

Chase Estepp

Prof. Stetzel/Schilling

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When I chose to come to Manchester College I based my decision on two things; the football program and the elementary education program. The fact that Manchester College is a liberal arts college made no difference to me. As I reflect back on the last four years I feel lucky to have attended a liberal arts college. There are many pros and cons to a liberal arts college. Some pros are the small class sizes and the professor to student ratio is very low. I can say that the small class sizes and the personal attention from professors have undoubtedly aided my assistance. A few personal cons that I have found with my liberal arts education were the high cost of tuition and the unnecessary classes. Some classes at the time seemed like a waste to me because they were not my focus area of study but looking back those classes that I dreaded helped me to be more willing to accept diversity and helped me to think critically in a different way. I am so glad that I ended up at a liberal arts college.

The one thing that I have enjoyed experiencing at Manchester has been the relationships that I have built over the past four years with faculty and peers. I truly do not know where I would be at in my education or personal life if it weren't the professors of education and the time and effort they put towards me. Although this is not directly related to the fact that I went to a liberal arts college, I do believe that the way the professors treat their students is a great representation of what a liberal arts college stands for. I have been provided many opportunities

to think critically, expand my thoughts, and reflect on myself over the past four years. Many of these have come in education classes and have helped me become more accepting of diversity and the different views of the world. Before coming to college, my main focus was on playing football and just getting through my four years and graduating. But with the assistance of many professors and faculty I realized that football would only get me so far in life and at some point I would have to concentrate on my career after football. Had I not enrolled in a liberal arts college, the professors may not have taken as much interest in my life outside of the classroom and been willing to go out on a limb for me.

The one experience that I think Manchester has provided me with the best is the fact that we have had to attend 40 convos over the past four years that have exposed us to many different topics, themes, and have been very diverse on who and what they talk about. From talks about Martin Luther King Jr. to sexual abuse to financial talks from the President to autism workshops, I have had the opportunity to listen to and learn about topics I may have never been interested in or took an interest in if not for the required convos. Although I may have grumbled about always having to attend these convos taking a step back and realizing the value they have had on my education makes me appreciate them more than what I have before. Even though I should be sitting here talking about all the convos being great and having an impact on my education and development as a person, there have been those convos where you walk away thinking what in the world was that about or why was that important. But all in all I think that is a positive aspect that a liberal arts college can provide students with in their education.

Although there are many positives to a liberal arts college, in my own personal opinion I think the fact that you are required to take courses that are not in your major can be

overwhelming and stressful because it is not in your concentrated area. The courses seemed to not relate at all to my major. Sometimes I liked this because I could take courses that I was interested in like history course such as History of the Holocaust taught by our Dean of Students. Other times I dreaded courses, some of these courses that I took were things such as Old Testament, Astronomy, Experiencing the Arts, and Principles of Macro Economics to name a few and although I realize that these courses make me a well rounded individual how did they directly relate to my elementary education degree? I have realized now that maybe it was not the course content that was the most important thing but the way the course made me think differently and explore things I had never explored. Maybe the whole purpose of these, what I thought to not “non-sense” courses, was the diverse setting I got out of that particular classroom of fellow Manchester College students that were all from different majors and backgrounds. Although the grade given directly reflected that amount of content we learned, I think now that the content was not the purpose of the class. There was more there that I did not see at the time.

I can apply my liberal arts education directly to my career in elementary education. Like in the classroom at a liberal arts college there is a diverse population of students, I will encounter the same thing in the classroom I teach in. Everyone will come from different backgrounds and places, due to my liberal arts education I will be able to highlight and appreciate the differences in my students. I will know how to handle diversity and create a welcoming classroom for all.