

Community Comment
August 30, 2013
Sam Pennisi

Welcome and welcome back HSU

Sharon and I were walking our granddogs Monday morning, as we do almost every morning for an hour. It's both our fitness routine and attitude adjustment hour. We both somehow don't feel right without our morning walk. It's also essential that these four dogs get their exercise. Our routine takes us by the University. Monday was the first day of classes at HSU and on our way back we started seeing students coming to their eight o'clock's. We both somehow started saying welcome back as we passed people. The response was just as light hearted and genuine; thanks, good to be back. These kids were on their way to class just as so many have done for 100 years. I'm glad to say I was one of them.

HSU is celebrating it's centennial this year and we should all celebrate with them. Arcata and Humboldt County would be quite different without it. Some may think we would be better without a University but I would beg to differ.

This University started as a normal college; a school to teach teachers. In 1913, we were much further North than we are today. Not by distance but by time. Having a college allowed local and regional people an opportunity to go to college, become a teacher and stay and work in their own community. It also opened the door for the stray outsider to come and discover the many charms of this part of Alta California.

Over the years Humboldt became a full college offering a full college curriculum. By the 50's, HSC was well known as a school for those interested in Natural Resource Management. Forestry, fisheries and wildlife management majors were some of the top graduates in these fields in the country. When I came in 1966 to study forestry, the college had less than 3000 students. The campus and the Arcata community were an easy place for an outsider to get to know. I was a junior transfer and was just a number. Not so at Humboldt. This place, the college and the community welcomed your input. Most students quickly discovered they were part of something bigger than themselves and that they could help shape the future. That lesson alone was worth the price of tuition.

Since the 50's, Humboldt State College became a University. This was more than a name change; the University status recognized the broad fields of study and the quality of the Institution. Graduates were leaders in their fields and influencing their professions locally, nationally, and internationally.

The broader community enjoys the wealth and richness that we get from having top scholars from around the country and the world come here to teach and do research. They raise families here and help shape our communities. The University brings top level speakers and entertainers to the community at affordable prices and without the need to leave the area. More recently, the Ollie Program, classes available at very low cost to

those over fifty has offered a wide variety of special interest classes. These are mostly offered at the beautiful new Aquatics Center on the Bay in Eureka.

In short, the richness that Humboldt State University provides its students and our community can not be overstated. And, neither can its contribution to our local and regional economy.

Welcome back students. And welcome HSU. You are a vital and essential part of who we are.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.