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## College Education And Its Relation To Liberal Education

Liberal Education is an important topic that every college student needs to know about. I am going to be talking about what it means to get a liberal education and why it's important from William Cronon's point of view. Next, I will be talking about the David Foster Wallace Commencement Speech and how its related to Cronon's view on liberal education. Thirdly, I will be talking about Andrew Delbanco's viewpoint on what a college education is and how it relates to liberal education. Finally, I am going to be talking about my own personal experience with the USP program here at UW-Oshkosh and if getting a liberal education is important to me. By the end, I hope to have explained the value that liberal education has from different perspectives and my opinion on it.

In order to understand what it means to get a liberal education; we must first define what liberal education is. Cronon defines liberal education as "an educational tradition that celebrates and nurtures human freedom." It is also important to note that, "a liberal education is not something any of us ever achieve; it is not a state. Rather, it is a way of living in the face of our own ignorance" (Cronon). Getting a liberal education comes with many values. One value a liberal education can help us with is being able to solve a variety of different problems. Being able to solve a problem or a puzzle can require multiple different subject backgrounds. One of the examples that Cronon uses is being comfortable with numbers and computers. In order to acquire these skills, we would have to take a mathematics course and a computer programming/web design course. This may especially be important to think about when applying for a job after college that requires good math and computer skills.

Wallace's speech and Cronon's view on liberal education comes with many similarities and a few differences. In one way they relate is that they both talk about how a liberal education is a way of teaching us how to think. This is the seventh value in Cronon's essay. "If you really learn how to think, how to pay attention, then you will know there are other options" (Wallace). It is important for us to be able to look at multiple different perspectives and viewpoints of others. A liberal education will broaden our knowledge and increase our thinking capacities, which in turn will help us to actively listen to others and hear their perspectives. A difference between the two is when Wallace talked about how our day is not only affected by ourselves but the people around us too. An example he talked about in his speech is grocery shopping. People normally shop after work which results in stores to become packed with people. This will cause us to be there longer than we expected to.

Delbanco views a college education to discover our talents and to figure out what we are good at. This also relates to what Cronon believes what a value of a liberal education is. Going to college is not necessarily only a tool for helping us to be prepared for the marketplace. He rather believes that a college education should "graduate people with competence, with the ability to read and to write clearly, and to work hard" (Delbanco). One other thing that Delbanco mentioned in his video is that college students should build up humility in the classroom. This means that they may go into the classroom with one point of view and come out with another. Ultimately, a college education should give us a variety of different skills so that we can talk, read and speak clearly.

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At first, I didn't necessarily agree with liberal education. I didn't see the point of taking a class if it didn't necessarily have to do with my major. However, I realized that after learning more about what a liberal education is and why it's important, my viewpoint has changed dramatically. "[A] liberal education in particular is about nurturing human freedom-helping young people discover and hone their talents-and this too sounds as if education exists for the benefit of individuals" (Cronon). What he is saying here is that a liberal education can help us discover our talents that were hidden. Being exposed to multiple different subject areas is a way of discovering our talents and ultimately choose a specific area of interest to pursue. In my own personal experience with the USP system at UW-Oshkosh I have changed my major once already. I was originally a finance major because I thought I wanted to maybe become an actuary. However, I realized I wasn't enjoying the classes I was taking. That's when I decided to pursue a major in supply chain instead. However, finance still can interrelate with supply chain just not to the extensive level as a major in finance would be. I decided to go with supply chain because I want to learn more about the management of the flow of goods and services. When we get a liberal education, we end up encountering things that may not be our first choice. This may or may not be a good thing. It is another way of discovering our hidden talents.

It is also important to note how time consuming and expensive it can get when students are required to take certain classes. Some people would love to go to college and get a good education in order to get a good job. However, some do not have the finances to go to college and get that education they want. I am not saying that USP shouldn't be required but it could be shortened. Currently UW-Oshkosh requires four different USP courses. They are each three credits and that is equivalent to a semester's worth of college, assuming full time. Since a liberal education is a way of finding our hidden talents some may choose to change their major and this will take a longer time to graduate as well as more money spent. Shortening the USP program in some way will not only drive down the cost of college a little bit, it will also benefit people already attending college. By shortening it a bit, more people will be able to graduate on time and be able to figure out their area of interest more quickly.

Ultimately, a liberal education helps shape us as a person and helps us become more open-minded. If we are only exposed to the things that we feel is necessary in our lives, we will forever be close minded and not willing to try other things. The goal of a college education is to provide us with the necessary skills to be successful not only with our future job but anything else that we may do in life. With that said, getting a college education is time-consuming and expensive.