

Community Comment
May 4, 2018
Sam Pennisi

Graduation 2018

We've been running a small bed and breakfast for 34 years in Arcata. As a student, a member of the faculty, and as a business owner, Humboldt State University has loomed large in our lives. Graduation day marks the end of another year of study and research for students from Humboldt County, California and around the world. Like the Redwoods, HSU attracts people from all over.

Founded in 1913, the normal school that would become HSU has played an enormous role in the history of this community. Because we are still a remote area in many ways, HSU provides a local opportunity to gain an undergraduate degree and even a number of masters' programs. For our local students, this provides an economical opportunity to pursue a college degree. To those coming to us, HSU provides an education and a chance to experience the amazing community that is Humboldt County and the North Coast.

For those of you that have been to college, you know the time and effort required to complete the course work. All most everyone, even the best students, will have some courses that push us to the limits of what we think we can do. We remember the late nights of study, the papers and projects that took up weekend after weekend, and the reading. Like in any endeavour, there is the tedium of work involved in a successful completion of the work.

And there are the friendships that you make. College life is unlike any other. Many of us bonded with a few people at first because we were going through the same experience. A handful of those people became lifelong friends. We often had similar jobs along the way and can relate to each other's life.

HSU is an economic giant in Humboldt County and Arcata in particular. It brings in money mostly from outside the area and that circulates to every aspect of our community. As a local lodging owner, HSU is our base of support. We house tourist to be sure. But the University provides a steady stream of guests. We get visiting lecturers and musicians, candidates for positions, and parents of potential students and then the parents and relatives of those students that stay for four or five years while they complete their degree.

Those who are successful have the thrill of a graduation ceremony that announces the completion of a rigorous course of study, endless hours of work, the broadening of our knowledge and awareness of the world around us, and the satisfaction of having an education that opens doors and expands the possibilities for the rest of our lives.

To the graduates of HSU I offer this toast and congratulation; you have accomplished a milestone in your life. But it is one step in lifelong learning. It is not job training, but will qualify you to apply for career positions otherwise often closed to you. Your education has broadened you and made you a better citizen with more awareness about the world. It is your responsibility to use your position to better your life and your world in the way that best fits your ideas and aspiration.

Congratulation to the HSU graduates of 2018.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.