

**OUTLINE FOR TV SHOW ON**  
**“MAKING THE MOST OF COLLEGE”**

1. Explain how and why your assessment project came into existence, and the sense in which you are using the word assessment.
2. To what extent did faculty from schools other than Harvard participate in the project?
3. Explain why you believe the project has resulted in ideas that are usable by faculty members on an everyday basis, rather than in mere abstruse recommendations of interest only to education specialists.
4. Explain the extent to which and the reasons why faculty members designed and actively participated in the project.
5. Explain the extent to which and the reasons why students participated in executing the project.
6. Explain your view of the value of individual stories for this project even though you are a statistician.
  - A. Isn't the use of stories something that often is pejoratively called mere anecdotal evidence? Why is it so valuable here? Explain what you called face validity.
7. If you have not done so already, discuss your horror at the concept that a college should take good students and then simply get out of their way, simply let them fend for themselves.
8. Describe the reasons why language courses (surprisingly?) are so highly regarded by students. These courses are a microcosm, are they not, of much that is desirable in education?: small classes of 15 students, constant questioning, daily participation by every student in class, constant quizzes which serve as feedback, etc.
  - A. Contrast this with large, lecture-type courses.
9. Discuss the need for and value of:
  - (i) small classes;

- (ii) independent research projects designed by students themselves.
10. Discuss the need to connect what goes on in class with daily life, or with what people are concerned about.
- A. Explain the philosophy class that used affirmative action to discuss the philosophy of Mill, Burke, etc.
    - (i) Wouldn't this kind of "connecting up" be even more important at schools which, unlike Harvard, have students who generally may not have high levels of ability to understand abstractions?
    - (ii) Doesn't this "connecting up" kind of teaching also promote interest by causing students to be able to bring their experience to the class? (Discuss the student who could bring knowledge of Chekhov to the class because he had worked on a production of a Chekhov play.)
  - B. Discuss students whose interests and/or activities outside of class became driving forces in their education, e.g., the dancer who studied the biology of pig and turkey bones and decided to become an orthopedic surgeon, the student who decided to become a labor lawyer.
  - C. Discuss the related question of teaching students about *all* the factors bearing on an issue, instead of confining teaching on the issue to only those matters arising in one academic discipline. Use the acid rain story here.
    - (i) Explain that the basic structure of universities is not true to life in this regard.
  - D. Discuss the students who decided chanting "I am somebody", etc. did not lead to true self esteem, which comes from accomplishing hard tasks.
    - (i) Did anybody consider whether the "chanting" has serious negative effects because students begin to feel "entitled" even though they are incapable? Isn't this a problem at every level of education, either directly or by analog? E.g., according to what one reads, even at Harvard, due to its grading system, students feel entitled to A's or at least B pluses, even though they haven't performed very well.
11. Discuss students' desire to learn to write better, and the techniques used to help them do so, e.g., several short papers during a semester (rather than one long one), working

with professors (e.g., the young woman who spent four hours with her mentor writing up some findings), writing for fellow students, etc.

- A. Explain that the highest level of engagement occurs when students have to write in class.
  - B. To begin to touch on a question that will merit its own extensive discussion -- that is, the translatability or non translatability of the findings at Harvard to large state universities, community colleges, etc. -- is it possible that Harvard students want to learn to write because they are smart enough to be at a school like Harvard? Isn't it the fact that, because of prior lack of educational rigor, lack of academic interest, the use of multiple choice tests, etc., students of lesser ability at lesser schools often have little interest in learning to write and, horribly enough, erroneously think they already write well although by our standards they are simply awful writers? If this is true, what do you suggest be done?
12. Discuss the use of the question and answer method of teaching, instead of mere lectures, in small and large classes alike. Use the example of whether the government should pay for day care.
- A. How come universities, for decades, have not learned from law schools in this regard? For all their pedagogical problems, which are many, law schools have been using this method for scores of years (although I gather that, because students want to continue to be spoon fed after eight years of spoonfeeding in high school and college, some law schools are reverting, abysmally, to lectures).
    - (i) For that matter, why didn't Harvard itself learn from people like Roland Christiansen, the (now deceased) University Professor from the Harvard Business School, who wrote books on "discussion teaching," which is, of course, used in the Business School? (I gather from Christiansen's works that occasionally discussion teaching *was* picked up elsewhere in the university, such as (remarkably enough?) in the medical school now and again.)
13. Explain the technique and value of having students "role play," i.e., one group takes one side, another takes the other.
14. Explain what is meant by, and what you think is the importance of, teaching students how an economist or a psychologist or an academic from another discipline looks at a problem.

15. Explain what you mean by, and why students appreciate, learning the value of evidence in making decisions?
  - A. Isn't the need for students to learn this at the college level an indictment of pre-college education? And isn't it true that even many *colleges* don't teach this?
16. Discuss the fact that students must understand that in college they need to learn how to synthesize, to integrate, to contrast differing views, not just to regurgitate information.
  - (i) But don't most colleges, in actuality, still require mainly regurgitation?
17. Describe the importance of taking some "non requirements" classes in the first year.
18. Explain your findings about the value of students studying together some of the time, instead of always doing everything alone. Give examples.
  - A. How often need this be done?
  - B. What can be done to promote this if a school is not a residential college, but is instead a commuter institution?
  - C. This is an enormous sea change, since all work formerly had to be done individually. What guidelines can there be for what is or is not permissible?
  - D. Explain that, despite some group studying, students wish to be and are still held individually accountable.
19. Explain your view of the crucial importance of every student trying to meet and get to know some professors every semester.
20. Discuss the importance of students learning to manage their time and, in this regard, to spend large chunks of time on a single subject instead of flitting around.
21. Explain the importance of students having outside interests and a social life. (The story about the woman from southeast Asia who helped hold the drum in the Harvard band.) What happens to people who "have no life" so to speak, and just spend all their time alone, studying?
  - A. What is the relationship between compensated or uncompensated outside

activities and (i) grade point average, or (ii) quality of life.

22. Explain the importance of a student's living arrangements, without reference to diversity as well as with reference to it.
23. Discuss Harvard's views of the value of diversity. In the course of this, explain:
- A. How does Harvard define diversity? Don't Harvard's groupings run afoul of the criticism that there are certain "governmentally approved" minorities or categories? Do you find a real basis for Harvard's groupings? Are they simply a reasonable and necessary administrative compromise?
  - B. Why do you claim that diversity is not a matter of liberalism or conservatism, but of open mindedness.
    - (i) Wouldn't most everyday citizens regard Harvard's position as the liberal position, as these things are measured today? If this is so, and perhaps even if it is not so, is Harvard afraid to say it is the liberal position for fear that its' diversity will be criticized if associated with the dread L word in today's conservative America? Is Harvard really contributing to necessary truth -- or is it instead just seeking political acceptability -- by shying away from saying its view of diversity is a liberal position.
    - (ii) In fact, hasn't Harvard chosen to implement a particular view of life and academics, a view that is regarded today as the liberal view, and wouldn't Harvard do better by the nation if it candidly said that this is what it believes is right and what it will do even if this is regarded today as the liberal point of view. (Was it Keynes who said that conservatives are people who worship dead liberals? Did Galbraith say it?)
  - C. Explain why people's experiences with diversity in high school have not automatically been something desirable. It has sometimes led to intergroup dislike, right?
  - D. Explain that, if diversity is to work, there need be certain core assumptions that are widely shared, e.g., a belief in (and practice of) good will, intelligence, hard work, etc. (This is no different is it than, say, the armed forces, where minorities get ahead because a belief in performance is the common denominator?)

- E. Explain the value of diversity in the classroom. Use examples like the philosophy seminar that dealt with affirmative action, the lack of knowledge of most American students of great Chinese, Indian, South American, etc. writers, the different perspectives brought to readings by students who have different assumptions due to differing religious or racial backgrounds.
- (i) Explain the value in the classroom of diversity *within* a particular group, e.g., the differing responses among the three African American students to the teacher mentioning that 70% of African American babies were born out of wedlock.
- F. Explain the value of diversity in living arrangements. Give examples, including the Korean and African American girls from L.A., the orthodox Jew and the African American from New York, attending friends' differing religious ceremonies, learning what underlies their beliefs, etc.
- G. Explain the tension between the idea of having single-group religious or racial groups on campus and the idea of diversity. Explain how joint sponsorships of lectures or joint activities are used to solve the problem (the Kuumba singers, etc.).
- H. Explain the differing reactions of differing groups to whether Harvard has to change to meet their needs.
24. You say that you think the findings at Harvard are translatable to other schools. But to what extent is this really true? Aren't there elements of your findings that depend on the kind of school Harvard is? For example:
- A. Wouldn't much of what you say -- for example, about students' interest in writing, their desire to have question and answer and go-beyond-what's in the book classes, their interest in research, the fondness of so great a percentage of them for participation in the arts -- be inapplicable at large state universities or community colleges because their students do not in general have the high degree of intellectual ability, accomplishment and desire as students at places like Harvard?
- B. How can there be extensive student advising, or serious grading of numerous student papers, at large, run of the mill state schools or community colleges where teachers already have large teaching loads, and/or are pressed for time to do research in order to try to "move up" in an academic world which trains them to believe that doing research and eventually being hired at places like

Harvard are the only worthwhile goals in life.

- B. It is impossible, isn't it, to get much diversity at schools that heavily serve a single local population, e.g., community colleges which serve mainly African Americans, or mainly Hispanic Americans, or, at best, both.
  - C. But, despite these problems, couldn't most schools at least use discussion teaching, and discuss abstract works in the context of real problems that interest students and/or that enable them to draw on their own experience?
25. In connection with diversification, you discuss the concept of "It's in the air." Doesn't this apply to everything at a university (just like anywhere else, actually), including, at universities, expectations for students, expectations of how faculty will spend their time, expectations of what will be done after graduation, etc.

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