: States that highschool students are not as dull and confused as sanders makes them out to be and points out that while they may not know exactly which major they would like to study, they would be

Sanford: Pointing to a statement expressed in “Why the current education reform plan won't work” by Robert D Atkinson, “The reality is quite different. Only about 5% of jobs are STEM jobs, and that share is not expected to grow significantly.” (Atkinson 2) States that it is quite important to realize that the other 95% of jobs could very well be filled with individuals with both STEM and Humanities backgrounds. However that the jobs that are far removed from STEM fields such as sales and business, politics, and service will be better served by humanities students.

Third Point:

Sanders points to a possible future where an increased talent pool in STEM fields could lead to a world where people would not have to work. Where everything is so innovated that societies needs are all but met and most people to not require employment.

The group (Sanford, Thorsdottir, and Peterson) unanimously agree that Sanders statement is abstract and irrelevant to the conversation.

Sanders: Agrees his statement is abstract and that future is many years in the future, he points to the fact that Sanford and Peterson cannot deny it's possibilities since the liberal arts scholars are used to dealing in the abstract.

Peterson: agreeing that humanities studies do deal with abstract ideas, but there is truth in the abstract and points to a quote from "The Public Role of Humanities Scholarship, in the Humboldtian Tradition" by David thunder stating that humanities scholars are "a community of scholars and students devoted to the pursuit of truth as an end in itself, through rational inquiry of human knowledge"

Sanford: Continuing on Peterson's statement brings up the fact again that liberal arts studies are needed to identify societies true needs not just their desires so that those tasked with innovating can do so for the betterment of society.

Conclusion**