

William Pierce

2009-2010 Cincinnati Area Mensa Scholarship Essay Contest

1st Place Winner

I was born August 23, 2005. No, I am not four years old. However, 8/23/05 was the day I started to live with purpose. My first day of AmeriCorps commenced my most important education and personal growth. A life of unexamined privilege and serene homogeneity would be forever shattered. I witnessed a vast spectrum of poverty, need, misfortune and good deeds as I led a team of ten young adults cross-country performing community service projects with the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). A job leading others and planning projects from Hurricane Katrina recovery to starting after-school programs allowed me to combine a love of community service with my previously underused intelligence. A second AmeriCorps year with Public Allies allowed me to manage the activities of a small food pantry in Cincinnati. There I was able to coordinate logistics, recruit 25 percent more regular volunteers, and design fundraisers – further joining service and intelligence.

An undergraduate education in Sociology gave birth to a curiosity into human nature. This platform enhanced my subsequent community service experience by giving me a clearer lens through which to view my ever-changing environment. Unfortunately, I coasted through most of college on a good memory, not necessarily through diligent study. Fortunately, subsequent service and work experiences have instilled a new drive for utilizing my talents and working hard.

Life after AmeriCorps left me wondering what to do next. How could I employ a love of education, the desire to change the world for the better, and conceptual skills? The Educational Studies program at the University of Cincinnati was my answer. This interdisciplinary program will allow me to explore various academic fields while preparing me to become a college professor. My immediate and long-term goals can be summed up simply as earning Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy Degrees from the Educational Studies Program, I intend to parlay the Ph.D. into a professorship of Philosophy. My skill set – understanding complex concepts, explaining ideas so that others can understand them, and writing well – will enable me to thrive both academically and professionally as a college faculty member.

I believe the program's multi-disciplinary nature will dovetail nicely with my multi-disciplinary mind. For instance, I have previously studied how and what people learn

and do in the macro sense through Sociology, which, to me, occupies the nexus of Anthropology and Psychology. And utilizing Philosophy requires an understanding of History as the past applications Political Science, Economics, and Religion, for example. Such is the paradigm through which I have best learned in the past: incorporating interconnected schools of thought to better understand and, therefore, improve the human condition. I wish to challenge my future students not to agree with my personal worldview but to question their own. There has to be a way that humans, Americans, or any group can bring actions and Philosophy together to improve our collective situation.

To achieve my goals, I have a clear destination. I have a clear academic path to get there. I have the drive and past success to lead me there. I know exactly what I want for the first time in my life. Essentially, I have everything to gain.