Engl 2 Spring 2017 **Sample Refutation Outline**

My topic: Is college “worth it”?

Thesis: While college certainly is a waste of time and money for people like Porter Stansberry, and while there is much to be said for a gap year, career-exploration through internships, and other alternatives to a straight-from-high school-to-college-to-job-hunt path, there is a lot to be gained from college, too, and some of it can really *only* be gained in college.

Essay I’m refuting: “Why College is a Waste of Time and Money” by Porter Stansberry, self-published on his company website, Stansberry Research, which describes itself as “a subscription-based publisher of financial information and software, serving millions of investors around the world.”

My Audience/forum: SJSU Students, especially those who are discouraged/disillusioned/skeptical about the value of college (plus faculty/staff); *Spartan Daily News.*

**Introduction**: Introduce the topic and briefly summarize the key points of the argument I’m refuting. Briefly establish my own position on the matter and my stake in the question—a former honor student/college dropout who now teaches in one. Maybe begin with a list of prominent and successful people who didn’t finish (or even start) college, such as the TOMS shoes founder, Blake Mycoskie and Nobel Prize winner Bernard Shaw. Maybe add Jane Goodall, who eventually got a Ph.D. but skipped the BS and MS stage, learning what she needed to know about chimpanzees by studying chimps directly and with experts in the field.

1. Where I agree with Stansberry: benefits of a gap year, before or during college.
2. Can let them test their career affinities, test their talents
3. Can build their confidence or temper their overconfidence, whichever they need
4. Can refresh a student worn out from too much school, rekindle their curiosity
5. Can let them outgrow their authority issues so they won’t waste their energy fighting their profs or other mentors.
6. Where I disagree Stansberry:
7. College is not a waste of time for everyone, and not everyone needs a gap year. Support this with evidence from my teaching career.
8. Why changing majors or even dropping out doesn’t mean you wasted your time
9. Studying in more than one field, including taking your gen. ed. classes seriously, will give you a way to relate to more different kinds of people—developing those “soft skills” that are so prized in both the business and the social world.
10. Dangers of a narrow, job-related education (in or out of college)
11. Ever-changing world of work requires flexible people, lifelong learners, not narrow, learning-averse specialists whose specialty will likely become obsolete.
12. Effects of a narrow, job-related focus on a personality: fosters narrow-mindedness, arrogance, self-importance, inability to respect or relate to people unlike yourself.

**Conclusion**: Make fullest statement of my thesis—there is no *one* best way to get an education, but college works great for some and shouldn’t be sneered at by any. Maybe wrap up with the example of Diane Fossey, an SJSU alum (occupational therapy degree) as an exemplar of someone whose education included a formal college degree and also learning from direct real-world experience, becoming an eminent expert in Gorilla research and later in environmental activism just by studying it in the field, only later earning a Ph.D. at Cambridge.