

A Liberal Arts Education:
Saving Students from Themselves, One Student at a Time

Emma Bruden
Political Science
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
299 Third Street, Fond du Lac, WI 54935
brudee74@uwosh.edu
(920)251-7500

I hereby affirm that this is an original essay and my own work.

All throughout my education teachers have asked me what I would like to do with my life. Since third grade I had always known the answer: I want to be a teacher. Watching my mother teach second grade was my inspiration for this. To further this decision, I recalled a commercial on television for education that talked about a boy who wanted to be a teacher. His friend doubted him, telling the boy that there are many careers in which one can earn more money. The boy replied, "If there were no teachers, where would doctors be?" This stuck with me, and I felt as though being a teacher was the most important career in the world. I was confident that I would follow in my mother's footsteps and become an elementary teacher.

However, as my education continued, I realized that I had a special passion for mathematics. Knowing that I wanted to be a teacher, I decided that I would merely change from elementary education to secondary education so that I could be a math teacher. My problem was solved, and I could still confidently answer my teachers' questions about what I want to be when I am an adult. This continued throughout high school. Without hesitation or thought of any kind, I knew what my future would hold. During high school, I was involved with extra-curricular activities involving teaching, and I continued to excel in math with little effort.

At college orientation, I realized that many people did not know what they would like to have as a career; luckily, this was not my case. While I registered for classes, it was apparent that my days of science, history, and English classes were not finished. I was rather upset because I knew what I wanted to do with my life; why should I have to waste time taking classes that are irrelevant to my future? That semester I had one math class and the other classes were general education classes to fulfill my liberal arts requirements, including a class on ethics.

As the semester continued, I went through my math class with ease, and, to my surprise, I was rather bored with the class compared to my other classes. There was no challenge to it. I

began to think of what my life would be like as a math teacher. I envisioned a repetitive day of teaching high school students about something that, while I would definitely be qualified to teach, would most likely bore me. For the first time in so many years, I began to doubt my career path. In the mean time, I was thoroughly enjoying my ethics class, especially the section that focused on ethics in politics. After deciding to re-evaluate my choices for my future, I created a list of my interests: logic, ethics, politics, language, and philosophy. It became clear to me that what I needed to do was somehow intertwine these interests. The idea struck me; I want to be a lawyer and uphold the ethics on which our country is based. When I told people about my new plan, I was giddy with excitement, a feeling that I never experienced when thinking about teaching.

If I had not been forced to take classes completely unrelated to my major, I would not realize that my major did not excite me as much as it should. Even if I somehow did realize that I was less than enthused with teaching math, I would not have had the slightest clue about what I would like to do with my future. I would not have had an ethics in politics class to inspire me. My first semester of college would have been wasted on a topic in which I was no longer interested, and my second semester would be spent taking random classes that may or may not have sparked my interest. Instead, I took several political science classes to ensure that my new future would truly satisfy me. My major is now political science with an emphasis on legal studies, and I have a Spanish minor.

Of course, there is no specific major for law school. Unlike other forms of education after undergraduate school, people go to law school with a bachelor's degree in science, math, English, music, politics, etc. The reason that there is no specific major required for law school is because being a lawyer requires more than one area of expertise. A lawyer must be able write

exceptionally well when preparing briefs, be an excellent persuasive speaker when addressing the court, and have common knowledge of almost every area of education because his or her client could be in any field. Because of this, being a successful lawyer requires that a person excels at all of the aforementioned topics.

Some schools do not require the students to fulfill liberal arts requirements, allowing the students to take classes only related to their major. Going to a school like that would not affect my ability to go to law school, but it would inhibit my ability to excel at law school and after law school because I would not have the knowledge that one acquires during a liberal arts education. Fortunately, my education at University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh will easily allow me to attain these qualities. My liberal arts education mandates that I take a speech class, several writing classes, and multiple general education classes on every subject from biology to music theory. It will give me the skills that will be necessary for me to master my future career.

Many times people do not fully appreciate the value of a liberal arts education. I, prior to my change in future careers, was one of these people. My liberal arts education has already helped me greatly by providing me with guidance when I was lost about what I wanted to do with my future. Had it not been for this education, I may still be stuck working toward a career about which I am not truly passionate or, if I somehow discovered that teaching was not my passion, I may be taking random classes in order to find my passion. Happily, this is not the case. Not only has my liberal arts education already helped me, but it will also help me with my future education and career. It will give me the skills that are necessary to be a successful lawyer by forcing me to take classes about speaking, writing, and other topics. My liberal arts education helped me already and, without a doubt, will continue to help me all throughout my future.