Amberly's Answers: Would You Want College to be Shorter or Longer?

Ryan’s Question: Would you want college to be shorter than four years, or longer than four years?

Amberly’s Answer: This question has been on my mind a lot as of late, with registration having just begun. I can’t actually register for anything until April 10, but I’ve been given an ample amount of time to look over the possible courses I could take, at the possible paths my future could take. And as I do, I’m reminded of what Sylvia Plath wrote in her novel, *The Bell Jar*:

“I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet.”

The thing is, there’s so much I want to do at UMass Amherst. I want to major in English, I want to delve into the Legal Studies and Communications and Woman, Gender, Sexuality Studies departments too. I want to do an Asia & Asian American Studies and a Film Studies certificate. I want to explore linguistics more, beyond just taking it as a
Gen-Ed for a semester. There’s so much I want to do. And back in high school, I could imagine doing it all, or how the different paths would pan out. I could imagine them over and over, create stories in my head, and be satisfied with that.

Now I actually have to tread on the path. And that’s what’s a little scary.

That’s why I want college to be longer, so that I can have time to explore all my interests, not just a few, and not just a few that I know will give me a better chance of landing a job. If college were longer, not just the overall duration, but the duration of semesters as well, I wonder if some of my professors would feel less rushed to cram everything into our brains before finals, if we could really explore the topic without that hanging over our heads.

Except, maybe not, because high school lasts longer than college (semester-wise) and teachers were still rushing to cram things into our brains before those finals. And also, just the fact that if college was longer, it’d become more expensive, a problem I delved into more in my last blog post.

Alas, it is what it is, and I have no power over Whitmore to change the entire university schedule. Plus, I’m pretty sure some students would revolt at the idea of staying any moment longer at school. But you asked a question, Ryan, and I guess that’s my answer.

Blog Column:
Amberly’s Answers

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