**Outline Assignment—Response to “Message to my Freshman Students”**

**Overview**: Now that you’ve had an introduction to rhetorical analysis through reading and discussion, it’s time to move into writing your own arguments. This is just a warm-up, though. You won’t have to write out a full response to “Message to My Freshman Students,” just think about what you have to say and how you might organize it.

**Assignment:** Think about what you would say to Keith Parsons’ essay, “Message to My Freshman Students,” and outline it, as I did below with a hypothetical response to a different essay (didn’t want to steal your thunder on the Parsons one).

**Your Audience/forum**: Choose your own audience and forum, and state them as I did below.

**Details**: This must be TYPED. **Due** *at the beginning of class* T 9/20 or W 9/21

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Sample outline for my own response to “Education’s Hungry Hearts”—Outline**

**Audience**: SJSU students/faculty/staff **Forum**: Spartan Daily

**Intro**: I’d introduce the topic, situating it as a beginning-of-the-semester rumination on why we do this—higher education—and identifying myself as a long-time instructor, primarily of freshman in GE classes. Then I’d introduce the essay I’m responding to, with a brief summary and something about the author. Lastly, I’d state either just his main point, which I want to challenge or build upon, or his main point and my own main point (below).

**My thesis**: While it *is* at least partly our (professor’s) job to instill a love of learning and to spark a wide-ranging, interdepartmental curiosity in our students, we can only really work with students who are ready, willing, and able to step up to the banquet and fill their plates. (I’m not sure if I’ll go with this hunger metaphor or use a more conventional one—learning as a light-giving torch or a life-giving fountain.)

1. Offer a description and a heart-felt appreciation for the students who *do* come to college with an eager, open mind. Give some examples. Describe their effect on a classroom of otherwise disengaged students.
2. Describe the problem posed by the disengaged student, the deadening, demoralizing effect they have on the professor and the rest of the class.
3. Discuss why these students’ disengagement is sometimes not their fault or not something they can control. Suggest things high schools could have done for them, things SJSU profs and support staff can still do for them, and alternative paths they could take (a gap year, service learning, internship/apprenticeship programs, vocational programs).
4. Suggest ways we (all of us at SJSU) can nurture the ones who do come to college with hungry minds, and how we can try to stoke the appetites of the merely unengaged (as opposed to the actively disengaged ones) to increase the ranks of the hungry. The primary strategies I’d argue for are these: model enthusiasm for learning ourselves, support and encourage the hungry ones in any way we can, be gentle and encouraging with the unengaged ones, avoid being harsh with the disengaged ones, but don’t let them drag down the class, either, or think the rules will be bent for them.

**Conclusion**: I’d reaffirm the value of the already hungry students who light up the classrooms with their energy and who call forth the best performance from their fellow students and their professors, and I’d encourage my fellow faculty to do everything they can to nurture this spirit in all of our students.