Exceptional Student

Mrs. Graves

College Composition II

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Critique

Author Andrew Delbanco, a Harvard graduate and director of American Studies at Columbia, wrote an article titled “3 Reasons College Still Matters” to argue what he believes to be the three purposes of college. Delbanco, who also wrote *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* in 2012, is well versed with knowledge regarding the pros and cons of college. He has been awarded numerous times for his essays available to the American public such as a National Humanities Medal by Barack Obama for his articles on higher education.

Delbanco presents the reader with three reasons he believes college is of importance. He says there is an economic and political reason and also that college widens a person's views and changes their perspectives. Delbanco states that people who attend college earn more money in a lifetime versus a person without one. For the political reason, Delbanco states that the people of the country must be educated in order for it to thrive. Lastly, he believes that college teaches one how to enjoy life. “You want the inside of your head to be an interesting place to spend the rest of your life” (508). Delbanco explains that college opens an individual up to new ideas and experiences that are important later in life.

Delbanco displays excellent writing skills throughout the article and uses different techniques to help convey his message to his audience. He does this by continuously using emotionally loaded terms. This is done to sway the reader into what he wants them to believe. He uses words such as “wrenching,” “unabashed,” “cruel,” “bombarded,” “tragic,” and “precious” to exaggerate the point he is making. Delbanco also uses several em dashes to make part of a sentence stand out to the reader. In his article, the author says “And an American college is only true to itself when it opens it doors to all — the rich, the middle, and the poor — who have the capacity to embrace the precious chance to think and reflect before life engulfs them” (509). In this sentence, Delbanco uses em dashes to set out “the rich, the middle, and the poor” to reinforce the reader with his opinion that colleges should accept all applicants capable of earning a higher level of education, regardless of their social class.

In the article, Delbanco uses a fair amount of information and presents both sides of the argument. He mentions that people on the right believe more funding for higher education is a bad idea. They believe that less capable students should enter vocational training and the more capable students should continue on to college and obtain higher ranking jobs. Delbanco then presents the other side of the argument. He says that people on the left dispute the aspiration of higher level education for people who cannot afford to waste time and money on college. They believe that students who struggled in high school should focus on an average wage job that can provide them health care and enough money to support themselves. Delbanco successfully presents both sides to a relevant argument, instead of just his own opinion.

Delbanco states in his article that “there is abundant evidence that people with a college degree earn more money over the course of their lives than people without one” (506). This is a false claim. A postmaster requires only a high school diploma and receives an average wage of $63,050 a year (Smith). After obtaining a bachelor's degree, a social worker only makes an average of $44,200 a year (Social Worker). There are plenty of jobs that outpay a job that requires some level of college education, which is ignored by Delbanco throughout the article.

In my opinion, Delbanco’s article was very well written. He uses a fair amount of information and presents both sides of the argument. If he were just to present his side, the reader would be less likely to believe his point without knowing another solution. He utilizes emotionally loaded terms to sway the reader and often sets part of the text out in em dashes to make the reader focus on the most important part of the sentence. When I was reading the article, these emotional terms made me feel more convinced that his points were correct.

While Andrew Delbanco offers reasons he believes college is still necessary in the article “3 Reasons College Still Matters,” he ignores the fact that there are plenty of jobs available that do not require any college education. Some of these jobs will pay just as much or more than a job that requires a degree; which takes a lot of time and money to obtain, both of which some people do not have. Besides this point, Delbanco uses plenty of information to prove his point and make a convincing argument.

Works Cited

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