

RENO HAPPENINGS



R. Grant Seals
President Reno-Sparks NAACP



What Is The Intrinsic Value Of Going To College?

R. Grant Seals, Ph.D.

I asked myself this question when confronted in my new job with talking to students about going to college.

The word,

"Intrinsic" means the real nature of a thing or properties which are not dependent on outside events. What is it, then, that is intrinsic to a four-year college education that is not true of other things.

One answer which comes to mind immediately is that it prepares one for a career. This it does do. But are there other ways to prepare for a career? Of course there are. Working with your dad in his business is one tried and true way. Starting with a business and working your way up is another way. So

preparing for a career is not intrinsic to a college education. There are other ways.

Another possible answer to what is intrinsic is knowledge. Can one get knowledge in other ways. Of course, Abraham Lincoln was self-educated. Many of the great 19th century railroad barons were self-educated. While it doesn't happen as much now, it is still possible, I believe 60 minutes did an episode some years ago on a Black man who did not graduate from high school, but had an extensive library and read profusely. So knowledge is not intrinsic to a four year college education.

Another possible answer is it (a college education) gives one better self-esteem, pride and your family is proud of you. Can this be done any

other way, yes. As a family, we are proud of our second child who has worked up to the first management level position in a prestigious Southern California Department Store chain with only a high school education. So while a lot of pride is associated with a college education, it can also be generated in other ways.

Another possible answer is that it increases your financial worth. Again, there are many ways of increasing your financial worth without going to college — real estate, business, self employment, etc. So again, college does not in itself hold the sole key to financial worth.

There are three things which I have identified with the help of the Hug High Human Relations Club as being intrinsic to a college education:

1. All things being equal, a college education gives one an edge in the job market whether one works for someone else or is self-employed. If abilities, background and all else are essentially the same, the college grad will get it every time.

2. Long term success. College graduates tend to sustain over several decades and throughout their lives, a successful life. They are respected by their peers and enjoy their choice of the inventions and objects of our civilization all of their lives. Successful businessmen usually have gone through periods where they've been flat broke although they've learned from their mistakes and bounced back.

3. College education

teaches values. In my first job out of graduate school, my take-home pay was the same as a brother-in-law who worked at a meat packing plant. But even then, I had a better fringe benefit package: retirement, health and life insurance, etc. Similarly, for three years my wife and I and the three kids (the fourth had not come along) lived beside a brick layer (who made good money). His wife stayed at home. So did mine. We rented. They rented. Our home was brick. Theirs was frame. Our car was new. Theirs was five years old and in disrepair. Our children got a few toys each for Christmas. Their children (four of them) got lots and lots of toys for Christmas. Our house was fully carpeted. They had worn floors and linoleum with a few throw rugs. Their children got brand new clothes every Easter. Our children got clothes when they needed them.

Finally after about a year and a half, our kids asked — "Why don't we get new clothes at Easter?" "Why don't we get the toys that they get?" Our reply was, would you rather have these things or go on a vacation every summer and go see Grandma? They replied without hesitation, we'd rather go see Grandma and go on vacations.

College does teach values my friend. You've heard that your teachers are underpaid. They are. If they look wealthier or more successful, it means that they spend their money differently, not that they are really making more. They



Delores Feemster, Reno Sentinel-Voice General Manager. For news, weekly locations of paper and advertising information, contact her at 323-3677.

may not go out every Saturday night, but they will go on a week or two vacation every year. Or they might not really leave town for four or five years and save up their money to travel abroad. They get their cars fixed and buy fewer, but nice looking clothes. They get some of their recreation by keeping the lawn and garden cut and trim. Some eat inexpensive but nutritional food and eat out once a month or once a week. They give their children books, read to them and take them to the library and to see Grandma or go on a vacation. Their children do not have a lot of clothes. I could go on.

But if anything is intrinsic to a college education, it is these values which I've alluded to, which are not necessarily taught in any courses, but which the student picks up from the college environment, the professors, other students and the cultural activities.

The Reno-Sparks NAACP TV program will now be aired at 12:30 p.m. Saturdays by KOLO-TV Channel 8.

Reno research park bill OK'd, sent to Reagan

WASHINGTON — Congress has passed and sent to President Reagan a bill that allows the Desert Research Institute, an arm of the University of Nevada System, to develop a research park in Reno out of what once was federal land. Without objections, the House passed the bill Thursday. The Senate had approved it May 2.

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