

The Gap Year Essay: Pros and Cons

Introduction

There is an ongoing debate on whether high school graduates should take a year off (a gap year) before joining college. A gap year is a break from formal education and controlled environment that is otherwise monotonous and exhausting. Gap year is common in European countries and also in Australia and it is quickly catching up in America. It is an idea that even the most prestigious colleges and universities are getting fond of and thus encourage high school leavers to try it out.

Gap Year Pros

After completing high school, students tend to suffer from 'information overload' and exhaustion (Naomi, 2008). A year off may be helpful to such a person who has had an academic burnout and can use some time out to 'recharge his or her academic battery'. The gap year will present the student with a chance to refresh his system and get a renewed energy which he will use to face the next phase of education.

Another reason as to why taking a year off is important is the fact that the person is able to build on some self confidence and their maturity level. Even top level universities are encouraging school leavers to take a year off since they reckon that those who do so, bring good values to the institution since they have had a taste of 'outside life' and will have a serious perspective towards life.

It is believed that those who take a gap year will be more focused and ready to face the more taxing institution of higher education. It is usually encouraged that students taking the gap year do so in a manner that will help them add some experience in a working environment while earning some money. They may also look for an internship which will help them have a feel of an organization and how it operates thus the student will make their curriculum vitae more appealing (William, 2000).

A gap year also offers chance for the high school leaver to do a thorough university search where he will look for the right institution that offers the course that he wants to engage himself in. The year off presents the school leaver with a chance to find the academic forte that he is most comfortable with. While enjoying a gap year, the school leaver will decide on what he or she wants to major in and this in turn will help them become more focused when joining university.

A school leaver may also spend his gap year travelling around hence broadening his horizon. By travelling abroad, the school leaver may discover new talents, gain new skills, learn new languages and visit various historical sites and this will help him have a diverse and broader perspective of life and thus make him more serious and focused when he gets to university.

Travelling abroad will also help the school leaver mingle with people of different races and cultures, a factor that helps them understand and appreciate diversity. This turns out to be very

helpful to the high school leaver since he will encounter a multiracial and multicultural environment in the university and can therefore easily adapt, settle and start learning (Shellenbarger, 2010)).

A high school leaver who takes a gap year has a better chance of handling the peer pressure in the university. Because the high school leaver who was previously under the careful watch of his parents, will now be left on his own and thus the leaver who enjoyed his gap year travelling or being on an attachment will have built his self-confidence and hence will tend to fight off peer pressure unlike the school leaver who joins university immediately where he will be hit by the reality of 'first true freedom' (World Inhabit, 2007).

Gap Year Cons

Besides the fact that taking a gap year will help to refresh the school leaver's system, the gap year may also turn out to be disastrous towards the student and his career. This usually happens when the high school leaver fails to plan properly his schedule for the year off. Mostly, the high school leavers will waste a whole year and may not gain any helpful experience.

A mismanaged gap year may turn out to be too expensive to the high school leaver and, hence, deplete resources leaving him with insufficient funds to join university. Taking a gap year may result in a higher university budget as tuition fees tend to increase annually. William (2000) notes that "engaging in a gap year may result in the student missing a slot in the university especially in courses that are competitive".

Also taking a year off may at times make the student lose momentum on studying and this may cause him a drop out of college or take a longer time to complete his course than expected. A gap year may lead to the high school leaver being demoralized by trailing his fellow classmates during the whole year (Sanjou, 2008).

A person who takes a gap year may fail to develop good skills and habits that may affect and help in his career and consequently fail to fit in the taxing university environment. A high school leaver who takes a gap year may enjoy real freedom having a time of his life and may find it very difficult to come in terms with reality that may end up by failing to join the university (Eunson, 2008).

Taking a year off may consequently lead to a delay in the beginning of a person's career which means that the person will start earning at a later stage in life than he was supposed to. Also there are companies which plan trips for the school leavers thus reducing their level of self responsibility and thus don't help build self confidence since they plan everything for the school leavers who should instead be doing things on their own to help build their confidence (College Confidential, 2010).

Conclusion

A high school graduate should consider the options he or she has when choosing whether or not to take up a gap year. The individual through numerous consultations with his parents, school counselors and sponsors should weigh between the pros and cons of taking up a gap year or not.

Ultimately, the decision lies in the high school leaver's hands. This means that should the school leaver decide that he needs a break from academic pressure, he should ensure that he spends his gap year productively in a manner that will help boost his career path. A year off that is well spent by the school leaver can help boost a person's confidence and maturity level. He will have a broader perspective of life and hence will give the university the seriousness it deserves once he gets enrolled.

Many universities in Europe and currently in the United States have come to appreciate the importance of taking a year off. Reports made by a number of university deans show that most people who take a gap year before joining university usually have a higher degree of seriousness, maturity and understanding than those who join university immediately after high school.

References

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