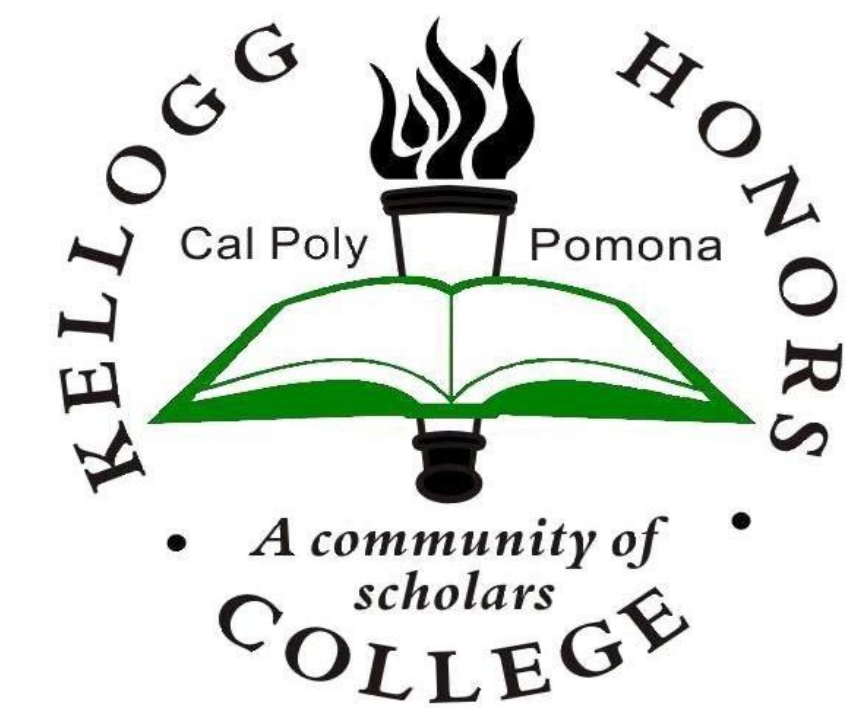


Satirizing College Life

(Gaining Traction Through Laughter)



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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Getting a college education is touted by many as the key to success. If you have a degree, you are qualified for higher paying, field-specific jobs. However, this system is not foolproof, nor is it any guarantee of success. What sacrifices must a student make in order to get that coveted college degree? I have taken some of these issues in the collegiate system and made them more accessible in the form of a satirical play. By employing satire, I will better gain the audience's trust and attention with humor and my message will become more palpable.

WHAT IS SATIRE?

Satire is a technique that writers use to expose and criticize flaws in an individual or society as a whole. Its intention is to improve humanity by pointing out these foibles and follies. Fictional characters are used in place of real people in order to expose and condemn their corruption. By employing humor and exaggeration, satire lowers an audience's guard through laughter and makes the message the author is trying to convey more receivable.

Satire is most commonly seen in political cartoons or shows like *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show*. It should not be confused with a parody or a farce. Parody simply mimics or mocks a person or concept, and has no intention of inciting change. It is pure entertainment and is simply meant to make an audience laugh. Satire, on the other hand, uses a combination of humor and anger towards a subject and gets its audience to think about what is being satirized.

POST GRAD PRESSURE

Many students believe that once they finish college they will be well prepared for their career and have a high chance of getting hired in a professional field. Unfortunately, these students are overestimating their level of preparedness, as well as their salary expectations, among other things. The Association of American Colleges and Universities reported that 59% of students stated they were well prepared to enter the professional world, but only 23% of employers agreed.

Consequently, college graduates often end up working jobs that aren't related to their major, if they can get a job at all. The millennial generation makes up about 40% of the unemployed in the United States, which is way above the national jobless rate of 5.4%. These problems only contribute to the crippling student debt that college millennials face. Low-income students are especially affected, and are the ones who struggle to pay off their student debt the most.

All of this puts enormous pressure on college students to succeed — or at the very least, graduate with a steady job and minimum debt. One study from Student Monitor listed stress as one of the biggest problems on campus, along with the cost of education and alcohol abuse or binge drinking. These three issues are the ones I have explored the most and feature prominently in my script.

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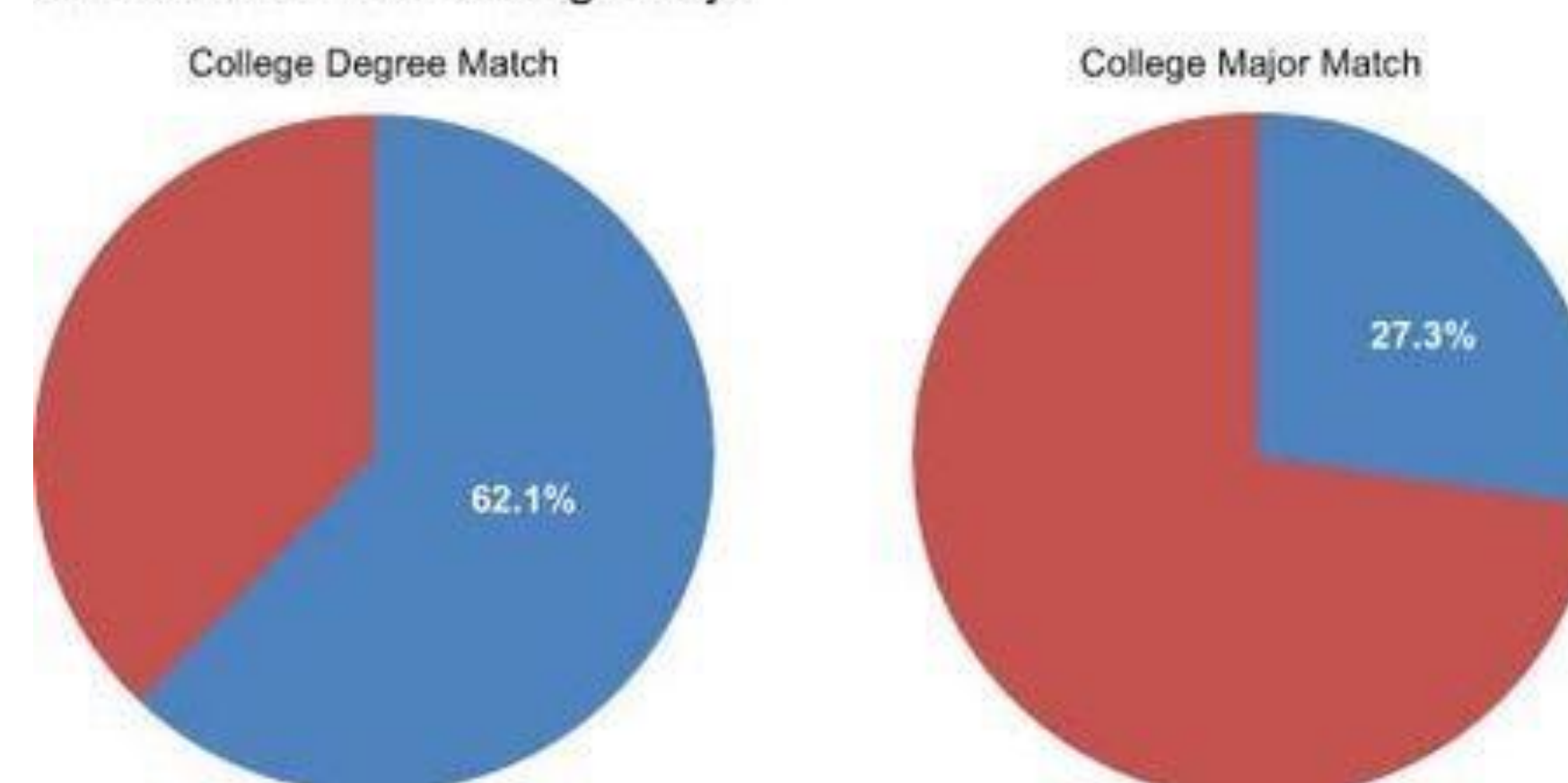
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Two different responses to the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. The top image suggests looters in Ferguson aren't helping the protestors' cause, while the bottom image shows the way police are dealing with journalists trying to take photos and video of the protests.



Share of College Graduates Working in a Job Requiring a College Degree or Related to Their College Major



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 American Community Survey; authors' calculations. Note: Individuals with graduate degrees are not included in the calculation of college major matching because the information available on majors relates to the undergraduate degree.

The Marvel character Deadpool is a classic example of a character breaking the fourth wall. Unlike other characters, Deadpool is aware of the reader and knows he is a comic book character. Consequently, some of his comments tend to fly over other characters' heads. In my play, the Narrator's antics tend to fall within the same vein as Deadpool's.

TURNING FACT INTO FICTION

Step 1: Gathering Material

Throughout the writing process, my biggest source of information was myself. I can tell my own truth better than I can tell someone else's, so many of the characters' quirks and experiences are based off my own. I have also compiled stories from other students, most notably the theatre department, and have used them to round out the script. Many of these stories are related to the three big issues college students face — stress, money, and alcohol. Once I compiled all of my gathered data, I could begin writing my script.

Step 2: Format

Ultimately, I decided to write the play in the form of a self-help guide. My play, titled *How to Survive College and Become a Financial Success in 10 Steps or Less*, comes with its own Narrator that lays out her steps to success at various points in the story. This Narrator intervenes in the lives of two college students and follows their journey towards graduation. Each scene represents one of the ten steps, and the scenes progress in chronological order.

Step 3: Creating Characters

Once I had a format for my play, I needed characters to flesh out the world I had created. The three most important characters in the play represent different parts of myself, while also functioning as broad generalizations of the various paths a college student might take.

Narrator - The most gimmicky character by far, and the one that keeps the story moving. She possesses several theatrical tropes; she is an almost omnipresent being that regularly breaks the fourth wall, or talks directly to the audience. She also comments on the other characters' actions, sometimes without them noticing her presence, or randomly inserts herself into the scene as another character.

Nathan - A college student and aspiring actor, Nathan represents the path I chose to take in college. Instead of choosing a career that is financially lucrative and steady, Nathan decides to pursue something he loves. He is more of a dreamer than a realist.

Maggie - A college student and friend of Nathan's, Maggie represents the opposite end of the spectrum. She decides to study in a well-paying field rather than choose a career that she may love, but will not be financially stable. She is the more pragmatic of the two protagonists.

