

Writing University-specific Literature



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About the Presenters



Brigham Dye

Major: Humanities/Philosophy

Freshman Academy Peer Mentor for 2 years

Honors Thesis: Academic Handbook for First-Year Students

Educational Goals: Obtain a PhD in Educational Psychology



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Major: Linguistics

Freshman Academy Peer Mentor for 3 years and

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Honors Thesis: A Parents' Guide to the Brigham Young University Experience

Educational Goals: Obtain a PhD in Psycholinguistics

About Brigham Young University



- **Size: 29, 808 full-time students, 90% are undergraduates.**
- **25% of students are married.**
- **Approximately 50% of students leave campus after the first year for a two-year hiatus.**
- **There are 190 majors in 8 colleges and 2 schools. Most of the colleges have limited enrollment programs.**
- **Doctoral research extensive institution according to the Carnegie ratings.**

Mission of BYU

**“The mission of Brigham Young University--
founded, supported, and guided by The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--
is to assist individuals in their quest for
perfection and eternal life. That assistance
should provide a period of intensive learning
in a stimulating setting where a commitment
to excellence is expected and the full
realization of human potential is pursued.”**

***An excerpt from *The Mission Statement of Brigham
Young University.****

Aims of a BYU Education

- **Spiritually Strengthening**
- **Intellectually Enlarging**
- **Character Building**
- **Leading to Life-long Learning and Service**

About BYU First-Year Students



• Freshman Profile

- Average Composite ACT 27
 - Average HS GPA 3.76
 - 86% of students were ranked in the top quarter of their High School.
 - 50% indicated a major at the time of admissions, but only 12% had researched it.
- Approximately 66% of students enter the university with AP credit, and on the average the student has taken 3 AP exams.
 - Required Freshman courses do not have to be completed the first year.

Freshman Misconceptions

- Education is about fulfilling requirements and getting good grades.
- I want to have a life, not spend most of my day studying.
- College is a just continuation of my high school experience.
- I don't need to study that much, this subject is easy for me.
- This class won't teach me anything I need to know for my real life.
- It is the teacher's responsibility to make class interesting.
- I don't need to study with other people, I learn better on my own.



Results from a Weekly Survey in a Biology Class with 160 Students

- 34% of students said they did not read before attending class.**
- 71% of students reported only studying what was required or what might be on exams.**
- 46% of students said they did not seek help when they did not understand.**
- Only 16% of students did not feel confident about their ability to graduate.**

What Do We Know about Parent Involvement at BYU?

- 66% of students ranked their parents as the most helpful or next most helpful resource in academic planning and registration.**
- 45% of students ranked other family (who attended BYU) as most helpful or next most helpful.**
- 76% of parents reported significant or complete involvement in helping the student consider possible majors or select a major.**
- 56% of parents reported significant or complete involvement in helping the student select specific courses.**

Parents' Questions

- How and when am I notified of my student's grades as a parent?
- What can my student do to ease the transition to a university course load?
- What recreational activities are available on and around campus?
- I would like to visit my student but don't want to interfere with her studies. When are breaks and exams?
- Does my student have to take American heritage if they took AP History in high school?
- What are the dates of New Student Orientation? Are there any pre-orientation programs?
- How does a new student get involved in campus activities or community service?
- What are the classes that my student has to take?

What Do We Know about Literature at BYU?

- Parents are more likely to read orientation literature that is mailed to them than information found online.**
- 50% of students will only read selected portions of literature they receive from BYU.**

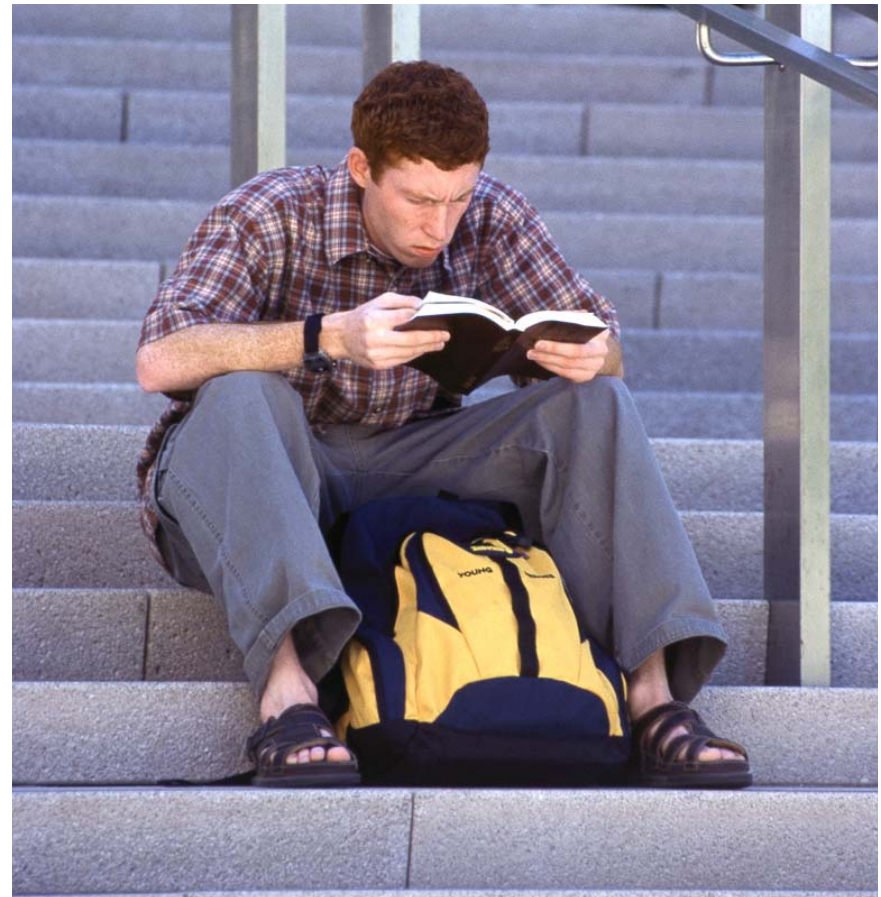
Considerations for Aligning Literature

“The tour is more than an instrumental task of transporting guests around campus and conveying technical information. It is one of many formal rituals that transmit the institution’s political, social, environmental, and cultural expectations and norms for prospective members.... This brief analysis reveals how the content of a particular campus tour conveys dominant cultural norms, values, and beliefs leading to a particular conceptualization of community. The tour illuminates the power of rituals in shaping the experiences of participants.”

Magolda, P. (2001). What our rituals tell us about community on campus. *About Campus*. January-February pp 2,6.

Creating University-specific Literature for Students and Parents

- **Students addressing new students and their parents**
- **Student-friendly language and explanations**
- **Real-life examples and experiences from other students**



Contents

Introduction: Why Bother Reading This?

Chapter 1: Why Are You at BYU?

What do you plan to take from BYU?
Orientations to Learning
The Challenge to Become
The Disciple-Scholar
Family Orientation to Learning
The Aims of a BYU Education
The BYU Student Covenant

Chapter 2: The University is a Dialogue

Student to Student Dialogue
Student to Faculty Dialogue
Reading and Writing as Dialogues
Diversity at the University

Chapter 3: What is Learning?

Learning and the Brain
What is Truth?
Academic vs. Eternal Truths
Surface/Deep/Strategic Approaches to Learning
Grades and Learning
Learning in Different Disciplines
The University as an Apprenticeship of Learning

Chapter 4: Habits of the Mind

Curiosity: The Child Within

Questioning: Taking a Second Look

Observation: Hunting and Gathering

Analysis: Understanding the Parts

Integration: Making Connections

Persistence: How You Think about Yourself

Chapter 5: How Habits of the Mind Shape Scholarly Habits

What is studying?

How do you get more out of going to class?

Time Management: The Number One Challenge

Civic Engagement: Is Education Just about Me?

Academic Planning: More than Just Picking Classes

Self-Regulation: Tracking Your Brain

Learning by the Spirit

Conclusion: Aligning Your Vision with the Lord's

Suggested Readings

Example of Current BYU Literature for Students

Using traditional academic language to describe the education envisioned in Brigham Young University's Mission Statement, we would say the education for which BYU aims is a liberal, or "freeing," education. It is unique to the American Experience, the kind of education that was at the heart of the Founding Father's vision. As important as vocational education is, a liberating education includes preparation for the whole life and for good citizenship. Thus, at Brigham Young University, religious education and general education are equally as important a part of our goal as is major education.

BYU's general education program prepares students with a broad, integrated foundation of knowledge, skills, and cultural understanding that supports and enhances major education and facilitates the ability and desire for lifelong learning and service. In an environment that blends the spiritual and the secular, general education courses improve the student's ability to think clearly, communicate effectively, and act wisely.

(From BYU's New Student Resources for Planning and Registration Packet, 2003-2004)

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SUMMARY

REQUIREMENT	OPTIONS	
LANGUAGES OF LEARNING		
Precollege Math	ACT math subscore of 22 or above; SAT math subscore of 500 or above; or Math 97, 110, 111; GE 105, or any higher college-level calculus course.	
First-Year Writing	Engl 115, 200, 200H, HonP 200, Phil 105, or Phil 105H. If you have AP credit for English 115, you are strongly encouraged to take one of the other options.	
Advanced Writing	Prerequisite is First-Year Writing or its equivalent. See the list of approved courses in the current class schedule. Some majors require a specific course. Recommended to be taken during junior year.	
Advanced Languages Four options: Advanced Math, Statistics, Foreign Language, or Advanced Music	Requirement to be satisfied either in mathematics, statistics, in one of three music tracks, or in a foreign language. See the current class schedule for approved math, statistics, music, and foreign language classes.	
*LIBERAL ARTS CORE (Check with your college advisement center to know which courses you should take.)		
Civilization	One 201 and one 202 course from the approved list in the current class schedule.	
American Heritage	Option A	Option B
	One course: AHTg 100, 100H; or HonP 240	One of the following two-course combinations: Hist 220 and PISc 110; or Hist 220 and Econ 110; or PISc 110 and Econ 110; or Hist 221 and PISc 110
Biology	One course: Biol 100, 100H; HonP 260; Mcbio 130; or Zool 101 and 102	One course each from two of the three groups: Group 1: Biol 150, Botny 125 Group 2: Biol 276, Zool 205, 260, 276 Group 3: Mcbio 221
Physical Science	One course: PhyS 100, 100H; or PhyS 110A and 110B; or HonP 259	One course each from two of the three different departments: Chem 101, 105, 111, 111H, 152 Geol 101, 101H, 103, 111, 330 Phscs 101, 105, 121, 127, 127H, 220
Wellness	HEPE 129	Three physical education or dance activity courses (see detailed information in the current class schedule)
*ARTS AND SCIENCES ELECTIVES		
Natural Sciences	Choose one course from the approved list.	
Social and Behavioral Sciences	Choose one course from the approved list.	
Arts and Letters	Choose one course from the approved list.	
*Classes in the Liberal Arts Core under Option B cannot be used to satisfy both the Liberal Arts Core and the Natural Sciences or Social and Behavioral Sciences Electives; one course or combination of courses cannot fulfill more than one requirement.		

Example of Literature from the Student Handbook

“Unfortunately, I later recognized, to my shock and grief, that my sister was not omnipotent. She didn’t even know everything there was to know about BYU. Gasp! Groan! “The horror, the horror!” (a quote for all of you who suffered through the horror of reading Conrad’s Heart of Darkness in twelfth-grade English). What was even worse was that she had actually been wrong about some of the things she’d told me about education. Imagine my surprise when I found out schooling wasn’t just about getting the grade so you could graduate and get a good job...

Example of Literature from the Student Handbook

...Or that it might not be the best just to get a required course out of the way so I could get on to what really interests me. Who would have thought that I really should have taken a first-year writing course even though I could AP out of it? (The BYU catalogue had said it was strongly recommended, but no, I was the exception!) Of course, all of you are much brighter than me, so you've probably figured this out long ago, but I share this to illustrate a point. There might be something in this handbook that could be more useful than what you've heard from your parent, sibling, friend, etc."

A Parents' Guide to the Brigham Young University Experience

- 1. Forward:** *I am a student...why listen to me?*
- 2. Introduction:** *You care about your student; you want to help them...but how?*
 - Transition vs. transformation
 - Methods to aid students in the transformation process
 - Application of methods
- 3. Section One:** *Understanding the Mission and Expectations of BYU*
 - AIMS of a BYU Education
 - Out of Your Experience Here
 - What I Now Believe about a BYU Education
- 4. Section Two:** *Spiritually Strengthening*
 - The Honor Code: a higher standard of living
 - Learning and teaching with the Spirit
 - Ecclesiastical Involvement in and out of the classroom
 - Sunday Services, Religion Classes, Devotionals and Forums,
 - Firesides, Personal Study and Growth
- 5. Section Three:** *Intellectually Enlarging*
 - Broad Learning
 - University Core
 - Looking beyond the requirements of General Education (GE)
 - Honors Program: an alternative way to fulfill GE Requirements
 - Deep Learning
 - Intellectual Discipline
 - Habits of the Mind: Curiosity, Questioning, Observation, Analysis, Integration and Persistence
 - Child of God: Welcome Correction, Keep Commitments, Work Hard, and Expect Resistance and Overcomes It
 - Specific Learning in Major
 - Open Major Advisement
 - Undergraduate Catalog
 - College Advisement Centers

Skill Training

Jacobson Center for Service and Learning
Research and Service Learning
On Campus Employment
Study Abroad

Community Learning

Study Groups/Group projects
Freshman Academy Linked Courses
Major Cohorts
Honors Program
Benefits of Community Learning

Faculty/Student Interaction

Faculty Advisors
Student and Faculty Research
Undergraduate Research
Mentored Learning Experiences
Study Abroad

6. Section Four: *Character Building*

BYUSA

Clubs and Organizations
Leadership Service
On Campus Activities
On and off-campus Housing
Residence Hall Council
Roommates

Jacobson Center for Service and Learning
Study Abroad: Meeting New People and Culture

7. Section Five: *Leading to Life-long Learning and Service*

Unique Mission: Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve

8. Appendix: *Additional readings about the Brigham Young University Experience*

9. Resources: *A guide to finding and using the university resources*

Example of General University Literature for Parents

“Students’ academic goals may vary depending on the type of institution. For example, many community college students plan to transfer to a four-year institution...Thus, you will want to understand the mission of the college your student has chosen to attend and how her individual goal might be affected by that mission.”

Smith, D. and Gordon, V. (2003). *A Family Guide to Academic Advising*. South Carolina University of South Carolina p. 47

Example of Literature from the Parent Guidebook

“When I first arrived on campus, I had no idea what the university expected me to get out of my education. I knew that I was going to college to learn, but I didn’t know that most of what the university wanted me to learn would not be taught in a classroom. I didn’t understand that the university expects me to leave with spiritual strength, intellectual depth, developed character, and a desire to continue learning while benefiting the community where I live by using the skills and knowledge I gain here (from the *Aims of a BYU Education*). When I began to understand the importance of these four goals it changed the way I thought about my education. I no longer think about grades and requirements because I have learned that there is more to my education. Ironically, this perspective has made studying easier—something that I want to do because I see a greater purpose. It becomes even easier when I begin to use the knowledge and skills I learn in class to benefit the campus community where I live....

Example of Literature from the Parent Guidebook

...In this community I am able to use my education in many different ways, such as volunteering as a tutor, working for a non-profit organization, or serving as a student leader. These experiences help me understand my course work better while preparing me to make a contribution to the world after graduation. Not every student will have the same experience or will even desire the same outcomes, but looking at the university's expectations provides insight into what a university education can be. My family has played an important role in this change by encouraging me to look for opportunities to apply the concepts I am learning in my classes; they take the time to ask me how I am using what I am learning. If families read and understood the mission and expectations of the university, they can encourage their students to make the most of their university experience."

How Would You Use the Literature at Your Institution?

Prospective Uses

Student Handbook

- Placed on a Website
- Used in conjunction with New Student Orientation
- Used by Peer Mentors in advising students
- Possible text for a University 101 course
- Used after students arrive on campus

Parent Guidebook

- Placed on a Website
- Mailed to parents after students are admitted
- Used as a reference during parent meetings for New Student Orientation
- Intended to help parents reinforce positive academic attitudes during the first year

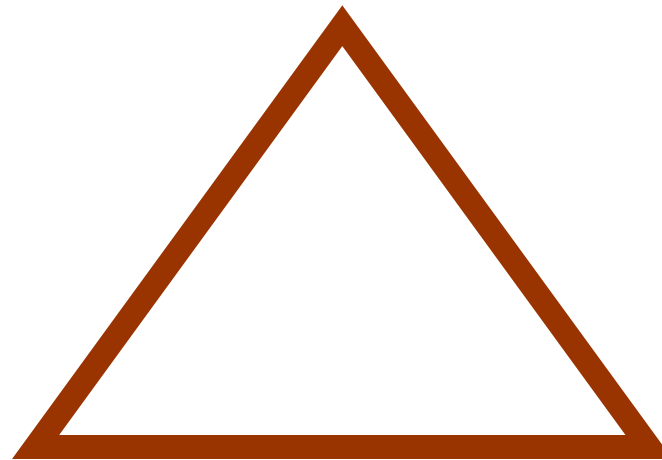
Institutional Alignment

“And, as an institution, the Instruction Paradigm college is not honest. I certainly do not mean to suggest that the people who work in the institution do not do their best to tell the truth. In my experience, most of them try to be honest, some making heroic efforts to do so. It is the institution itself, in its very design, that imports falsehood into its practices. College presidents and college teachers usually say what they believe. But the espoused theories of educational leaders [...] are misaligned with the theory-in-use that controls institutional behavior. The result is that the college gives the lie to its leaders. Practice contradicts precept at every turn. Students learn that the unwritten rules are the ones that determine your future and learn to cast a jaundiced eye on the noble espousals of their well-intentioned professors and deans.”

Tagg, J. (2003) *The Learning Paradigm College*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc. pp. 282-283.

Why Customize Orientation Literature?

University Objectives



Audience

Literature

Questions to Consider

- **What is unique about your campus?**
- **What kind of students does your institution enroll?**
- **What is your purpose in writing the literature?**
- **How will you tailor the literature to your students/parents?**
- **How will you use the literature once it has been written?**

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- Freshman Planning and Registration Committee. (19 Dec. 2000). *Freshman Planning and Registration Report Fall 2000*. Provo: Brigham Young University.
- Other studies from Freshman Academy at Brigham Young University

A copy of this presentation is posted on the Freshman Academy website and copies of the handbooks will be posted on the Freshman Academy website by March 31, 2004.

<http://academy.byu.edu>