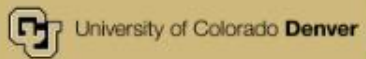


**Mini School
for
Humanities**

**Liberal Arts
Education:
What is it and
why is it
valuable
today?**

Jeff Franklin, Ph.D.



**Liberal Arts
Education**

**The Well-
Rounded
Debate**

9/11/2001

**Liberal Arts
Education
Debate**

**Critical
Thinking**

**What Kinds of
Learning do Student
Need? What Do
Employers Want
Students to Learn?**

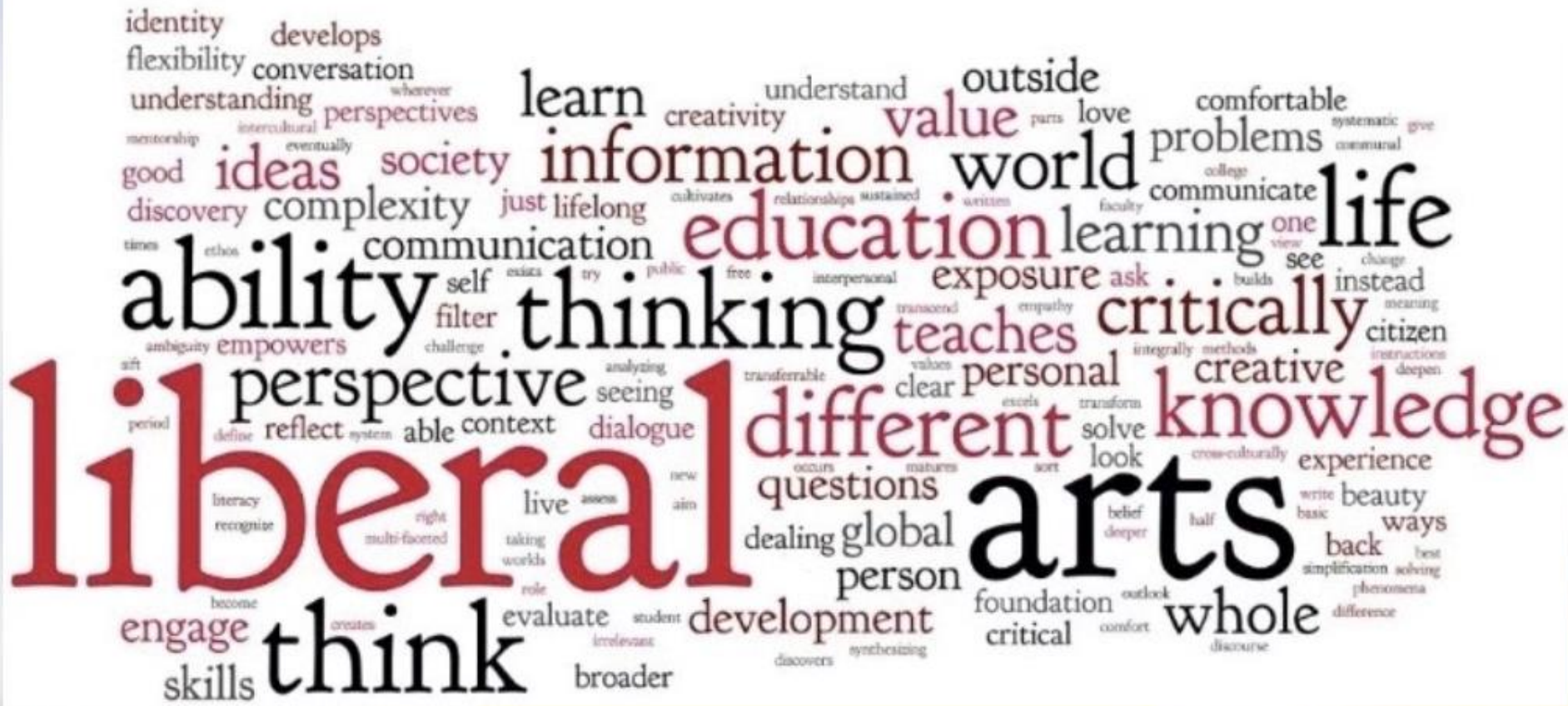
**The
Bottom
Line**

**Civic
Engagement
Arguments**

Works Cited

Works Cited

The Value of a Liberal Arts Education



September 11th Attacks



**Wars that
Followed**

2,996 U.S. deaths on that day

Wars that Followed

Afghanistan War: Operation Enduring Freedom
2001-2014

- Estimated Casualties: 50,000 (31,000 civilians) and 2,372 U.S. troops
- Estimated U.S. Military Costs: \$468 billion

Iraq War: U.S. Invasion and Occupation of Iraq
2003-2011

- Estimated Casualties: 151,000-600,000 Iraqis, 4,424 U.S. Troops
- Estimated Military Cost: \$2.4 trillion

Liberal Arts Education Debate

"So I want that money [state education funding] to go to degrees where people can get jobs in this state. Is it a vital interest of the state to have more anthropologists? I don't think so."

--Florida Governor Rick Scott, Sarasota Herald-Tribune, October 10, 2011

"We seriously undershoot the mark if we reduce the value of a liberal arts degree to career readiness or the size of the first paycheck. It's simply not enough to prepare graduates for gainful employment. . . . Education should lead to a job, absolutely, but it should also lead to a fulfilling and personally satisfying life in a society we want to live in, fight for and improve."

-- Dr. Wendy B. Libby, President of Stetson University, 2017

**Liberal Arts:
A Brief
History**

**Does
"Liberal"
Mean
"Liberal"?
No.**

**AAC&U
Definitions**

Liberal Arts: A Bit of History

Artes liberales: 8th century BCE Greece: “those subjects or skills that were considered essential for a free person to participate in civic life, including public debate, defending oneself in court, serving on juries. . .,” specifically, the “trivium” of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, plus the “quadrivium” of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music theory.

Artes mechanicae: 12th century CE, European Middle Ages: weaving, agriculture, masonry, warfare, trade, cooking, metallurgy.

Does "liberal" mean "liberal"? No.

Liberal in "liberal arts" = liberating, the freedom of citizens to think as they choose, the opposite of subjugated ≠ not the opposite of "conservative" ≠ not "politically liberal"

Arts = from "ars," "principled practice," technique or craft ≠ not "fine arts"

Association of American Colleges and University Definitions

Liberal Education: An approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

Liberal Arts: Specific disciplines (i.e., the humanities, sciences, and social sciences).

General Education: That part of a liberal education curriculum that is shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing essential intellectual, civic, and practical capacities. . . .

The Well-Rounded Argument for Liberal Arts Education

**CU Denver
Core**

**Skills and
Dispositions**

ELO's

CU Denver's General Education "Core"

A. Intellectual Competencies:

1. Composition (college writing): 6 credits
2. Mathematics (quantitative literacy): 3-4 credits

B. Knowledge Areas

3. Arts (fine arts): 3 credits
4. Behavioral Sciences: 3 credits
5. Humanities: 3 credits
6. Natural & Physical Sciences: 7-8 credits
7. Social Sciences: 3 credits

C. Diversity and Global Learning

8. Cultural Diversity: 3 credits
9. International Perspectives: 3 credits

Typical total credit hours: 34-36

Skills and Disposition Argument for Liberal Arts Education

Essential Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the **Physical and Natural World: 1.**

Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including: **2.** Inquiry and analysis, **3.** Critical thinking, **4.** Creative thinking, **5.** Written communication, **6.** Oral communication, **7.** Reading, **8.** Quantitative literacy, **9.** Information literacy, **10.** Teamwork, **11.** Problem solving.

Personal and Social Responsibility, including: **12.** Civic knowledge and engagement, **13.** Intercultural knowledge and competence, **14.** Ethical reasoning and action, **15.** Foundations and skills for lifelong learning.

Integrative and Applied Learning, including: **16.** Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is one example of a liberal arts skill/disposition.

- a.** To critically analyze one's own and others' unexamined assumptions, interests, beliefs, and ideologies, and
- b.** To support one's critically analyzed positions with evidence and balanced argument while crediting positions counter to one's own when they are likewise supported. It is not possible to exercise critical thinking and dogmatic thinking simultaneously.

**Jobs
Debate**

**Major
Choice Does
Matter**

Jobs Argument

For/against a
Liberal Arts
Education

Major Choice Does Matter in Terms of (Initial) Salary

- STEM, health, and business majors are the highest paying; early childhood education, arts, and human services are the lowest paying.

- The majority of the highest paying jobs are in engineering fields.

But. . . .

- “It’s also important to note that while many families are concerned with immediate ROI and degrees that command high starting salaries right out of college, AAC&U’s “How Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors Fare in Employment” report found that by their 50s, liberal arts majors on average earn more annually than those who majored as undergraduates in professional or pre-professional fields.”

What kinds of learning do students need when...

- Every year, more than 1/3 of the entire US labor force changes jobs.
- Today's students may have between 10-14 jobs by the time they are 38.
- Every year, more than 30 million Americans are working in jobs that did not exist in the previous quarter.

And...

- Before long, any job that can be done by a computer/robot will be done by a computer/robot.

**What do
Employers Want
Students to Learn**

**Employer
Priorities**

**Learning
Outcomes for
Undergraduate
Engineering
Programs**

What do Employers Want Students to Learn?

- 95% of employers "put priority on hiring people with the intellectual and interpersonal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace."
- 93% say they are asking employees to "take on more responsibilities and to use a broader set of skills than in the past"
- 93% say "a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major."
- 80% say all students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences."

Employer Priorities on Select College Learning Outcomes

Intellectual and Practical Skills

- Oral communication
- Teamwork skills with diverse groups
- Written communication
- Critical thinking and analytic reasoning
- Complex problem solving
- Information literacy
- Innovation and creativity
- Technological skills
- Quantitative reasoning

Very important for recent grads

Executives

Hiring Managers

80%	90%
77%	87%
79%	78%
78%	84%
67%	75%
73%	79%
61%	66%
60%	73%
54%	55%

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Ethical judgment and decision making
- Work independently—set priorities, manage time/deadlines
- Self-motivated—ability to take initiative and be proactive

77%	87%
77%	85%
76%	85%

Integrative and Applied Learning

- Applied knowledge in real-world settings

73%	79%
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Student Learning Outcomes for Undergraduate Engineering Programs

- (a) an ability to apply knowledge of mathematics, science, and engineering
- (b) an ability to design and conduct experiments, as well as to analyze and interpret data
- (c) an ability to design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs. . . .
- (d) an ability to function on **multidisciplinary teams**
- (e) an ability to identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems
- (f) an understanding of professional and **ethical responsibility**
- (g) an ability to **communicate effectively**
- (h) the **broad education** necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context
- (i) a recognition of the need for, and an ability to **engage in life-long learning**
- (j) a knowledge of **contemporary issues**
- (k) an ability to use the techniques, skills, and modern engineering tools necessary for engineering practice.

Only 3 out of 11 are specific to engineering.

The Bottom Line

While it's true that STEM skills provide practical tools for the future workforce, this doesn't mean the so-called "soft" studies are diminishing in value. In fact, counterintuitive as it may seem, the uniquely human skills polished by a well-rounded liberal arts education will make job candidates more competitive for all roles in the digital economy – whether you're an artist or an engineer. . . . A liberal arts education will teach you to think critically and creatively, to collaborate with and manage people and to demonstrate human empathy and compassion. As a consequence, I expect you'll find more interest from potential employers, not less.

-- Alex Chris, "Don't Ditch that Liberal Arts Degree," U.S. News & World Report,
1-19-18

The Civic Engagement Arguments

1. Preparation to be an informed, critically thinking citizen
2. Preparation for human services jobs upon which society depends
3. Preparation not just for the elite but for all citizens, especially historically underrepresented peoples
4. Global Thinking

Citizenship

Jobs that
Serve

Levels the
Playing
Field

Global
Thinking

Citizenship, According to Campus Compact

We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future. . . .

We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.

We embrace our responsibilities as place-based institutions, contributing to the health and strength of our communities. . . .

We harness the capacity of our institutions. . .to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.

We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education. . . .[1]

Jobs that Serve People and Society

The liberal arts and sciences, in particular, play a major role in sustaining the social and economic fabric of our society. Study in these fields educates graduates for employment in a wide range of professions, including socially vital professions related to public service, education, healthcare, and other social services.

-- Debra Humphreys and Patrick Kelly, "How the Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors Fare in Employment: A Report on Earnings and Long-Term Career Paths," 2014

Liberal Education Levels the Playing Field and Supports Upward Mobility

We want one class of persons to have a liberal education and we want another class of persons, a very much larger class of necessity, to forgo the privileges of a liberal education. --Woodrow Wilson, 1909

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.
--W.E.B. DuBois, 1949

It should not be liberal education for some and narrow or illiberal education for others....Access to educational excellence is the equity challenge of our time.
-- AAC&U Board of Directors, The Quality Imperative, 2010



Global Thinking

**Intercultural Knowledge
and Competence**

**Synthesis and Application
to Unscripted Problems**

Ethical Reasoning and Action

Life Long Learning

Critical Thinking

**Civic Knowledge and
Engagement**

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