

MALS Application Writing Sample

To help the MALS program assess your current analytical writing skills, please read "An Education for the 21st Century: Stewardship of the Global Commons" by Douglas C. Bennett, Grant H. Cornwell, Haifa Jamal Al-Lail and Celeste Schenck.

Then respond to the prompt below in an essay of 4-5 pages (1200-1500 words). Article is included in this PDF after the prompt below.

In their proposal Bennet et al note that "ours is a world being transformed by transnational flows of goods and capital, peoples and practices; by the unraveling of the nation state; and by the rapid rise of new forms of instantaneous electronic communication." They observe that, therefore, the "challenges of the twenty-first century — the possibilities of prosperity, of peace, of health, of fulfillment — all unfold on a global stage. What a few people do in Boston or Bangkok, in Riyadh or Rome or Rio de Janeiro can affect others at a considerable distance. The earth has become a place of global cultures, in all of their valued particularity, and increasingly a global commons, in all of its necessary interdependence. An appropriate university education for everyone, not just a privileged elite, must prepare women and men for participation in these cultures and this commons." They focus on envisioning and implementing a system of "undergraduate education designed to prepare graduates for citizenship and leadership in the highly globalized twenty-first century..." that will equip them to "negotiate such complexity, and to enter into thoughtful stewardship of initiatives, resources, languages, and cultures."

Please engage Bennet et al's perspective on the value and necessity of liberal education as a component of higher education from the standpoint of graduate studies as well; what benefits of this approach might enrich your own pursuit of advanced study in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program? Briefly summarize their argument, then analyze specifically how their contentions resonate with your own background, mindset, and objectives for your pursuit of a graduate liberal studies degree.

An education for the twenty-first century stewardship of the global commons

Authors: Douglas C. Bennett, Grant H. Cornwell, Haifa Jamal Al-Lail and Celeste Schenck

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IN THIS BRIEF PROPOSAL, we are trying to envision a foundational higher education for the twenty-first century, an education that has some claim to adequacy for the possibilities of human beings today on this earth. We are writing this to provide more depth to the idea of "global education," a term that has become commonplace but that, too often, is put forward without adequate substance. We call this "An Education for the Twenty-First Century: Stewardship of the Global Commons." We take on this task as members of the Global Liberal Arts Alliance, a consortium of twenty-five colleges and universities cooperating to advance the theory and practice of undergraduate education designed to prepare graduates for citizenship and leadership in the highly globalized twenty-first century.

We believe it is important to imagine an education fit for global possibilities because ours has become a world in which connections and consequences reach across borders and leap oceans. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it may have been appropriate to frame education in national terms, but no more. The challenges of the twenty-first century--the possibilities of prosperity, of peace, of health, of fulfillment--all unfold on a global stage. What a few people do in Boston or Bangkok, in Riyadh or Rome or Rio de Janeiro can affect others at a considerable distance. The earth has become a place of global cultures, in all of their valued particularity, and increasingly a global commons, in all of its necessary interdependence. An appropriate university education for everyone, not just a privileged elite, must prepare women and men for participation in these cultures and this commons.

Ours is world being transformed by transnational flows of goods and capital, peoples and practices; by the unraveling of the nation state; and by the rapid rise of new forms of instantaneous electronic communication. There is an urgent need to prepare young people to negotiate such complexity, and to enter into thoughtful stewardship of initiatives, resources, languages, and cultures.

We know that there are many approaches to higher education across the world, some more narrowly focused on preparation for vocation, some aiming to educate the whole person. We do not intend our conception of global education as a singular conception of education to be implemented everywhere in the same way. We want, rather, to articulate the main features of any education that can be truly adequate to global challenges. In relation to current educational systems around the world, this is an approach that is generally more interdisciplinary, more collaborative, and more attuned to stewardship than to instrumental effort or narrow self-interest. It is also an education that compels students, and those who teach them, to come to know not just that which is familiar and already "one's own," but to seek understanding of others and to welcome the opportunity to learn what those who are different from them have discovered about our common humanity and our common habitation of this planet.

We conceive of this education as having three kinds of elements, which may well be best learned together. It

requires the acquisition of some literacies: scientific, cultural, and global--understandings that are both substantive and, because necessarily unfinished, include the capabilities to continue learning. It requires the learning of some skills that are essential to effective action. And it requires acquisition of some dispositions that promote constructive rather than destructive engagement with others.

We share this proposal to invite others into the conversation. We encourage others to comment on and add to our work in envisioning a foundational education for the twenty-first century--a global education that prepares students for effective stewardship of the global commons.

Literacies for global stewardship

The following areas of knowledge are important for effective agency. What do our graduates need to know to be able to exercise stewardship?

Scientific understanding:

- * The capacity to use scientific knowledge and methods to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions in order to make decisions about the natural world and the changes made to it through human activity (1)

Cultural understanding:

- * A comparative and historical grasp of world religious traditions and practices of faith

- * A comparative and historical understanding of the variety of human cultures as expressed in music, the arts, and literature



* A sense of world history focused more on the movement of peoples across the globe, intercultural encounters, and cultural creolization than on nations, dynasties, empires, and hegemonic regimes; mastery of world geography supporting such an approach

* A sophisticated understanding of the social construction of identities and the dynamics of positionality--race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and nationality--involved in the distribution of power



Understanding of global issues:

* A critical understanding of the workings of global capitalism, global patterns of production and consumption, and the global flows of people, commodities, and money



* A grasp of the dynamics of globalization as a complex, disjunctive, and overlapping set of "scapes," as described by Arjun Appadurai (2) to include ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, and ideoscaples; we would add envirosaples and cultursaples

* A grasp of the transdisciplinary and transnational nature of global problems and the sciences that illuminate them--problems related to health, food, poverty, security, climate change, and the environment



* An understanding of the philosophy and history, the possibilities and limitations of human rights

Skills for global engagement

* Communicating meaningfully using expert writing, speaking, listening, and negotiating skills; deploying electronic communication technologies with rhetorical sensitivity to the potentials and limitations of their various modes

* Developing the capacity to see, appreciate, and draw novel insight from cultural differences and the ability to work, negotiate, socialize, and play with people of different cultural backgrounds

* Mastering a foreign language, learning to translate from one language to another, and, by means of both experiences, gaining access to another culture

* Using mathematics and statistics, and building and using models of complex systems

* Cultivating discernment by searching and sorting through information from multiple sources, assessing the validity of truth claims, and interrogating one's own most basic assumptions

* Producing original research and new knowledge in the service of problem solving



- A grasp of the transdisciplinary and transnational nature of global problems and the

* Praxis: taking theory to practice and thought to action

* Mastering "scalar thinking": a method of Google Earth--style reasoning that permits us to zoom in and zoom out on issues in ways that reveal the interconnections between the local and the global; at each scale of analysis, different features and relationships emerge

* Triangulating differences using global positioning: a GPS is only reliable if it is coordinating information from a variety of differently situated sources; this skill entails taking into account disparate points of view--disciplinary, cultural, ideological--and being able to discern where they can be reconciled into a more complex and complete understanding and also the limits of that reconciliation

Dispositions for global engagement

* Respect: a recognition of the dignity inherent in humanity, of human rights, and of our responsibilities to others

* Vulnerability: a disposition not to recoil at difference, but to see encounters with difference as opportunities for

growth and learning, for innovation, and for joyful interaction with others

- * Hospitality: a disposition to feel at home in the world and to make others feel welcome and valued
- * Compassion: a disposition undergirded by the awareness that suffering is an essential dimension of the human condition and that suffering can be ameliorated by the comfort of empathy
- * Agency: the resolve to transform commitment into action by promoting change, by resisting the unacceptable, and by championing justice
- * Agility: the capacity to continually revise one's notion of one's own identity and that of others in constellation with new cultures, persons, and experiences
- * Fairness: a disposition toward egalitarian distribution of power and privilege, and a commitment to democratic processes
- * Service: a commitment to support the wellbeing of others and the global commons more broadly
- * Leadership: the proclivity to stand up among others so as to take initiative constructively, generously, and persistently

The purpose of a twenty-first-century education is to produce graduates who recognize themselves to be of the world and who also assume responsibility for the world. Such graduates respect the specificities of particular cultures as well as the need for a global commons. As stewards of such cultures and commons, they draw upon multiple disciplines and viewpoints to address the world's problems, and they work collaboratively with others to solve them.

DOUGLAS C. BENNETT is former president and professor of politics at Earlham College, GRANT H. CORNWELL is president of the College of Wooster, HAIFA JAMAL AL-LAIL is president of Effat University (Saudi Arabia), and CELESTE SCHENCK is president of the American University of Paris (France) .

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