

Community Comment
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A civics education

We are close to another HSU graduation. As an Innkeeper, the weekend is crazy busy. We simply draw more people than we have bed space for even with the growth of air b&b and vacation rentals. It's good for my bottom line and brings a great deal of money to Humboldt County. It's not just the lodging facilities that do well, so do the restaurants, retail stores, and service stations.

More than that, however, it marks the completion of a significant accomplishment. Receiving a bachelors or masters degree is not easy. It requires hard work, hours of study, honing reading and writing skills and the self discipline and intelligence to stick to the work. It means showing up on time and cooperating with others and following directions. These skills allow us to be successful in the world of work and life. Frankly, the more you can do the work, the more likely you can break the rules and pioneer new pathways. This is when work and life get to be fun and meaningful.

In 2017, graduating from college is the new high school diploma. In this fast paced and high tech world, a college degree is a minimum requirement for getting a career. A degree is not job training, but it tells people that you can work alone and with others, you can read and analyze information, and you can think critically. A college degree is not the end of your education, it is the beginning of your work life. The better prepared you are, the more choices you have to work in something that has meaning for you and that you can build a life around.

I happen to be a fan of the institution that is HSU. The faculty is not just good, they are often exceptional. Interesting and important research is being done in many cutting edge areas. Students can learn at a whole other level when they participate in research projects.

We do a good job with the technical aspects of various subjects but I think we are not doing a good job in the area of civics. As our population grows and diversifies, governing gets more and more complicated. Governing 300 million people and providing the services that we expect is difficult and expensive. The basics like a modern and well maintained infrastructure costs money. Expecting clean and safe drinking water and working wastewater systems cost money. Being prepared to defend ourselves from hostile groups or nations cost money. Keeping the peace through diplomacy costs money. And providing a solid education for our children, our future, is arguably the most important role of self governance.

It is education that will keep us competitive with the global community. Well financed Universities will keep us leading the way in this world. American children need to be prepared to lead. But to be effective at any of this, we need to know how to govern. To

know how to govern, we need to know how our system works and what changes we need to make to keep up with science and technology. We need to be willing to be part of our government at all levels while understanding that we are all in this together.

Governing and what it means to be an educated citizen of the United States of America has to be a bigger part of our educational requirements.

Congrats to the graduates. We wish you well.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.