

# STUDY GUIDE

## THE SPEECH EVERY 2015 GRAD NEEDS TO HEAR

**KEY TERMS:**

bromides  
subsidies

bubble  
conformity

sub-prime  
entitlement

<b>NOTE-TAKING COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <i>during</i> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	<b>CUE COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <i>after</i> the video.
<p>What should current college grads receive from their universities, in addition to a degree?</p> <p>How did universities respond when government planners made student loans significantly easier to get?</p> <p>Why have universities restricted free speech?</p>	<p>How has the university experience changed for the worse compared to student experiences 40 years ago?</p> <p>How are universities, in general, failing to prepare graduates for the real world?</p>

## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

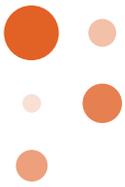
- In the video, Mr. Will's fictitious commencement speaker begins, "Members of the Graduating Class: You who are about to receive your diplomas should also receive an apology from this university – and a refund of a large portion of the tuition you have paid." Why do you think that Mr. Will would have the speaker say this to the graduates? What would you think if you were a member of that graduating class and heard that- would you agree? Why or why not?
- Mr. Will explains that the "...government made student loans and other tuition subsidies easier to get" and as a result "...the cost of college has been rising four times faster than the rate of inflation. The cost of college has increased faster than the cost of health care." Good intentions or not, do you think that the government making student loans more available has helped or hurt students more? Why?
- Mr. Will's speaker goes on to state, "Most of you are graduating today with debt. In effect, you are graduating with a mortgage – but no house. And what did you get for all this expense? A sub-prime education." Do you think that Mr. Will's analogy is valid? Why or why not? Do you think his point is valid? Why or why not? What do you think he means by 'sub-prime education?' Do you think that you are getting your money's worth at your school?
- Later, Mr. Will's speaker admonishes graduates, when the graduation ceremony is over, to, "...not bother looking for a job. Instead, go straight to the unemployment office. This university did not equip you to add value to the American economy." Why do you think that Mr. Will would have his speaker say that? What does he mean by 'add[ing] value to the American economy?' How do you think that your degree will help you to 'add value to the American economy?' Do you care if it does or not? Why or why not?
- Towards the end, Mr. Will's speaker states, "If this campus is like most campuses, you have been living in a community of enforced conformity," and that, "This school has restricted speech in order to protect your tender sensitivities and to protect your feelings from being hurt. When you leave this campus, you will have to unlearn the silliness you have been taught here – the idea that you deserve to be treated as a frail flower." What does he mean by 'enforced conformity?' What are some examples of 'enforced conformity' that you have experienced? Do you feel that the money you are paying now and later for college is worth you being subjected to 'enforced conformity' and the entitlement mindset being foisted upon you? Why or why not? How do you think that the enforced conformity and entitlement propaganda affect college students in regards to their course of study and in terms of preparing them for life after college?

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: The Modern University

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “The Modern University Is Failing Students in Every Respect,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What four goals did modern American universities used to assume? Exactly how are modern universities failing, in terms of meeting their assumed goals? Why can't some college graduates reason and write well? How much of the current conditions are the university's fault- are others culpable as well? Explain.
- The article states, “Hypersensitive students are warned about “micro-aggressions” that in the real world would be imperceptible. Apprehensive professors are sometimes supposed to offer “trigger warnings” that assume students are delicate Victorians who cannot handle landmark authors such as Joseph Conrad or Mark Twain. 'Safe spaces' are designated areas where traumatized students can be shielded from supposedly hurtful or unwelcome language that should not exist in a just and fair world” and that “Various expensive ‘centers’ address student problems that once were considered either private matters or well beyond the limited resources of the campus.” Considering that the real world isn't and never will be ‘just and fair,’ do you think that this coddling of students is what's best for them in the long run, and is it worth their money? Explain.
- In what ways does the article support the viewpoints reflected in the video? What solutions does the article offer? What would you change about the university experience if you could? What can you do to help get your money's worth out of your education?

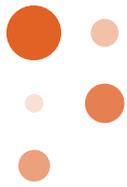


# QUIZ

## THE SPEECH EVERY 2015 GRAD NEEDS TO HEAR

---

- 1. Most college commencement addresses are enthralling and full of great advice.**
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
- 2. Washington has produced a bubble in higher education just the way it produced the bubble in \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - a. Healthcare
  - b. The stock market
  - c. Housing
  - d. Welfare
  
- 3. The cost of college has increased \_\_\_\_\_ times faster than the rate of inflation.**
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  
- 4. When the university's office in charge of alumni asks you for money, what should you do?**
  - a. Get out your checkbook immediately.
  - b. Send copies of your bank statements.
  - c. Send a schedule of your student loan repayments.
  - d. Pursue a Master's degree.
  
- 5. What is a "free speech zone"?**
  - a. A small, isolated, inconvenient space where students are allowed to exercise their First Amendment Rights.
  - b. A small, isolated, inconvenient space where students are allowed to exercise their Second Amendment Rights.
  - c. A large auditorium where speeches on a variety of different topics are held regularly.
  - d. There is no such thing.



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

## THE SPEECH EVERY 2015 GRAD NEEDS TO HEAR

---

1. Most college commencement addresses are enthralling and full of great advice.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. Washington has produced a bubble in higher education just the way it produced the bubble in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Healthcare
  - b. The stock market
  - c. Housing
  - d. Welfare
  
3. The cost of college has increased \_\_\_\_\_ times faster than the rate of inflation.
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  
4. When the university's office in charge of alumni asks you for money, what should you do?
  - a. Get out your checkbook immediately.
  - b. Send copies of your bank statements.
  - c. Send a schedule of your student loan repayments.
  - d. Pursue a Master's degree.
  
5. What is a "free speech zone"?
  - a. A small, isolated, inconvenient space where students are allowed to exercise their First Amendment Rights.
  - b. A small, isolated, inconvenient space where students are allowed to exercise their Second Amendment Rights.
  - c. A large auditorium where speeches on a variety of different topics are held regularly.
  - d. There is no such thing.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/416673/modern-university-failing-students-every-respect-victor-davis-hanson>

## The Modern University Is Failing Students in Every Respect



(Mario Tama/Getty)

by Victor Davis Hanson April 9, 2015 12:00 AM @vdhanson

**From cost to employment prospects, the state of American higher education is dismal for students.**

Modern American universities used to assume four goals. First, their general education core taught students how to reason inductively and imparted an aesthetic sense through acquiring knowledge of Michelangelo, the Battle of Gettysburg, “Medea” and “King Lear,” Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” and astronomy and Euclidean geometry.

Second, campuses encouraged edgy speech and raucous expression — and exposure to all sorts of weird ideas and mostly unpopular thoughts. College talk was never envisioned as boring, politically correct megaphones echoing orthodox pieties.

Third, four years of college trained students for productive careers. Implicit was the university’s assurance that its degree was a wise career investment.

Finally, universities were not monopolistic price gougers. They sought affordability to allow access to a broad middle class that had neither federal subsidies nor lots of money.

The American undergraduate university is now failing on all four counts.

A bachelor's degree is no longer proof that any graduate can read critically or write effectively. National college-entrance-test scores have generally declined the last few years, and grading standards have as well.

Too often, universities emulate greenhouses where fragile adults are coddled as if they were hothouse orchids. Hypersensitive students are warned about "micro-aggressions" that in the real world would be imperceptible.

Apprehensive professors are sometimes supposed to offer "trigger warnings" that assume students are delicate Victorians who cannot handle landmark authors such as Joseph Conrad or Mark Twain.

"Safe spaces" are designated areas where traumatized students can be shielded from supposedly hurtful or unwelcome language that should not exist in a just and fair world.

One might have concluded from all this doting that 21st-century American youth culture — rap lyrics, rough language, spring break indulgences, sexual promiscuity, epidemic drug usage — is not savage. Hip culture seems to assume that its 18-year old participants are jaded sophisticated adults. Yet the university treats them as if they are preteens in need of vicarious chaperones.

Universities entice potential students with all sorts of easy loan packages, hip orientations, and perks like high-tech recreation centers and upscale dorms. On the backside of graduation, such bait-and-switch attention vanishes when it is time to help departing students find jobs.

College often turns into a six-year experience. The unemployment rate of college graduates is at near-record levels. Universities have either failed to convince employers that English or history majors make ideal job candidates, or they have failed to ensure that such bedrock majors can, in fact, speak, write, and reason well.

The collective debt of college students and graduates is more than \$1 trillion. Such loans result from astronomical tuition costs that for decades have spiked more rapidly than the rate of inflation.

Today's campuses have a higher administrator-to-student ratio than ever before. Those who actually teach are now a minority of university employees. Various expensive "centers" address student problems that once were considered either private matters or well beyond the limited resources of the campus.

Is it too late for solutions?

For many youths, vocational school is preferable to college. Americans need to appreciate that training to become a master auto mechanic, paramedic, or skilled

electrician is as valuable to society as a cultural-anthropology or feminist-studies curriculum.

There are far too many special studies courses and trendy majors — and far too few liberal-arts surveys of literature, history, art, music, math, and science that for centuries were the sole hallowed methods of instilling knowledge.

Administrators should decide whether they see students as mature, independent adults who handle life's vicissitudes with courage and without need for restrictions on free expression. Or should students remain perennial weepy adolescents, requiring constant sheltering, solicitousness, and self-esteem building?

Diversity might be better redefined in its most ancient and idealistic sense as differences in opinion and thought rather than just variety in appearance, race, gender, or religion.

The now-predictable ideology of college graduation speakers should instead be a mystery. Students should not be able to guess the politics of their college president. Ideally, they might encounter as many Christians as atheists, as many reactionaries as socialists, or as many tea partiers as Occupy Wall Street protestors, reflecting the normal divisions of society at large.

Colleges need to publicize the employment rates of recent graduates and the percentage of students who complete their degrees so that strapped parents can do cost-benefit analyses like they do with any other major cash investment.

A national standardized exit test should be required of all graduates. If colleges predicate admissions in part on performance on the SAT or ACT, they certainly should be assessed on how well — or not so well — students score on similar tests after years of expensive study.

Finally, the federal government should hold universities fiscally accountable. The availability of federal grants should be pegged to a college's ability to hold annual tuition increases to the rate of inflation.

At this late date, only classically liberal solutions can address what have become illiberal problems.

— Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and the author, most recently, of *The Savior Generals*.