

Summative Argument Essay

Write an argument about one of the topics listed below. Your argument must have a claim, must acknowledge and refute the counterclaim, must make logical and emotional appeals, and must use at least three rhetorical devices. Choose one of the following to write about:

- **Does the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibit racial preferences in state university admissions?**

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides that: "No State shall ... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Yet many state universities give substantial preferences to certain races in their admissions decisions. In *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the Supreme Court approved such preferences, but the case was close, and controversial, and the question is back before the Supreme Court this term. One side may argue that these preferences level the playing field, remedy prior discrimination, and enhance diversity within the classroom, thus redeeming the true promise of equal protection. But the other may say that these preferences – in favor of some races, at the expense of others – are racial discrimination pure and simple, the precise evil that the Equal Protection Clause was intended to forbid.

- **Should the courts rather than college campuses decide sexual assault cases?**

High-profile cases have recently put campus sexual assault in the spotlight. One question that has repeatedly come up: why are these cases being handled by campuses at all? Title IX requires that every school receiving federal aid must take concrete steps to deal with hostile environments and sexual assault. This leaves colleges and universities with the task of figuring out what policies and procedures to enforce. Proponents say that campus investigations serve a real need, forcing schools to respond to violence and protecting the interests of victims in ways that the criminal justice system may fail. Can schools provide due process for defendants and adequate justice for victims, or do these cases belong in the courts?

- **Should Congress raise the federal gas tax in order to fund infrastructure?**

The Highway Trust Fund provides funding for road, bridge, and mass transit projects across the country – and it's running out of money. Its revenue source, the federal gas tax, at 18.4 cents a gallon, has not been raised in over two decades. Congress has been kicking this can down the road for years. There are many arguments for a leaner fund, among them, the idea that scaling back the program would force government to prioritize projects and eliminate waste. But proponents of the tax say that it still plays a vital role in supporting infrastructure, and that perpetual shortfalls have led to construction delays and uncertainty. Should Congress raise the federal gas tax?