Sample Student Essay Two

Wesley Clark for President?

As Americans, we have the right to vote on a leader to rule the country. Those few who step up to the challenge, *no comma needed here* begin by bombarding the public with their campaigns of promises for the future if they are elected. As a citizen, one tries to look at all sides of the arguments of each candidate to try and find those qualities which are fit to lead our nation. One prime example of a candidate who shows incredible leadership ability is Wesley Clark. *intro is a little blah right now, although you do signal that you are particularly interested in LEADERSHIP as a quality in a candidate. You might want to highlight this as a thesis – the most important quality is leadership/Wesley Clark is a leader*

Wesley Clark was born in Chicago, IL on December 23, 1944. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point; *just a comma here – you might want to review commas and semicolons in a style book* where he served thirty-three years in the United States Army; during which he rose to the rank of 4-star general. He served as Director for Strategic Plans and Policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1994, and in 1996 he was Commander in Chief of the United States Southern Command in Panama where he was in charge of the military activities in Latin America. *Can you be more specific? “the military activities” sounds a bit mysterious* In 1997, Clark became NATO Supreme Allied Commander and Commander in Chief of the United States European Command. “In this position, General Clark led Operation Allied Force, NATO's first major combat action, which saved 1.5 million Albanians from ethnic
cleansing in Kosovo (Homepage, Oct 12, 2003).” Throughout his military service, Clark received many awards including the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart. Clark’s experience as Commander in Chief in Bosnia is depicted in his best-selling book “Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat.” At the present he is the Managing Director for the investment firm, Stephens Inc. Clark is new to the race for president, but his objectives are nevertheless forceful. He just recently decided to be Democrat even though his views tend to lean towards republican. “Why the decision to run as a Democrat? A hint can be found in a recent Newsweek article. After 9/11, Clark had expected the Bush Administration to enlist him in their “war on terror.” “After all, he’d been NATO commander … and the investment firm he now worked for had strong Bush ties. But when GOP friends inquired, they were told: forget it. Word was that Karl Rove, the president's political mastermind, had blocked the idea. Clark was furious. [Clark] happened to chat with two prominent Republicans, Colorado Gov. Bill Owens and Marc Holtzman. . . . "I would have been a Republican," Clark told them, "if Karl Rove had returned my phone calls (Palestine Chronicle, Oct 15, 2003).”

[Who are you quoting here? Attach a name to this quote!] It’s controversial, and quite incendiary, really – he’s “really” a Republican running as a Dem?! You start the paragraph off with a sentence about his objectives, but it really isn’t about his objectives at all – it’s about his decision to be a Democrat. You
might want to refocus this toward the big Republican/Democrat issue in Clark’s campaign, and you’ll need to address (briefly) why Karl Rove wasn’t returning his calls... also, what’s the Palestine Chronicle? A local paper? A major newsmagazine? Let your reader know more about your sources, so we can trust them to be accurate]

In fact, Clark’s hatred towards Bush only appeared after not being enlisted in the War on Terror. [This strikes me as a difficult position for you to take in your essay supporting Clark as a great leader... it makes him seem like a little boy who was left out of the party, or was picked last for a team in gym class.] In a speech from the Palestine Chronicle before his fallout with the Republican Party, Clark states, “We're going to be active; we're going to be forward engaged. But if you look around the world, there's a lot of work to be done. And I'm very glad we've got the great team in office: men like Colin Powell, Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Paul O'Neill -- people I know very well -- our president, George W. Bush. We need them there, because we've got some tough challenges ahead in Europe (Palestine Chronicle, Oct 15, 2003).” [this doesn’t sound like “hatred” towards Bush, and is actually quite disturbing information if you are a Democrat... “great team” like Condi Rice, Rumsfeld, Cheney? This is a scary quote from a Democratic contender, if you don’t like the current Republican administration! He’s basically praising all of the top Republican people here. Not offering much of an alternative to Bush in this case, is he?]

Clark’s anger towards the Republican Party is shown in a speech reported by the Washington Post. “Clark vowed to "hold this administration accountable" for the 2.7 millions jobs lost during Bush's tenure, the ballooning budget deficits and the loss of
respect for the United States by "so many people around the world (Washington Post, Oct 12, 2003).” From his point of view, the war in Iraq was completely unnecessary. We, as a country, had no right to rip apart the Iraqi government in order to kick Saddam Hussein out of power. In other words, the only reason for the U.S. intervening in those affairs was to maintain a stable oil supply and to set up a military base. In this way, the United States has a way of preventing future attacks on the U.S. by stopping them before the enemy reaches the U.S. border. [this is a big shift from the last paragraph, where he praises the people who put this policy in place. You’ll need to work on the flow of information here, so we’re led from one idea to another more smoothly]

On other topics, such as the environment, Clark feels that, "Environmentally, it means that we must do more to protect our natural resources…” [Be careful of ellipses here… they are ALL saying we need to protect natural resources, but the ellipses suggest that Clark has nothing very specific to offer, which is not necessarily a strong argument in support of Clark] We should find efficient ways to maintain fossil fuels as well as finding other types of energy sources so as not to deplete the earth of its resources and have no source of fuel to turn to. Clark’s beliefs for the economy are to increase incentives for more employment for Americans as well as attract interests of businesses abroad. On matters such as National Security, Clark assures in, “meeting the near term challenges of the day - whether they be terrorism or something else - that, we don't compromise the freedoms and rights which are the very essence of the America we are protecting.”

As stated earlier, Clark plans to balance the federal budget and reduce the long term public debt. He also wants to make health care and education available to everyone.
[Wow! These are big promises to throw into a paragraph, without going into any
details about how he intends to DO these things. Virtually every candidate is
promising to do all this… the big question is HOW. If he isn’t being specific (and I
know he isn’t), you might want to address only those issues he IS specific about. If
there are any. I’m afraid your essay is giving me reasons NOT to support Clark,
which isn’t a good thing for a persuasive piece of writing! I think you can still turn
me around, though, if you concentrate on Clark’s strengths and avoid mentioning
things he’s vague on. You’ll need to think about whether or not it is an asset TO
YOU that he’s basically a Republican in sheep’s clothing, as you describe above…
perhaps that’s a selling point in this political climate? Perhaps we need a Democrat
who is really a Republican? It’s an argument one can make. If he likes the Bush
cabinet so well, why does he think he’s better suited to be president than Bush? This
is the big question you’ve opened up by going into the whole Republican/Democrat
thing above. I’m glad to have this information about Clark, but it doesn’t
necessarily help your argument in favor of him]

Wesley Clark doesn’t have much of a campaign or even experience in
governmental positions. He is depending on his military experience to boost his
campaign and attract popular votes. I believe that Clark’s military status gives him a
great advantage over the rest of the presidential candidates who are running; even
enabling him to beat Bush. Many people think highly of a person who has received a rank
of 4- star general. Clark is an excellent speaker; he is able to express his views in a
simple, but forceful manner. In a speech in New York City, Clark comments on the need
for nationalism, "Meeting these challenges of our time demands three things: new leadership, new ideas, and a new spirit of patriotism."

The outcome of the election is hard to determine since it is still early in the campaigning process. Clark needs to raise about $20 million dollars before the preliminaries [PRIMARIES] in order to try and get states such as Florida to win votes. Even though some may think the odds are against him, the outcome isn’t final until Election Day next year.

Clark doesn’t have many qualities which make him stand out from the rest of the crowd. His lack of experience in governmental positions and no campaign leaves him nothing to fall back on if his military status isn’t enough. Even though Clark may be a very strong speaker and able to present himself in front of a large crowd, but his inexperience seems to outweigh the rest.

OK, so you AREN’T supporting Clark… that’s a tough position to be in for a persuasive essay, which this was supposed to be. I can’t remember now if you pulled Clark out of the packet randomly, and then just stuck with him, or if he was the only one who interested you, so you ran with him. You need to recast this as an argumentative essay in favor of Clark, which you can do without actually believing in Clark, or wanting Clark to be president. Or you can turn this around and talk about Clark as a danger to the American political process, and focus your attention around a thesis that argues against Clark. Either way, this is wishy-washy right now, and I suspect this is because CLARK is wishy-washy, too. You start off with the leadership thing as a loose thesis, then end with his inexperience. You have good
research here, it has just convinced you that he isn't the man for the job. Go back and revise the essay to point us in this direction, so your readers will agree with you about Clark. If I had to grade this today, I’d give it a C+, but I know you are capable of doing much better with this with relatively little effort. The information is all here, you just need to shape it around a thesis you are comfortable with.

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Works Cited

