



# The Amplifier

Plug into news that informs and encourages

November 2016

## Is “Free College” the Answer?

At this year’s Democratic National Convention young Americans “feeling the Bern” made it clear they were unhappy with the nomination of Hillary Clinton. Chants of “CHEATER!” and “NEVER HILLARY!” revealed the Republican Party is not the only one experiencing a division amongst its ranks. In an attempt to bring the party together, Hillary exclaimed “Bernie Sanders and I will work together to make college tuition-free for the middle class and debt-free for all!” The plan, known as the “New College Compact,” would provide free tuition for in-state public college and university students whose families have income less than \$85,000 a year. This threshold would rise to \$125,000 by 2021, and students would be required to work ten hours a week. Though the plan is only an outline at this point, it already has quite a few potential deficiencies. Free college sounds great in theory, but will it really lead to an increase in employment and overall quality of life?

It is important to remember that education means more than just college. Technical and vocational schools just as often lead to fulfilling careers, balanced lives, and better-than-average pay. By stressing college as the path all students should follow, the government discourages entry into the trades where jobs often go unfilled thanks to a shortage of qualified applicants. Recently Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel admitted, “Getting people to college isn’t enough. They need to learn real-world skills too.” He and others at the state and local level have recently launched successful efforts improving access to community college and increasing educational attainment. In 2015, he started the STAR Scholarship program, which makes community college free for seniors graduating from public schools with a B average or better. This year, STAR scholarship applications are up 29% and more than half of STAR scholars are first-generation college students. Last year Chicago launched a STAR partnership with the fifteen area universities to provide significant financial support for high-performing STAR scholars. This will help them earn a four-year degree at world-class institutions such as University of Illinois at Chicago, Northwestern, and Illinois Institute of Technology. Emanuel is also working with local employers like Aon to develop community college curricula that prepare students for good paying jobs. Firms involved include those from industries such as hospitality, health care, logistics, and auto manufacturing.

Also, increasing enrollment in college does not necessarily mean that more people will graduate. An extremely high dropout rate seems to indicate that too many people attend

colleges as is. According to a 2011 report from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, less than 30% of college students completed a two-year degree in three years and only 56% completed four-year degrees within six years. The STAR program has made encouraging progress in this area. An astounding 94% of STAR participants were retained from their fall semester to the spring semester.

Let’s say, however, that Hillary’s program does lead to an increase in graduation rates. More degrees aren’t the same as more learning, jobs, or productivity. According to the Department of Education, nearly 43% of recent graduates are underemployed, meaning they are working jobs that do not require their degree. This number could very well go up with more degree holders vying for the same amount of jobs. In South Korea, higher-ed experts say the country’s near-universal college-attendance rate has devalued degrees and led to a surge of unemployment among young people.

Clinton’s plan also ignores the need for more attention to K-12 years. Schools in low-income areas such as Chicago’s South Side have students who are dealing with trauma outside the classroom; as a result they are disengaged. Educating teachers on how to connect with these children is perhaps a better allocation of resources. This would ensure that students emerging from primary and secondary schools are ready to take advantage of the opportunities provided by programs such as the STAR scholarship and New College Compact. American taxpayers are already paying, on average, more than \$12,000 per student per year for K-12 schooling. Yet American students consistently underperform their counterparts in other countries. After thirteen years of public education—more than \$156,000 per student—taxpayers have the right to expect high-school graduates to have the skills needed to enter higher education.

Clinton’s plan would cost anywhere from \$350 to \$700 billion on top of the roughly \$75 billion that the federal government already provides to support higher education. This means a substantial tax increase for not only the wealthy but for recent graduates who are already struggling in a weak economy with low wages. While the current total student debt of well over a trillion dollars is something that must be addressed, passing the buck to the taxpayers may not necessarily be the best choice. Possible alternatives include income-based payment plans that reduce monthly payments, forgive partial debt, and hold schools responsible for some portion of defaults. This would alleviate debt without crushing borrowers or taxpayers.

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Another potential downside is the possible decrease in the quality of the education provided at public schools. Surely funding will not increase enough to maintain the current standards for a much larger student body. Also, free tuition for most families could exacerbate existing inequalities and further stratify higher education. While poor students will attend crowded, low-tier public colleges at no cost, affluent students could buy their way into elite colleges where they will get a different education than others.

How it all will play out will depend on the specifics of Clinton's plan, which we simply don't know yet. As with many policy initiatives, large-scale consequences will only be discerned after large-scale implementation. This will be a difficult process and could very likely have unintended consequences including a reduction in the pursuit of trades, decline in the quality of education offered at public colleges and universities, and the placement of new burdens on an already overwhelmed tax system. We must create a system that prepares young people to compete in the global economy without being saddled with an unbearable amount of debt.

—C.J. Shea



## Interview with Ian Scott

**Co-facilitator of C.A.V.E.—on  
baseball, being from California,  
and figuring out where he'll be  
in five years.**

**So Mr. Scott, where are you from?**

I'm from California. I spent most of my life outside of Los Angeles, San Bernardino County.

**What is your fondest childhood memory?**

(Long pause) I would say... what I would say... I would say it was baseball. Not one event, but I was really into baseball. I got to meet a lot of players. It connects me to my childhood even today.

**If you could change one thing about your childhood or the way you were raised, what would it be?**

I would say the one thing I would change wouldn't be about me, it would be more about my surroundings or the environment I was raised in. What I mean by that is I had a pretty rough childhood. I had some trauma growing up; there were several traumatic events that I had to deal with. So while I don't necessarily wish the trauma didn't happen, I just wish that I had had people in my life that would've cared enough to help me, because I had to deal with these traumatic events on my own and that's a lot to have to deal with as a kid.

**Is your own past trauma what drew you to C.A.V.E.?**

A lot of my teenage years were rough because I was dealing with trauma in unhealthy ways, because I didn't know better, and so as I got older, I learned about what trauma is and how to deal with it. I wanted what I do to focus on a lot of the support that I wish I had been given earlier in life.

**Being a facilitator with C.A.V.E. and working with men with very different backgrounds than your own, does white guilt ever become an issue?**

I would say that is a very interesting question, and it's always something that I talk with my students about. I taught high school in Los Angeles where 100 percent of the students were either black or Latino. There were things that we could relate to, things in life like not having a lot of money, or living in a single-parent household. It was interesting in talking about how I grew up poor and my students grew up poor, but there were differences because we were different races. So it was never about dealing with white guilt; it was learning from each other's experience, and of understanding the different ways society treats people of different races differently.

**What have you overcome to get where you are today?**

I actually dropped out of high school when I was in the ninth grade, and if you look at the statistics of dropouts that go on to complete any type of degree let alone go into a Ph.D. program, it's very rare. The way I was able to do that and not be just another stat was that I saw college as a way to have a life where I could do work that's meaningful to me. So I never saw college as going to get a good job or a means of making a lot of money, I saw it as a way to learn about things that I care about.

**So, what did your return to education look like?**

Well, I got my G.E.D. at twenty-two. What really led me back to education was growing and learning about myself and really understanding what went on in childhood and really wanting to better myself. I'm truly glad that in the meantime nothing happened to prevent me from getting to the point that I could get back into school.

**What did you learn about yourself on the way to becoming the man you are today?**

Okay so I have two separate answers to this . . . so the first is something I didn't realize until I was an adult, which is that I'm much more resilient than I've ever given myself credit for. It's tough overcoming a difficult past, and I needed to learn to give myself credit for the progress that I've made throughout my life. And the second thing is not about me; it's about people, and that is that. Everyone has their own battles and everyone is going through something on their own, so I've always tried to give people the benefit of the doubt and understand that there might be something going on in their life that I can't see that is affecting them.

**Whose advice do you value the most right now, and why?**

I would say it's my mom's when I was growing up. My mom and I were not very close, but our relationship got stronger as I got older. Whenever there's something personal going on in my life she's the one I go to. So the reason for that is she knows me better than any other person in the world. She has seen me at my highest highs and my lowest lows, so her advice is really meaningful because she knows everything about me as a person.

**What is your area of study?**

I am in the Department of Educational Psychology, and specifically my program deals with research methodology and program/policy evaluation. So, the whole point of me studying this field is that I'm interested in helping to create a more just world for people with disabilities. Because of my own personal experiences and working with students with disabilities, I've seen a lot of how people with disabilities are marginalized and excluded from society in very disgusting ways. If I can do anything to improve that situation, in my opinion, I will have lived a successful life.

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**So what do these disgusting things look like?**

Persons with disabilities are less likely to have intimate personal relationships or friendships, also less likely to be paid equally for the same work, and are more likely to have violent encounters with law enforcement. In addition, this happens because this is how society is trained to view them, not because there is anything wrong with them. This also gives us an opportunity to correct these attitudes.

**Professionally in five years where do you hope to be and what will you be doing?**

My hope is that I can use everything I've learned in my Ph.D. program to work with communities to help people with disabilities live lives of dignity and respect. I'm sort of leaving myself open to where that's going to be because I don't want to limit myself or miss out on any opportunities. My focus is more on going where I'll be needed as opposed to focusing on what I want to do.

**What do you think it will feel like to finally become Dr. Ian Scott?**

On the one hand I've never been big on titles; it's something I've never sought out. But on the other hand, I'm actually really excited to be Dr. Scott, because in my past people have always told me that that is something I would never achieve.

**Will C.A.V.E. be the extent of your involvement with the EJP, or can we look forward to you expanding your involvement, possibly offering or doing a workshop or reading group?**

For right now, C.A.V.E. has been my only involvement, because my course work has taken up a bunch of my time. But since this is my last year of taking classes, I plan on getting more involved in different EJP programs. I would like to next summer offer a reading group and use that as a way to possibly try out ideas for a course I would like to offer in the future.

**Elena Quintana, one our other C.A.V.E. facilitators, posed the following in a past C.A.V.E. session and I'd like to wrap our inter-view with it: If you could have lunch with anyone living or departed who would it be, what would you eat, where would you meet, and what would you talk about?**

I would want to have lunch with President Barak Obama. I would want to meet in one those secret bunkers in the White House so we could speak freely without worry that our conversation would be overheard by anyone. I always feel like my best conversation happens over breakfast and coffee. I would want to have pancakes with maple syrup, fried eggs, hash browns, a huge mixed-fruit bowl, can't forget the vegetarian chorizo sausage. I've been following his career since he was a senator in Illinois and I've always seen him as one of those rare politicians that went into politics for all the right reasons and tried to do well and is genuinely a good person, and I still feel that is true about him. At the same time, as president he has made a lot of decisions that I find morally problematic. A lot of my discussion with him would focus on how he as an individual makes decisions that he himself might not agree with specifically in a position of power at that level—how much of himself has to go away for him to be able to make those decisions. And even further, does the individual even matter at that level? Is the system designed in such a way that it doesn't matter who's running the show because the outcomes will be the same regardless? The reason why I would be interested in having this type of discussion is that for those of us who are trying to make the world a better place, it shows us where we need to focus our attention to make change happen.

—Terrance Hanson

## When We All Act

*EJP student Ramon Cabrales left DCC late last September to complete the final stages of his journey home. Those EJP members fortunate enough to have met Mr. Cabrales could not help but be impressed by his quiet modesty and earnest commitment to education. He leaves a legacy of that commitment with Language Partners. The ongoing ESL program resulted from his inspired proposal to help non-English-speaking residents of Danville acquire the skills to pursue educational opportunities at DCC. The following is his outgoing reflection.*

As many of us at the time, in 2008 I was elated to learn that the University of Illinois was coming to Danville in the form of EJP. The University of Illinois . . . I witnessed how it all started. Basically we learned as we went how to deal with this new program, with this new dynamic. Ms. Ginsburg (she'll be the first to tell you not to call her "Doctor") and Mr. Sullivan (he'll be the first to tell you not to call her "Doctor") and Mr. Sullivan taught not-for-credit classes to "test" the waters. I took Mr. Sullivan's Psychology class. I loved it. It was a significant departure from what I had encountered in the past academically.

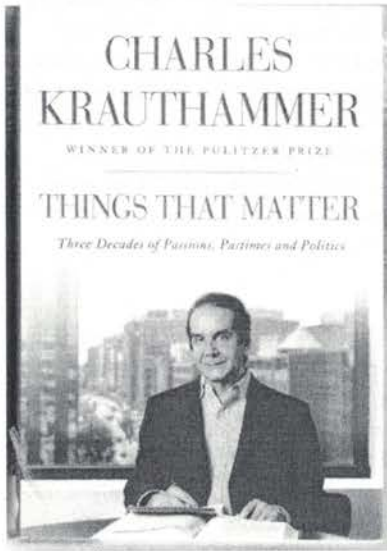
The first for-credit class that I took challenged me to look around me and see what could be changed. I had many ideas, but the most salient was to help other people from the general population to learn English. You see, years before EJP came here I saw how the ESL teacher at the time treated the students. I was taking college classes from Lake Land at the time, and I remember in our breaks the students would tell me how the teacher would sit with his feet on the desk reading the newspaper and give them tickets if they bothered him with questions. Because of the EJP class, a few years later I was in front of that desk along with other Teaching Partners teaching English and learning with the students.

I'd like to use this space to note that as much as I always get all the accolades for Language Partners, the Resource Partners and especially the Teaching Partners don't receive enough praise. I've witnessed the TPs spend many hours working in and out of the classroom. They are true professionals, the only thing lacking from their resume is a Master's degree. Other than that, they do everything a paid teacher does and more.

In Language Partners we not only teach English, but also critical thinking. One memorable experience was not long ago. I had given the students an article that I adapted from *National Geographic Magazine* to read for a week and to come prepared to talk about it the next class. The article talked about how Ciudad Juarez in Mexico came from being the most violent city in the world to not being in the first 50 in a matter of a few years due to changes that business people and organizations came together to enact (I put the article in the Public Documents in a folder named "Juarez"). After an interesting discussion we had as a class, I asked the students if the transformation in Juarez could be replicated in other cities in Mexico suffering







On January 20, 1981, the day Republican president Ronald Reagan was sworn in, Harvard Medical School graduate and practicing psychiatrist Charles Krauthammer began a new life as a journalist. “My life as a doctor felt constricted” said Krauthammer. “It was conducted entirely within the four walls of the hospital while outside there was a history unfolding which I felt impelled to contribute to.” Over the next 35 years, his writing would earn him a Pulitzer Prize for journalism and respect as one of America’s most influential conservative thinkers. In *Things That Matter: Three Decades of Passions, Pastimes, and Politics*, he shares with us a sundry collection of newspaper columns, magazine pieces, and essays from his long and celebrated career.

The majority of the pieces are drawn from the nationally syndicated column Krauthammer has written for the *Washington Post* since 1984. The articles are divided into four sections: personal, political, historical, and global. Each is written in a witty and distinctly cynical style that evokes both laughter and contemplation. Among the highlights of the personal section are thought-provoking articles on the lives of important historical figures such as Winston Churchill and mathematician Paul Erdos. Krauthammer makes passionate and well-thought arguments for why each is indispensable in the annals of world history.

While only one of the four sections is labeled political, every topic is viewed through a politico’s lens. “Politics,”

Krauthammer reminds us, “in all its grubby, grasping, corrupt, contemptible, manifestations—is sovereign in human affairs.” The majority of the articles are markedly conservative; however, articles arguing against the death penalty or for feminism reflect the author’s willingness to defy ideological convention. Ironically, just like the president inaugurated on his first day as a journalist, Krauthammer began his political career as a Democrat. In 1980 he began writing speeches for vice president Walter Mondale.

In the liberal culture of the Education Justice Project, Krauthammer’s conservative views give students an important look at the other side of the aisle. The ability to compare these ideas and find out where you stand is distinctly important when it comes to the deeply divisive issues in politics. As the entire twentieth century has shown us, if we get our politics wrong the consequences can be dire.

In the second half of the book Krauthammer turns to the issues of America’s role as a superpower, Jewish destiny, and an examination of the historical developments in our country over the past 35 years. He takes us through the “revival” of the 80’s, the “serenity” of the 90’s, and the “terror” of the 2000’s. Each piece is short but powerful. Krauthammer has a remarkable ability to, in only a few pages, get to the heart of topics about which whole books have been written.

Mr. Krauthammer’s book is not without flaws. His extremely partisan takes on the Iraq war and foreign policy in general are dripping with contempt for anything associated with the Clinton and Obama administrations. This derision at times diminishes the efficacy of his arguments. Also, he strays from conservatism to populism in pieces such as “First a Wall Then Amnesty” in which he argues for a wall on the Mexican border. Interestingly, despite arguing for some very Trump-like policies, even Krauthammer has refused to support the current Republican candidate.

English philosopher John Stuart Mill said that “truth emerges from an unfettered competition of ideas and that individual character is most improved when allowed to find its own

way.” It is in this spirit that a critical thinking EJP student might want to give this book a chance. While you may not agree with all of Mr. Krauthammer’s positions, listening to someone whose ideas and beliefs differ from your own can leave you feeling richer and more assured in your own beliefs.

—C.J. Shea

### *When We All Act*—continued

violence and corruption, or even in the country itself as a whole. Most students were pessimistic. They had lived on their own the violence and the corruption that sadly Mexico is lately known for. They didn’t think that anything could be done.

I just asked a question: “So what then? Are we just going to throw our arms in the air and say ‘Screw it! That’s the way it is.’?” Some students shared chilling stories of family members or acquaintances tortured or even killed for standing up. As much as I wanted to express my own views, I sympathized and tactfully guided the conversation as to how change most of the time involves baby steps. “You set one brick, the next person sets another one, until we have a new structure,” I told them. After many examples of what those bricks/baby steps were, the mood in the classroom changed to a more optimistic one.

This experience was enlightening. I believe it mirrors our current struggles in our desire to see things change. Undoubtedly, change requires passion, effort, commitment, and, unfortunately, pain and suffering. But it is worth it. History is filled with examples of dramatic change led by unlikely people. Through its classes, EJP is equipping us to be agents of change if we so desire. One day we will all go out to our communities. Though there may be many roadblocks, imagine what we could get accomplished in them if we all act.

—Ramón Cabrales

# Submission Guidelines

Comments and submissions may be addressed to *The Amplifier* and placed in the EJP suggestion box or handed to Ms. Cumpston or a member of *The Amplifier* editorial staff.

Submissions may be in any legible format.

Submissions will be selected for publication according to:

- 1) EJP values and standards as outlined in the EJP handbook
- 2) Editorial needs

Submissions will be edited for clarity, length, and technical issues, using the *Chicago Manual of Style* and AP guidelines as authoritative. When possible, editing will be done in cooperation with the author, and greater latitude will be given to creative/personal pieces.

The deadline for the December issue is November 25.

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Managing editor: Michael Lawless

Assistant managing editor: David Hensley

Copy editor: Terrance Hanson

Calendar editor: Nikia Perry

Graphics editor: Josh Walbert

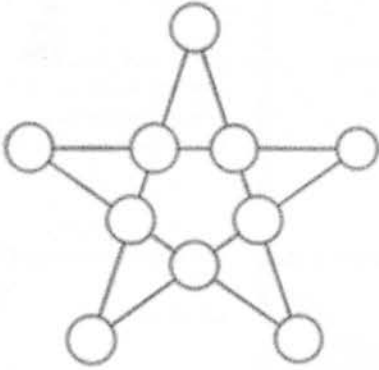
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Letters to the editor may be submitted within Danville to the Suggestion Box in the EJP library; or submitted by mail to EJP, 403 E. Healey Street, Champaign, IL 61820.

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## Eddie's Enigmas— MAGIC PENTAGRAM

Ten different positive integers must be placed in the ten circles of this pentagram so that each of the five rows has four integers that add up to the same sum as every other row. What is the smallest integer  $N$  such that every integer placed in the magic pentagram is less than or equal to  $N$ ?



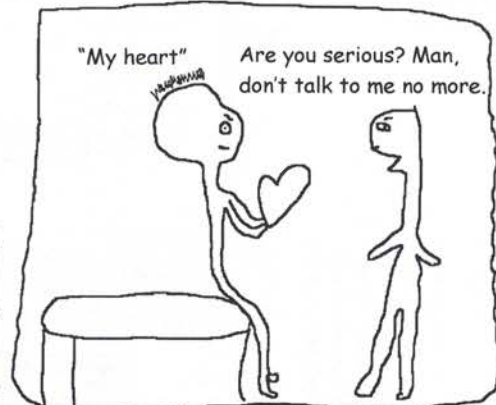
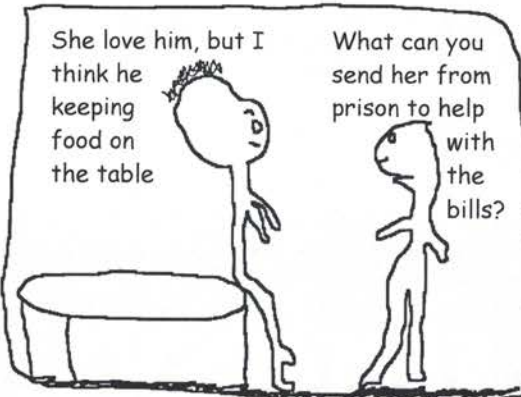
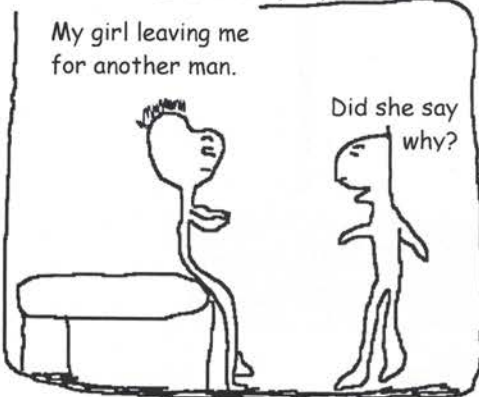
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Solutions to EDDIE'S ENIGMAS can be found on the bulletin boards in the Computer Lab and Resource Room 1.



—Anonymous

## Real Love by Raylan Gilford





# NOVEMBER

Updates to the calendar may be found in the EJP public documents November calendar!

## MONDAY

## TUESDAY

## WEDNESDAY

## THURSDAY

## FRIDAY

11:30a SRR  
5p WAMP  
5p Language Partners  
6p Academic Advising

1

6p Library Work

2

8:30a Intro to Python  
11:30a Bioinformatics  
5p Language Partners  
5p Mindfulness

3

9a Newsletter  
9a CAVE

4

5p For-credit courses:  
Finance II 199  
Teaching & Learning 446  
Ethical Theories 421  
Environ Sustainability 370

11:30a Computer Policy  
5p WAMP

7

SCHOOL CANCELED

8

9a CAVE  
5p Workshop: Cosmology

9

8:30a Networking  
11:30a Illinois Politics  
5p Language Partners  
5p Mindfulness

10

SCHOOL CANCELLED

11

5p WAMP

14

11:30a SRR  
5p Language Partners  
5p WAMP  
6p Academic Advising

15

5p Library Speaker: Brain Chat

16

8:30a What Makes you Tick  
12p Python Group  
5p Language Partners  
5p Mindfulness

17

9a Newsletter  
9a CAVE

18

5p For-credit courses:  
Teaching & Learning 446  
Ethical Theories 421  
Environ Sustainability 370

5p WAMP

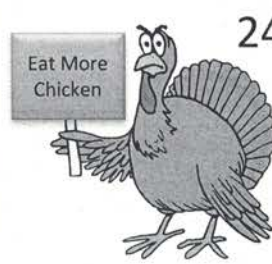
21

11:30a SRR  
5p Language Partners

22

5p CAVE  
5p Workshop: Illinois Politics

23



24

SCHOOL CANCELLED

25

5p WAMP

28

11:30a SRR  
5p Language Partners  
5p WAMP  
6p Academic Advising

29

11:30a Pit Crew  
5p Critical Climate Discussion

30

MAGIC PENTAGRAM HINT  
There are five rows of numbers, with equal sums. Therefore, the sum of all ten integers must be a number with a factor of five.

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.  
Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903)



# ILLINOIS

EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT