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### Are We Going to College for the Right Reasons?

The article, “The Day the Purpose of College Changed,” by Dan Berrett, explores whether or not students go to college to critically challenge themselves or to look forward to being financially stable in the future. Around 1967, two theories were brought up about higher education. Ronald Reagan, governor of California at the time, pushed attending college for kids to get prepared for work, rather than the popular idea of higher education widening the mind’s way of thinking. Some thought that schooling should make “...neither a psychologist nor a brick mason, but a man.” Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Association of American Colleges started seeing schools “lose sight of the value of a liberal education.” I completely agree with Berrett’s points here, as I myself, believe that college is there for more than just learning. Changing this can be hard, as some simply do not enjoy learning, but a job and money should not be the main focus.

Berrett opens this article with an example of Ronald Reagan going head to head with specific editors over the purpose of higher education. The *Los Angeles Times* editors decided to voice their opinion by saying, “If a university is not a place where intellectual curiosity is encouraged [...] then it is nothing.” What is being said here is that college is a place where people should go when they want to widen their knowledge. Many people end up finding a passion of theirs that can support them financially for the future, but many go for the wrong reasons. If college turns into a place where this isn’t happening,

what is? Many students find themselves distracted, unmotivated, and with no desire to even get a higher education. If it continues, college degrees could be a rare possession of people in the future. Reagan counteracted these thoughts in that he valued the financial outcome of college. He saw school as training for opportunities later in life as, "...learning for learning's sake might be nice..." but it's not the main focus. Reagan recognizes that learning is important, but not for shaping adults' life. Since Reagan voiced these opinions, many students have taken on his theory. Statistics show that, "in the early 1970s, nearly three-quarters of freshmen said it was essential to them to develop a meaningful philosophy of life," while the other third wanted to be financially stable. Today, these measurements have swapped. This shows that the importance of learning is slowly being erased from students' minds. The pressure of living a comfortable life makes many people want to study something that guarantees them money. Finding a passion in college, studying it, and making a lot of money is very hard to come by. This discourages students, making them focus on getting a job, rather than getting a true, higher education.

This argument is further described by what students should turn into. Those who thought school was for learning only, see their kids growing up and maturing, whilst studying. Though this is true for some, a lot of college's have more and more distractions for kids to dwell in. There is a popular idea to never grow up and to always stay a kid, but in life, maturing to a certain extent is necessary. In a perfect world, everyone would be completely prepared for adult life after college, but that simply, is not the case.

I believe college should be about learning and preparation. Many of the examples mentioned earlier show that it should be one or the other. I disagree with this because,

while gaining more knowledge, you are getting the necessary skills for the job in the field. If we were just trained for one specific job, people wouldn't be able to find new hobbies, interests, or possible passions. If we just focused on learning every possible thing we could in four years, we wouldn't have all the needed skills for a job we wanted to have, making finding one hard. With this being said, we can't have one without the other because it would do more harm to the purpose of college than needed. Knowledge helps humans evolve and grow in ways we can't imagine. For example, the technology advances we have, have originated with a student in a classroom, learning. If we throw this to the side, we wouldn't be able to change, discover, or improve anything.

From what I previously knew about this topic, some of my ideas were confirmed and some were contradicted. Growing up and seeing my sisters begin and end college before me, I always thought it was a place that taught you things for a specific subject, rather than many and eventually landed you a job after 4 years. As this is true, there is more to it than I thought. One of my sisters struggled with school her whole life, but once she found her true passion, nursing, she began to excel. She always explained it as being something she didn't mind putting time toward and something she could never stop learning. As I am now in college myself, I know that the work is hard, time consuming, and somewhat interesting, but I will never truly do my best until I find the thing I love.

From this article, I can take away several things. I now have confirmed that college is about learning, but also about your experience. I've been struggling to think of something I would like to major in, but I think I might know why. I'm a fulltime student and fulltime worker with somewhat of a social life. Online college has helped me start to further my knowledge while still supporting myself, but until I attend a University where

I attend classes and test my abilities, I don't think I will find what I'm looking for. This article showed me that college is important for the future and getting a job that can financially support me, but I don't want to do something I don't love. At that point, it isn't living, it's working.

Overall, I believe many find college as a place for widening one's knowledge, as some see it as training for the future. Both of these things are true, but you can't have one without the other and be happy. One needs to be out of their comfort zone and try things in order to find what they want to do. Then, they can broaden their knowledge on that subject. Higher education isn't about learning everything, but about learning about what one would love to learn about. Life is simple, once you know your true path.

#### Works Cited

Berrett, Dan. "The Day the Purpose of College Changed." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 Jan. 2015. [www.chronicle.com/article/The-Day-the-Purpose-of-College/151359/](http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Day-the-Purpose-of-College/151359/)