PART

3

Writing an Argumentative Essay
Planning, Drafting, and Revising an Argumentative Essay

Should College Campuses Go Green?

In recent years, more and more American colleges and universities have been moving toward becoming green, emphasizing sustainability—the use of systems and materials that will not deplete the earth’s natural resources. Various schools have taken steps such as the following to become green:

- Placing an emphasis on recycling and reducing nonbiodegradable waste
- Creating green buildings and using eco-friendly materials in construction projects
- Instituting new curricula in environmental science
- Monitoring their greenhouse gas emissions and evaluating their carbon footprint
- Growing crops on campus to feed students
- Hiring full-time “sustainability directors”
- Encouraging students to use bikes instead of cars
- Purchasing wind-generated electricity to supply the campus’s energy
- Eliminating trays in college cafeterias

Although many schools have launched ambitious programs and projects to reduce their energy dependence, some have been more cautious, citing the high cost of such programs and the need to allocate resources elsewhere. Moreover, some critics of the green movement object to the notion that colleges should help to make students “sustainability literate.” Such critics consider the green movement to be an expression of political correctness that at best gives lip service to the problem and at worst threatens academic freedom by furthering a political agenda.

The question remains whether the green movement that is spreading rapidly across college campuses is here to stay or just a fad—or something between these two extremes. This chapter takes you through the process of writing an argumentative essay on the topic of whether college campuses should go green. (Exercises guide you through the process of writing your own argumentative essay.)
Before you can write a convincing argumentative essay, you need to understand the **writing process**. You are probably already familiar with the basic outline of this process, which includes **planning, drafting, and revising**. This chapter reviews this familiar process and explains how it applies to the specific demands of writing an argument.

### Choosing a Topic

The first step in planning an argumentative essay is to choose a topic you can write about. Your goal is to select a topic that you have some emotional stake in—not simply one that interests you. If you are going to spend hours planning, writing, and revising an essay, then you should care about your topic. At the same time, you should have an open mind about your topic and be willing to consider various viewpoints. Your topic also should be narrow enough to fit the boundaries of your assignment—the time you have to work on the paper and its length and scope.

Typically, your instructor will give you a general assignment, such as the following.

**Assignment**

Write a three- to five-page argumentative essay on a topic related to college services, programs, facilities, or curricula.

The first thing you need to do is narrow this general assignment to a topic, focusing on one particular campus service, program, facility, or curriculum. You could choose to write about any number of topics—financial aid, the writing center, athletics, the general education curriculum—taking a position, for example, on who should receive financial aid, whether to expand the writing center, whether college athletes should receive a salary, or why general education requirements are important for business majors.

If you are interested in the environment, however, you might decide to write about the green movement that is spreading across college campuses, perhaps using your observations of your own campus’s programs and policies to support your position.

**Topic**

The green movement on college campuses
TOPICS TO AVOID

Certain kinds of topics are not appropriate for argumentative essays. For one thing, some topics are just not arguable. For example, you could not write an argumentative essay on a statement of fact, such as the fact that many colleges saw their endowments decline after the financial crisis of 2008. (A fact is not debatable, so there can be no argument.)

Some familiar topics also present problems. These issues—the death penalty, abortion rights, and so on—are important (after all, that’s why they are written about) so often, but finding an original argument on either side of the debate can be a challenge. For example, you might have a hard time finding something new to say that would convince some readers that the death penalty is immoral or that abortion is a woman’s right. In many people’s minds, these issues are “settled.” When you write on topics such as these, some readers’ strong religious or cultural beliefs are likely to prevent them from considering your arguments, however well supported they might be.

Finally, topics that are very narrow or depend on subjective value judgments—or that take a stand on issues readers simply will not care much about, such as whether one particular video game or TV reality show is more entertaining than another—are unlikely to engage your audience (even if these topics are compelling to you and your friends).

EXERCISE 7.1

In response to the boxed assignment on the previous page, list ten topics that you could write about. Then, cross out any that do not meet the following criteria:

■ The topic interests you.
■ You know something about the topic.
■ You care about the topic.
■ You have an open mind about the topic.
■ The topic fits the boundaries of your assignment.

Finally, choose one topic to write an essay about.

Thinking about Your Topic

Before you can start to do research, develop a thesis statement, or plan the structure of your argument, you need to think a bit about the topic you
have chosen. You can use invention strategies, such as freewriting (writing without stopping for a predetermined time), brainstorming (making quick notes on your topic), or clustering (creating a diagram to map out your thoughts) to help you discover ideas you might write about. You can also explore ideas in a writing journal or in conversations with friends, classmates, family members, or instructors.

### Freewriting

**People say green is good, but I’m not sure why. Why do we need all these containers for different kinds of bottles and cans, white and colored paper, etc., etc.? In middle school, we learned about the “three Rs” to save the environment—one was Recycle, but I forget the other two. Renew? Reuse? Remember? Whatever. OK, I know not to throw trash on the ground, and I know we’re supposed to separate bottles from cans, etc. I get that. But does all this time and effort really do any good?**

### Brainstorming

**TOPIC: THE GREEN MOVEMENT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES**

- **When started? Why? (Real need — or just a fad?)**
  - Background on our campus
  - Help environment
    - Recycling cans
    - Styrofoam take-out containers in cafeteria
    - Paperless classes
  - Hurt environment

- **Students’ responsibility vs. school’s responsibility**

- **Do green campuses save money or waste money?**

- **FUTURE — more special courses? new majors?**
  - (Could green rules lead to police-state atmosphere on campus?)

- **Possible Drawback**

- **Does it really help?**
When you finish your preliminary exploration of ideas, you should be able to construct a quick informal outline that lists the ideas you plan to discuss.

**Informal Outline**

*Topic: The Green Movement on College Campuses*

**History/background**
- National
- Our campus

**Positive aspects**
- Helps environment
- Attracts new students

**Negative aspects**
- Cost
- Enforcement

**Future**
By grouping your ideas and arranging them in a logical order, an informal outline like the one above can help lead you to a thesis statement that expresses the position you will take on the issue.

**EXERCISE 7.2**
Focusing on the topic you chose in Exercise 7.1, freewrite to think of ideas you might write about in your essay.

**EXERCISE 7.3**
Continuing to work with the topic you chose in Exercise 7.1, brainstorm for ideas to write about.

**EXERCISE 7.4**
Still working with the topic you chose in Exercise 7.1, draw a cluster diagram to help you think of ideas to write about.

**EXERCISE 7.5**
Construct an informal outline for an essay on the topic you chose in Exercise 7.1.

### Drafting a Thesis Statement

After you have decided on a topic and thought about how you want to approach it, your next step is to take a stand on the issue you are going to discuss. You do this by expressing your position as a **thesis statement**.

A thesis statement is the central element of any argumentative essay. It tells readers what your position is and also perhaps indicates why you are taking this position and how you plan to support it. As you draft your thesis statement, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- An argumentative thesis statement is not simply a statement of your topic; rather, it expresses the point you will make about your topic.
  
  **TOPIC**
  The green movement on college campuses
  
  **THESIS STATEMENT**
  College campuses should go green.

- An argumentative thesis statement should be specific, clearly indicating to readers exactly what position you will take in your essay.
  
  **TOO GENERAL**
  Colleges need to do more to get students involved in environmental issues.
  
  **REVISED**
  Colleges should institute programs and classes to show students the importance of using sustainable resources.
An argumentative thesis statement should get right to the point, avoiding wordy, repetitive language.

**WORDY**

Because issues that revolve around the environment are so crucial and important, colleges should do more to increase student involvement in campus projects that are concerned with sustainability.

**REVISED**

Because environmental issues are so important, colleges should take steps to involve students in campus sustainability projects.

Many argumentative thesis statements include words such as *should* and *should not*.

- College campuses should ____________________________.
- Because _____________, colleges should ________________.
- Even though _____________, colleges should not _____________.

**NOTE**

At this point, any thesis that you come up with is tentative. As you think about your topic and as you read about it, you will very likely modify your thesis statement, perhaps expanding or narrowing its scope, rewording it to make it more precise, or even changing your position. Still, the thesis statement that you decide on at this point can help you focus your exploration of your topic.

**TENTATIVE THESIS STATEMENT**

*College campuses should go green.*

**EXERCISE 7.6**

List five possible thesis statements for the topic you chose in Exercise 7.1. Which thesis statement seems most promising for an essay? Why?

**Understanding Your Audience**

When you write an argument, your goal is to convince your audience to accept your position as sensible (or even compelling). Sometimes you will be able to change your readers’ minds and get them to accept your position—or even take some action in support of it. To make the best possible case to your audience, you need to understand who your audience is—what knowledge, values, beliefs, and opinions your readers might have.
You will also need to have some idea whether your audience is likely to be receptive, hostile, or neutral to the ideas you propose.

In most cases, it makes sense to assume that your readers are **skeptical**—that they have open minds but still need to be convinced. However, if you are writing about a topic that is very controversial, you will need to assume that at least some of your readers will not support your position and may, in fact, be hostile to it. If this is the case, they will be scrutinizing your arguments very carefully, looking for opportunities to argue against them. Your goal in this case is not necessarily to win them over but to make them more receptive to your position—or at least to get them to admit that you have made a good case even though they may disagree with you. At the same time, however, you also have to work to convince those who probably agree with you or are neutral (perhaps because the issue you are discussing is something they haven’t thought much about).

An audience of first-year college students who are used to the idea that sound environmental practices make sense might find the idea of a green campus appealing—and, in fact, natural and obvious. An audience of faculty or older students might be more skeptical, realizing that the benefits of green practices might be offset by the time and expense they could involve. College administrators might find the long-term goal of a green campus attractive (and see it as a strong recruitment tool), but they might also be somewhat hostile to your position, anticipating the considerable expense that would be involved. If you wrote an argument on the topic of green campuses, you would need to consider many of these positions—and, if possible, address them.

**EXERCISE 7.7**

Consider how different audiences might respond to the thesis statement you found the most promising in Exercise 7.6. Identify five possible groups of readers on your college campus—for example, athletes, history majors, or part-time faculty. Would you expect each group to be neutral, positive, or hostile to your thesis? Why?

**Gathering Evidence**

After you have a sense of who your audience will be and how they might react to your thesis, you can begin to collect **evidence** to support your thesis. As you look for evidence, you need to evaluate the usefulness and relevance of each of your sources, and you need to be alert for possible bias.

**Evaluating the Evidence in Your Sources**

As you read each potential source, consider the quality of the supporting evidence that the writer marshals to support his or her position. The more compelling the evidence, the more willing you should be to accept the writer’s ideas—and, perhaps, to integrate these ideas into your own essay.
(Don’t forget that if you use any of your sources’ ideas, you must document them. See Chapter 10 for information on MLA documentation format and Appendix B for information on APA documentation format.)

To be convincing, the evidence that is presented in the sources you review should be准确, 相关, 代表性和充分:

- **准确** evidence comes from reliable sources that you have quoted carefully—and not misrepresented by quoting out of context.
- **相关** evidence applies specifically (not just tangentially) to the topic under discussion.
- **代表** evidence is drawn from a fair range of sources, not just those that support your position.
- **充分** evidence is enough facts, statistics, expert opinion, and so on to support the essay’s thesis.

(For more detailed information on evaluating sources, see Chapter 8.)

**NOTE**

Remember, the evidence you use to support your own arguments should also satisfy the four criteria listed above.

**Detecting Bias in Your Sources**

As you select sources, you should be alert for bias—a writer’s use of preconceived ideas (rather than factual evidence) as support for his or her arguments. A writer who demonstrates bias may not be trustworthy, and you should approach such a writer’s arguments with skepticism. To determine whether a writer is biased, follow these guidelines:

- **Consider what a writer explicitly tells you** about his or her beliefs or opinions. For example, if a writer mentions that he or she is a lifelong member of the Sierra Club, a vegan, and the owner of a house heated by solar energy, then you should consider the possibility that he or she might downplay (or even disregard) valid arguments against a green campus rather than presenting a balanced view.

- **Look for slanted language.** For example, a writer who mocks supporters of environmental issues as politically correct or uses pejorative terms such as hippies for environmentalists should not earn your trust.

- **Consider the supporting evidence** the writer chooses. Does the writer present only examples that support his or her position and ignore valid opposing arguments? Does the writer quote only those experts
who agree with his or her position—for example, only pro- (or only anti-) environmental writers? A writer who does this is presenting an unbalanced (and therefore biased) case.

■ Consider the writer’s tone. A writer whose tone is angry, bitter, or sarcastic should be suspect.

■ Consider any overtly offensive statements or characterizations that a writer makes. A writer who makes negative assumptions about college students (for example, characterizing them as selfish and self-involved and therefore dismissing their commitment to campus environmental projects) should be viewed with skepticism.

NOTE

Be aware of any biases you hold that might affect the strength or logic of your own arguments. See “Being Fair,” page 256.

EXERCISE 7.8

What evidence might you use to support the thesis statement you decided on in Exercise 7.6?

EXERCISE 7.9

In writing an essay that supports the thesis statement you have been working with in this chapter, you might not be objective. What biases do you have that you might have to watch for as you research and write about your topic?

EXERCISE 7.10

Gather evidence to support your thesis statement, evaluating each source carefully (consulting Chapter 8 as necessary). Be on the lookout for bias in your sources.

Refuting Opposing Arguments

As you plan your essay and read sources that will supply your supporting evidence, you will encounter evidence that contradicts your position. You may be tempted to ignore this evidence, but if you do, your argument will be less convincing. Instead, as you do your research, identify the most convincing arguments against your position and prepare yourself to refute them (that is, disprove them or call them into question), showing them to be illogical, unfair, or untrue. Indicating to readers that you are willing to address these arguments—and that you can respond effectively to them—will help convince them to accept your position.
Of course, simply saying that your opponent’s position is “wrong” or “stupid” is not convincing. You need to summarize opposing arguments accurately and clearly identify their weaknesses. In the case of a strong opposing argument, be sure to acknowledge its strengths before you refute it; if you do not, readers may see you as uninformed or unfair. Also be careful not to create a straw man—distorting an opposing argument by oversimplifying it so it can be easily refuted (for example, claiming that environmentalists believe that sustainability should always be a college’s first priority in its decisions about allocating resources). This unfair tactic will discourage readers from trusting you and thus will undermine your credibility.

**NOTE**

Sometimes an opposing argument is so strong that you will not be able to refute it. If you cannot demonstrate that an opposing argument is weak or false, it makes sense to concede the point—perhaps noting that it is not central to your discussion or that it is beside the point—and then move on.

Although refutation is a key element of an argumentative essay, it can also provide the structure for an entire essay. For example, if you are writing an essay for an audience of students who believe they have no time to pay attention to campus environmental issues, you might structure your essay as a refutation. Your essay would discuss and refute each of your audience’s objections and then present your own position. A thesis statement such as the following one would indicate that your essay was structured as a refutation:

> Although protecting the environment may be time-consuming, a green campus should be a priority for every U.S. college student.

**Revising Your Thesis Statement**

Before you can draft your argumentative essay and even before you can begin to arrange your ideas, you need to revise your tentative thesis statement so it says exactly what you want it to say.

After you have gathered and evaluated evidence to support your position and considered the merits of opposing ideas, you are ready to refocus your thesis and state it in more definite terms. Although a tentative thesis statement such as “College campuses should go green” is a good start, the thesis that guides your essay’s structure should be more specific. In fact, it will be most useful as a guide if it actually acknowledges opposing arguments in its phrasing.
EXERCISE 7.11

Consulting the sources you gathered in Exercise 7.10, list all the arguments against the position that you took in your thesis statement. Then, list possible refutations of these arguments. When you have finished, revise your thesis statement so that it is more specific, acknowledging and refuting the most important argument against your position.

After you have revised your thesis statement, you will have a concise blueprint for the essay you are going to write. Now, you are ready to plan your essay’s structure and write a first draft.

Structuring Your Essay

As you learned in Chapter 1, an argumentative essay, like other essays, includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. In the introduction of an argumentative essay, you state your thesis; in the body paragraphs, you present evidence to support your thesis, and you refute opposing arguments; and in your conclusion, you bring your argument to a close and reinforce your thesis with a strong concluding statement. As you have seen, these four elements—thesis, evidence, refutation, and concluding statement—are like the four pillars of the ancient Greek temple, supporting your argument so that it will stand up to scrutiny.

SUPPLYING BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Depending on what you think your readers know—and what you think they need to know—you might decide to include a background paragraph that supplies information about the issue you are discussing. For example, in an essay about green campuses, you might briefly sum up the history of the U.S. environmental movement and trace its rise on college campuses. If you decide to include a background paragraph, it should be placed right after your introduction, where it can prepare readers for the discussion to follow.
Understanding basic essay structure can help you as you shape your essay. Using induction and deduction, identifying a strategy for your argument, and constructing a formal outline can also help you develop the body of your essay.

**Using Induction and Deduction**

Many argumentative essays are structured either *inductively* or *deductively*. (See Chapter 5 for explanations of induction and deduction.) For example, the body of an essay with the thesis statement that is shown on page 252 could have either of the following general structures:

**INDUCTIVE STRUCTURE**
- Colleges are taking a number of steps to follow green practices.
- Through these efforts, campuses have become more environmentally responsible, and their programs and practices have made a positive difference.
- Because these efforts are helping to save the planet, they should be expanded.

**DEDUCTIVE STRUCTURE**
- Saving the planet is vital.
- Green campuses can help to save the planet.
- Therefore, colleges should create green campuses.

These strategies offer two options for arranging material in your essay. Many argumentative essays, however, combine induction and deduction or use other strategies to shape their ideas.

**Identifying a Strategy for Your Argument**

As Part 5 of this book makes clear, there are a variety of different ways to structure an argument, and the strategy you use depends on what you want your argument to accomplish. In this text, we discuss six options for presenting material: *definition arguments*, *causal arguments*, *evaluation arguments*, *proposal arguments*, *argument by analogy*, and *ethical arguments*.

Any of the six options listed above could guide you as you developed an essay on green campuses:

- You could structure your essay as a *definition argument*, explaining the concept of a green campus and giving examples to show how it operates. (See Chapter 12 for more on definition arguments.)
You could structure your essay as a **causal argument**, showing how establishing a green campus could have positive results for students and for the campus. (See Chapter 13 for more on causal arguments.)

You could structure your essay as an **evaluation argument**, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of various programs and policies designed to create and sustain a green campus. (See Chapter 14 for more on evaluation arguments.)

You could structure your essay as a **proposal argument**, recommending a particular program, service, or course of action and showing how it can support a green campus. (See Chapter 15 for more on proposal arguments.)

You could structure your essay as an **argument by analogy**, showing how a college campus is a city in miniature and should therefore be green for the same reasons cities should have responsible environmental policies—to protect its citizens, buildings, natural resources, and institutions. (See Chapter 16 for more on argument by analogy.)

You could structure your essay as an **ethical argument**, explaining why creating a green campus is the right thing to do from a moral or ethical standpoint. (See Chapter 17 for more on ethical arguments.)

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**NOTE**

Keep in mind that you might also decide to structure your essay as a **refutation**. (See pp. 22–23 for more on refutation.)

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**Constructing a Formal Outline**

If you like, you can construct a **formal outline** before you begin your draft. (Later on, you can also construct an outline of your finished paper to check the logic of its structure.) A formal outline, which is more detailed and more logically organized than the informal outline shown on page 245, presents your main points and supporting details in the order in which you will discuss them.

A formal outline of the first body paragraph of the student essay on page 267 would look like this:

1. **Background of the term green**
   - A. **1960s environmental movement**
     1. Political agenda
     2. Environmental agenda
   - B. **Today’s movements**
     1. Eco-friendly practices
     2. Green values
Following a formal outline makes the drafting process flow smoothly, but many writers find it hard to predict exactly what details they will use for support or how they will develop their arguments. In fact, your first draft is likely to move away from your outline as you develop your ideas. Still, if you are the kind of writer who prefers to know where you are going before you start on your way, you will probably consider the time you devote to outlining to be time well spent.

**EXERCISE 7.12**

Look back at the thesis you decided on earlier in this chapter, and review the evidence you collected to support it. Then, construct a formal outline for your argumentative essay.

**Establishing Credibility**

Before you begin writing your draft, you need to think about how to approach your topic and your audience. The essay you write will use a combination of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals, and you will have to be careful to use these appeals reasonably. (See the introduction to this book for information on these appeals.) As you write, you will concentrate on establishing yourself as well informed, reasonable, and fair.

**Being Well Informed**

If you expect your readers to accept your ideas, you will need to establish yourself as someone they should believe and trust. This involves showing your audience that you have a good command of your material—that is, that you know what you are talking about.

If you want readers to listen to what you are saying, you need to earn their respect by showing them that you have done your research, that you have collected evidence that supports your argument, and that you understand the most compelling arguments against your position. For example, discussing your own experiences as a member of a campus or community environmental group, your observations at a Greenpeace convention, and essays and editorials that you have read on both sides of the issue will encourage your audience to accept your ideas on the subject of green campuses.

**Being Reasonable**

Even if your evidence is strong, your argument will not be convincing if it does not seem reasonable. One way to present yourself as a reasonable person is to establish common ground with your readers, stressing possible points of agreement instead of attacking those who might disagree with your position. For example, saying, “We all want our planet to survive” is a
more effective strategy than saying, “Those who do not support the concept of a green campus are going to destroy our planet.” (For more on establishing common ground, see the discussion of Rogerian argument in Chapter 6.)

Another way to present yourself as a reasonable person is to **maintain a reasonable tone**. Try to avoid absolutes (words like *always* and *never*); instead, use more conciliatory language (*in many cases*, *much of the time*, and so on). Try not to use words and phrases like *obviously* or *as anyone can see* to introduce points whose strength may be obvious only to you. Do not brand opponents of your position as misguided, uninformed, or deluded; remember, some of your readers may hold opposing positions and will not appreciate your unfavorable portrayal of them.

Finally, be very careful to treat your readers with respect, addressing them as your intellectual equals. Avoid statements that might insult them or their beliefs (“Although some ignorant or misguided people may still think . . .”). And never assume that your readers know less about your topic than you do; they may actually know a good deal more.

**Being Fair**

If you want readers to respect your point of view, you need to demonstrate respect for them by being fair. It is not enough to support your ideas convincingly and maintain a reasonable tone. You also need to avoid unfair tactics in your argument and take care to avoid **bias**.

In particular, you should be careful not to **distort evidence**, **quote out of context**, **slant evidence**, **make unfair appeals**, or **use logical fallacies**. These unfair tactics may influence some readers in the short term, but in the long run such tactics will alienate your audience.

- **Do not distort evidence.** Distorting (or misrepresenting) **evidence** is an unfair tactic. It is not ethical or fair, for example, to present your opponent’s views inaccurately or to exaggerate his or her position and then argue against it. If you want to argue that green programs on college campuses are a good idea, then it is not fair to attack someone who expresses reservations about their cost by writing, “Mr. McNamara’s concerns about cost reveal that he has basic doubts about saving the planet.” (His concerns reveal no such thing.) It is, however, fair to acknowledge your opponent’s reasonable concerns about cost and then go on to argue that the long-term benefits of such programs justify their expense.

- **Do not quote out of context.** It is perfectly fair to challenge someone’s stated position. It is not fair, however, to misrepresent that position by **quoting out of context**—that is, by taking the words out of the original setting in which they appeared. For example, if a college dean says, “For schools with limited resources, it may be more important to allocate
resources to academic programs than to environmental projects,” you are quoting the dean’s remarks out of context if you say, “According to Dean Levering, it is ‘more important to allocate resources to academic programs than to environmental projects.’”

■ **Do not slant evidence.** An argument based on slanted evidence is not fair. Slanting involves choosing only evidence that supports your position and ignoring evidence that challenges it. This tactic makes your position seem stronger than it actually is. Another kind of slanting involves using biased language to unfairly characterize your opponents or their positions—for example, using a dismissive term such as tree-hugger to describe a concerned environmentalist.

■ **Do not make unfair appeals.** If you want your readers to accept your ideas, you need to avoid unfair appeals to the emotions, such as appeals to your audience’s fears or prejudices. For example, if you try to convince readers of the importance of using green building materials by saying, “Construction projects that do not use green materials doom future generations to a planet that cannot sustain itself,” you are likely to push neutral (or even receptive) readers to skepticism or to outright hostility.

■ **Do not use logical fallacies.** Using logical fallacies (flawed arguments) in your writing will alienate your readers. (See Chapter 5 for information about logical fallacies.)

**MAINTAINING YOUR CREDIBILITY**

An argument is no place for modesty. Be careful to avoid phrases that undercut your credibility (“Although this is not a subject I know much about”) and to avoid apologies (“This is just my opinion”). Be as clear, direct, and forceful as you can, showing readers you are confident as well as knowledgeable. And, of course, be sure to proofread carefully: grammatical and mechanical errors and typos will weaken your credibility.

**Drafting Your Essay**

Once you understand how to approach your topic and your audience, you will be ready to draft your essay. At this point, you will have selected the sources you will use to support your position as well as identified the strongest arguments against your position (and decided how to refute them). You may also have prepared a formal outline (or perhaps just a list of points to follow).
Now, you need to focus on some guidelines for drafting your essay. As you write, keep the following points in mind:

- **Follow the general structure of an argumentative essay.** State your thesis in your first paragraph, and discuss each major point in a separate paragraph, moving from least to most important point to emphasize your strongest argument. Introduce each body paragraph with a clearly worded topic sentence. Discuss each opposing argument in a separate paragraph, and be sure your refutation appears directly after you summarize each opposing argument. Finally, don’t forget to include a strong concluding statement in your essay’s last paragraph.

- **Decide how to arrange your material.** As you draft your essay, you may notice that it is turning out to be an ethical argument, an argument by analogy, or another kind of argument that you recognize. If this is the case, you can follow the guidelines outlined in the appropriate chapter in Part 5 of this book.

- **Use evidence effectively.** As you make your points, select the evidence that supports your argument most convincingly. As you write, summarize or paraphrase relevant information from your sources, and respond to this information in your own voice, supplementing material that you find in your sources with your own original ideas and conclusions. (For information on finding and evaluating sources, see Chapter 8; for information on integrating source material into your argumentative essay, see Chapter 9.)

- **Use coordination and subordination to make your meaning clear.** Readers shouldn’t have to guess how two points are connected; you should use coordination and subordination to show them the relationship between ideas.

  Choose **coordinating conjunctions**—and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet—carefully, making sure you are using the right word for your purpose. (Use and to show addition; but, for, or yet to show contradiction; or to present alternatives; and so to indicate a causal relationship.)

  Choose **subordinating conjunctions**—although, because, and so on—carefully, and place them so that your emphasis will be clear.

  Consider the following two sentences.

  Achieving a green campus is vitally important. Creating a green campus is expensive.

  If you want to stress the idea that green measures are called for, you would write the following:
Although creating a green campus is expensive, achieving a green campus is vitally important.

If, on the other hand, you want to place emphasis on the high cost, you would write the following:

Although achieving a green campus is vitally important, creating a green campus is expensive.

- **Include transitional words and phrases.** Be sure you have enough transitions to guide your readers through your discussion. You need to supply signals that move readers from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph, and the signals you choose need to make sense in the context of your discussion.

**SOME TRANSITIONS FOR ARGUMENT**

- To show causal relationships: *because, as a result, for this reason*
- To indicate sequence: *first, second, third; then; next; finally*
- To introduce additional points: *also, another, in addition, furthermore, moreover*
- To move from general to specific: *for example, for instance, in short, in other words*
- To identify an opposing argument: *however, although, even though, despite*
- To grant the validity of an opposing argument: *certainly, admittedly, granted, of course*
- To introduce a refutation: *however, nevertheless, nonetheless, still*

- **Define your terms.** If the key terms of your argument have multiple meanings—as *green* does—be sure to indicate what the term means in the context of your argument. Terms like *environmentally friendly, global warming, climate change, environmentally responsible, sustainable,* and *sustainability literacy* may mean very different things to different readers.

- **Use clear language.** An argument is no place for vague language or wordy phrasing. If you want readers to understand your points, your writing should be clear and direct. Avoid vague words like *good, bad, right,* and *wrong,* which are really just unsupported judgments that do
nothing to help you make your case. Also avoid wordy phrases such as *revolves around* and *is concerned with*, particularly in thesis statements and topic sentences.

- Finally, show your confidence and your mastery of your material. Avoid qualifying your statements with phrases like *I think*, *I believe*, *it seems to me*, and *in my opinion*. These qualifiers weaken your argument by suggesting that you are unsure of your material or that the statements to follow may not be true.

### GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

#### Using Parallelism

As you draft your argumentative essay, you should express corresponding words, phrases, and clauses in **parallel** terms. The use of matching parts of speech to express corresponding ideas strengthens your argument’s impact because it enables readers to follow your line of thought. In particular, use parallelism in sentences that highlight *paired items* or *items in a series*.

- **Paired Items**
  
  **UNCLEAR** Creating a green campus is important because it *sets* an example for students and the environment will be *protected*.
  
  **PARALLEL** Creating a green campus is important because it *sets* an example for students and *protects* the environment.

- **Items in a Series**
  
  **UNCLEAR** Students can do their part to support a green campus in four ways—by *avoiding* bottled water, use of electricity *should be limited*, and they *can recycle* packaging and also *educating* themselves about environmental issues is a good strategy.
  
  **PARALLEL** Students can do their part to support a green campus in four ways—by *avoiding* bottled water, by *limiting* use of electricity, by *recycling* packaging, and by *educating* themselves about environmental issues.

#### EXERCISE 7.13

Keeping the above guidelines in mind, write a draft of an argumentative essay that develops the thesis statement you have been working with.
Revising Your Essay

After you have written a draft of your essay, you will need to revise it. Revision is “re-seeing”—looking carefully and critically at the draft you have written. Revision is different from editing and proofreading (discussed on pp. 265–266), which focus on grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and the like. In fact, revision can involve substantial reworking of your essay’s structure and content. The strategies discussed on the pages that follow can help you revise your arguments.

Asking Questions

Asking some basic questions, such as those in the two checklists that follow, can help you start the revision process.

CHECKLIST

Questions about Your Essay’s Structure and Style

☐ Do you have a clearly stated thesis?
☐ Are your topic sentences clear and concise?
☐ Do you provide all necessary background and definitions?
☐ Do you refute opposing arguments effectively?
☐ Do you include enough transitional words and phrases to guide readers smoothly through your discussion?
☐ Have you avoided vague language and wordy phrasing?
☐ Do you have a strong concluding statement?

CHECKLIST

Questions about Your Essay’s Supporting Evidence

☐ Do you support your opinions with evidence—facts, observations, examples, statistics, expert opinion, and so on?
☐ Do you have enough evidence to support your thesis?
☐ Do the sources you rely on present information accurately and without bias?
☐ Are your sources’ discussions directly relevant to your topic?
☐ Have you consulted sources that represent a wide range of viewpoints, including sources that challenge your position?
The answers to the questions on the preceding page may lead you to revise your essay’s content, structure, and style. For example, you may want to look for additional sources that can provide the kind of supporting evidence you need. Or, you may notice you need to revise the structure of your essay, perhaps rearranging your points so that the most important point is placed last, for emphasis. You may also want to revise your essay’s introduction and conclusion, sharpening your thesis statement or adding a stronger concluding statement. Finally, you may decide to add more background material to help your readers understand the issue you are writing about.

**Using Outlines and Templates**
To check the logic of your essay’s structure, you can prepare a revision outline or consult a template.

- To make sure your essay’s key points are arranged logically and supported convincingly, you can construct a formal outline of your draft. (See p. 254 for information on formal outlines.) This outline will indicate whether you need to discuss an additional point, add supporting evidence, or refute an opposing argument more fully. It will also show you if paragraphs are arranged in a logical order.

- To make sure your argument flows smoothly from thesis statement to evidence to refutation of opposing arguments to concluding statement, you can refer to one of the paragraph templates that appear throughout this book. These templates can help you to construct a one-paragraph summary of your essay.

**Getting Feedback**
After you have done as much as you can on your own, it is time to get feedback from your instructor and (with your instructor’s permission) from your school’s writing center or from other students in your class.

**Instructor Feedback** You can get feedback from your instructor in a variety of different ways. For example, your instructor may ask you to email a draft of your paper to him or her with some specific questions (“Do I need paragraph 3, or do I have enough evidence without it?” “Does my thesis statement need to be more specific?”). The instructor will then reply with corrections and recommendations. If your instructor prefers a traditional face-to-face conference, you may still want to email your draft ahead of time so that he or she will have had time to read it.
Writing Center Feedback  You can also get feedback from a writing center tutor, who can be either a student or a professional. The tutor can give you another point of view about your paper’s content and organization and also help you focus on specific questions of style, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. (Keep in mind, however, that a tutor will not edit or proofread your paper for you; that is your job.)

Peer Review  Finally, you can get feedback from your classmates. Peer review can be an informal process in which you ask a classmate for advice, or it can be a more structured process, involving small groups working with copies of students’ work. Peer review can also be conducted electronically. For example, students can exchange drafts by email or respond to one another’s drafts that are posted on the course Web site. They can also use Word’s comment tool, as illustrated in the following example.

DRAFT

Colleges and universities have no excuse for ignoring the threat of global warming. Campus leaders need to push beyond efforts to recycle or compost and instead become models of sustainability. Already, many universities are hard at work demonstrating that reducing their institution’s environmental impact is not only possible but worthwhile. They are overhauling their entire infrastructure, their buildings, systems, and even curriculum. While many students, faculty, staff, and administrators are excited by these new challenges, some still question this need to go green. Is it worth the money? Is it promoting “a moral and behavioral agenda rather than an educational one”? (Butcher). In fact, greening will ultimately save institutions money while providing their students with a good education. Colleges should make every effort to create green campuses because by doing so they will help solve the global climate crisis.

FINAL VERSION

Over the last few years, the pressure to go green has led colleges and universities to make big changes. The threats posed by global warming are inspiring campus leaders to push beyond efforts to recycle to become models of sustainability. Today, in the interest of reducing their environmental impact, many campuses are seeking to overhaul their entire infrastructure—their buildings, their systems, and even their curriculum. While many students, faculty, staff, and administrators are excited by these new challenges, some question this need to go green. Is it worth the money? Is it promoting “a moral and behavioral agenda rather than an educational one”? (Butcher). In
fact, greening will ultimately save institutions money while providing their students with the educational opportunities necessary to help them solve the crisis of their generation. Despite the expense, colleges should make every effort to create green campuses because by doing so they will improve their own educational environment, ensure their own institution’s survival, and help solve the global climate crisis.

NOTE
Remember that the peer-review process involves giving feedback as well as receiving it. When you respond to a classmate’s work, be tactful and supportive when pointing out shortcomings or errors, give praise and encouragement whenever possible, and be generous with your suggestions for improvement.

EXERCISE 7.14
Following the guidelines for revision discussed earlier, get some feedback from others, and then revise your argumentative essay.

Adding Visuals
After you have gotten feedback about the ideas in your paper, you might want to consider adding a visual—a chart, graph, table, photo, or diagram—to help you make a point more forcefully. For example, in a paper on the green campus movement, you could include anything from photos of students recycling to a chart comparing energy use at different schools. Sometimes a visual can be so specific, so attractive, or so dramatic that its impact will be greater than words would be. At other times, a visual can expand and support a verbal argument.

You can create a visual yourself, or you can download one from the Internet, beginning your search with Google Images. If you download a visual and paste it into your paper, be sure to include a reference to the visual in your discussion to show readers how it supports your argument.

NOTE
Don’t forget to label your visual with a figure number, to use proper documentation, and to include a caption explaining what the visual shows, as the student paper that begins on page 267 does. (For information on how to document visuals, see Chapter 10.)
Polishing Your Essay

The final step in the writing process is putting the finishing touches on your essay. At this point, your goal is to make sure that your essay is well organized, convincing, and clearly written, with no distracting grammatical or mechanical errors.

Editing

When you edit your revised draft, you review your essay’s overall structure, style, and sentence construction, but you focus on grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Editing is an important step in the writing process because an interesting, logically organized argument will not be convincing if readers are distracted by run-ons and fragments, confusingly placed modifiers, or incorrect verb forms. (Remember, your grammar checker will spot some grammatical errors, but it will miss many others.)

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun must always agree in number with its antecedent, the word to which it refers. Every pronoun must clearly refer to a particular antecedent.

| CONFUSING | College administrators, faculty members, and staff members must work hard to show every student that a green campus will benefit them. |
| REVISED   | College administrators, faculty members, and staff members must work hard to show every student that a green campus will benefit him or her. |

Proofreading

When you proofread your revised and edited draft, you carefully read every word, trying to spot any remaining punctuation or mechanical errors, as well as any typographical errors (typos) or misspellings that your spell checker may have missed. (Remember, a spell checker will not flag a correctly spelled word that is used incorrectly.)
GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Contractions versus Possessive Pronouns
Be especially careful not to confuse the contractions it’s, who’s, they’re, and you’re with the possessive forms its, whose, their, and your.

INCORRECT  Its not always clear who’s responsibility it is to promote green initiatives on campus.
CORRECT    It’s not always clear whose responsibility it is to promote green initiatives on campus.

Choosing a Title
After you have edited and proofread your essay, you need to give it a title. Ideally, your title should create interest in your topic and give readers clear information about the subject of your essay. It should also be appropriate for your topic. A serious topic calls for a serious title, and a thoughtfully presented argument deserves a thoughtfully selected title.

A title does not need to surprise or shock readers. It also should not be long and wordy or something many readers will not understand. A simple statement of your topic ("Going Green") or of your position on the issue ("College Campuses Should Go Green") is usually all that is needed. If you like, you can use a quotation from one of your sources as a title ("Green Is Good").

EXERCISE 7.15
Evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of the following titles for an argumentative essay on green campuses. Be prepared to explain the strengths and weaknesses of each title.

- Green Campuses
- It’s Not Easy Being Green
- The Lean, Clean, Green Machine
- What Students Can Do to Make Their Campuses More Environmentally Responsible
- Why Campuses Should Be Green
- Planting the Seeds of the Green Campus Movement
- The Green Campus: An Idea Whose Time Has Come
Chapter 7  Planning, Drafting, and Revising an Argumentative Essay

Checking Format

Finally, make sure that your essay follows your instructor’s guidelines for documentation style and manuscript format. (The student paper below follows MLA style and manuscript format. For additional sample essays illustrating MLA and APA documentation style and manuscript format, see Chapter 10 and Appendix B, respectively.)

The following student essay, “Going Green,” argues that colleges should make every effort to create green campuses.

GOING GREEN
SHAWN HOLTON

1  Over the last few years, the pressure to go green has led colleges and universities to make big changes. The threats posed by global warming are encouraging campus leaders to push beyond early efforts, such as recycling, to become models of sustainability. Today, in the interest of reducing their environmental impact, many campuses are seeking to overhaul their entire infrastructure. Although many students, faculty, staff, and administrators are excited by these new challenges, some question this need to go green. Is it worth the money? Is it promoting “a moral and behavioral agenda rather than an educational one”? (Butcher). In fact, greening will ultimately save institutions money while providing their students with the educational opportunities necessary to help them solve the crisis of their generation. Colleges should make every effort to create green campuses because by doing so they will improve their own educational environment, ensure their own institution’s survival, and help solve the global climate crisis.

2 Although the green movement has been around for many years, green has only recently become a buzzword. Green political parties and groups began forming in the 1960s to promote environmentalist goals (“Environmentalism”). These groups fought for “grassroots democracy, social justice, and nonviolence” in addition to environmental protections

1
Introduction

2
Thesis statement

Body paragraph: Background of green movement
and were “self-consciously activist and unconventional” in their strategies (“Environmentalism”). Today, however, green denotes much more than a political movement; it has become a catchall word for anything eco-friendly. People use green to describe everything from fuel-efficient cars to fume-free house paint. Green values have become more mainstream in response to evidence that human activities, particularly those that result in greenhouse-gas emissions, may be causing global warming at a dramatic rate (“Call for Climate Leadership” 4). To fight this climate change, many individuals, businesses, and organizations are choosing to go green, making sustainability and preservation of the environment a priority.

Greening a college campus means moving toward a sustainable campus that works to conserve the earth’s natural resources. It means reducing the university’s carbon footprint by focusing on energy efficiency in every aspect of campus life. This is no small task. Although replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent ones and offering more locally grown food in dining halls are valuable steps, meaningful sustainability requires more comprehensive changes. For example, universities also need to invest in alternative energy sources, construct new buildings and remodel old ones, and work to reduce campus demand for nonrenewable products. Although these changes will eventually save universities money, in most cases, the institutions will need to spend money now to reduce costs in the long term. To achieve this transformation, many colleges are—individually or in cooperation with other schools—establishing formal “climate commitments,” setting specific goals, and developing tools to track their investments and evaluate their progress.

Despite these challenges, there are many compelling reasons to act now. Saving money on operating costs, thus making the school more competitive in the long term, is an appealing incentive. In fact, many schools have made solid and sometimes immediate gains by greening some aspect of their campus. For example, by changing its parking and transit systems to encourage more carpooling, biking, and walking, Cornell University has saved 417,000 gallons of fuel and cut costs by $36 million over the last twelve years (“Call for Climate Leadership” 10). By putting in a “smart grid” that improves efficiency in energy distribution
and use for three new buildings, Drexel University in Philadelphia is saving 20% on energy costs. By using a similar smart grid and by generating three megawatts of their own green power, Santa Clara University is working toward being entirely energy independent (McClure 64). Given the high cost of electricity in California, getting off the grid offers significant savings; as one university administrator puts it, “Those 3 megawatts allow us to stay open” (qtd. in McClure 64). And Oberlin College not only saves money by generating its own solar energy (as shown in Fig. 1) but also makes money by selling its excess electricity back to the local power company (Petersen). Many other schools have taken similar steps, with similarly positive results.

Attracting the attention of the media, donors, and—most significantly—prospective students is another practical reason for schools to go green. As one researcher explains, “There is enough evidence nationwide to detect an arms-race of sorts among universities competing for green status” (Krizek et al. 27). The Princeton Review now includes a “green rating,” and according to recent studies, more than two thirds of college applicants say that they consider green ratings when choosing a school (Krizek et al. 27). A school’s commitment to the environment can also bring in large private donations. For example, Carnegie Mellon University attracted $1.7 million from the National Science Foundation for its new Center for Sustainable Engineering (Egan). The University of California, Davis, will be receiving up to $25 million from the Chevron Corporation to research biofuel technology (“Call for Climate Leadership” 10). While greening certainly costs money, a green commitment can also help a school remain financially viable.

In addition to these practical reasons for going green, universities also have another, perhaps more important, reason to promote and model sustainability: doing so may help solve the climate crisis.
Although an individual school’s reduction of emissions may not noticeably affect global warming, its graduates will be in a position to make a huge impact. College is a critical time in most students’ personal and professional development. Students are making choices about what kind of adults they will be, and they are also receiving the training, education, and experience that they will need to succeed in the working world. If universities can offer time, space, and incentives—both in and out of the classroom—to help students develop creative ways to live sustainably, these schools have the potential to change the thinking and habits of a whole generation.

Many critics of greening claim that becoming environmentally friendly is too expensive and will result in higher tuition and fees. However, often a very small increase in fees, as little as a few dollars a semester, can be enough to help a school institute significant change. For example, at the University of Colorado–Boulder, a student-initiated $1 increase in fees allowed the school to purchase enough wind power to reduce its carbon emissions by 12 million pounds (“Call for Climate Leadership” 9). Significantly, the students were the ones who voted to increase their own fees to achieve a greener campus. Although university faculty and administrators’ commitment to sustainability is critical for any program’s success, few green initiatives will succeed without the enthusiastic support of the student body. Ultimately, students have the power. If they think their school is spending too much on green projects, then they can make a change or choose to go elsewhere.

Other critics of the trend toward greener campuses believe that schools with commitments to sustainability are dictating how students should live rather than encouraging free thought. As one critic says, “Once [sustainability literacy] is enshrined in a university’s public pronouncements or private articles, then the institution has diminished its commitment to academic inquiry” (Butcher). This kind of criticism overlooks the fact that figuring out how to achieve sustainability requires and will continue to require rigorous critical thinking and creativity. Why not apply the academic skills of inquiry, analysis, and problem solving to the biggest problem of our day? Not doing so would be irresponsible and would confirm the perception that universities are ivory towers of irrelevant knowledge. In fact, the
presence of sustainability as both a goal and a subject of study has the potential to reaffirm academia’s place at the center of civil society.

Creating a green campus is a difficult task, but universities must rise to the challenge or face the consequences. If they do not commit to changing their ways, they will become less and less able to compete for students and for funding. If they refuse to make a comprehensive commitment to sustainability, they also risk irrelevance at best and institutional collapse at worst. Finally, by not rising to the challenge, they will be giving up the opportunity to establish themselves as leaders in addressing the climate crisis. As the coalition of American College and University Presidents states in its Climate Commitment, “No other institution has the influence, the critical mass and the diversity of skills needed to successfully reverse global warming” (“Call for Climate Leadership” 13). Now is the time for schools to make the choice and pledge to go green.

Works Cited
EXERCISE 7.16

Find a visual that will strengthen your argument, and add it to your essay. Be sure to document it appropriately and to include a descriptive caption. Then, edit and proofread your paper, paying special attention to parenthetical documentation and your works-cited page. When you have finished, add a title, and print out a final copy of your essay.
PART 4
Using Sources to Support Your Argument