



Budget degrees sacrifice quality



Connor Stangler

The 10K-B.A. It's not a charity event, it's a college degree program.

In a Feb. 1 New York Times opinion piece, professor and policy researcher Arthur C. Brooks argued for a simple solution to the skyrocketing price of higher education — a trimmed-down, predominantly online college education which would cost less than \$10,000. In answer to critics everywhere who doubt the virtue of this shortcut to credentials, Brooks cited his own success story as a college dropout turned political wonk, all thanks to a cheap online education. Replace the in-class experience with the outsourced resumé line, he suggests.

Before America sacrifices what the classical philosophers praised, what the Enlightenment made policy, what our professors trained for and what has shaped me the past four years, we'll need more than this man's story as evidence.

The name 10K-B.A. conjures up beloved free market imagery — competition, racing and efficiency. Brooks' attitude seems too indifferent for any reasonable criticism. His shameless and stone-faced defense of his bottom-line position frustrates the skeptic. As I simmer with inarticulate rage, I can't help but admire his unapologetic boldness, as he seems to say as he snubs his nose at me, "I like cheap degrees. So sue me." I do want to sue him — morally, rhetorically and intellectually — but I struggle to poke holes in the attractive logic of his argument. If I like to save money, if I like to spur economic growth, if I support expanding educational opportunity, maybe my concerns are overblown.

However, the logic of efficiency-oriented capitalism is the iceberg of politics — attractive, attention-grabbing, but 90 percent of the danger is underneath.

Brooks takes issue with the claim of one anonymous university professor. Under the 10K-B.A. program, "You're going to be awarding degrees that are worthless to people." Brooks says these degrees aren't worthless and I agree, but how do we measure their worth? Cutting college production costs inevitably means cutting quality. We have to cut teachers, services and classroom time to streamline learning. If we're not willing to invest more than \$10,000 in a degree, then probably we're not willing to invest in the abstract skills and benefits that come with a thorough college experience. In a hyper-connected and dynamic economy, we don't need the shortest route from A to B, but the most complete.

As Thomas Friedman pointed out in the New York Times a couple of days before Brooks did, an individual can no longer count on the relevancy of education for an entire career. Now, our skills are outdated in a couple of decades as better technology emerges and forces sophistication. At a time when we need colleges to invest in more classroom time and more intellectually stimulating experiences to prepare us for an unrecognizable professional world, Brooks is arguing for the opposite.

Additionally, not everyone can achieve success as easily as Brooks did and we need to accommodate and prepare students of all backgrounds and abilities. Rather than a one-size-fits-all online curriculum, we need more face-to-face exchanges, student-teacher connections and personalized plans.

Brooks also quotes Darryl Tippens, Provost of Pepperdine University, who argues — more intellectually than economically — that the cheap, no-frills degree cannot supply the "surprise, the frisson, the spontaneous give-and-take of a spirited, open-ended dialogue with another person." Brooks again dismisses the problem, admitting that even though his college years were "bereft of frissons," he still achieved professional success.

Though his pocketbook might be better off, is his mind? The moment we put those "frissons" on the budgetary chopping block is the moment we threaten the spirit of American higher education. The reason we have innovative entrepreneurs, great economists, talented authors, ingenious scientists and thoughtful public servants is because colleges took the time to challenge and not just to instruct. A thorough and intellectual experience should not just be reserved for those who can afford it. It's valuable for everyone, not just for the few.

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Immigrants can benefit economy



Sarah Muir

As Congress works toward bipartisan immigration reform, a key split is occurring between those who favor tackling security and punishment first and those who favor paths to citizenship as most important.

Unfortunately, Missouri national senators are taking the wrong side of the argument. Prioritizing security and punishment for illegal immigration ignores the many benefits immigrants have to offer.

Senators Claire McCaskill and Roy Blunt agree security should be handled first, according to a Jan. 29 St. Louis Post-Dispatch article.

"Any bill that earns my support must build on our recent success in bolstering border security, punish employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants and include consequences for those who came here illegally," McCaskill said, according to the previously mentioned St. Louis Post Dispatch article.

However, strong punishments can deter illegal immigrants from seeking legal immigrant status. The immigration problem can't be solved if the government isn't willing to be flexible with the people and families

already residing in the U.S.

Before immigration is tackled, the myth of the parasitic illegal immigrant needs to be destroyed. A 2006 study conducted by the Missouri Budget Project found that illegal immigrants contribute up to \$57 million to Missouri's government through various taxes. This doesn't count the taxes they contribute to Social Security and Medicare, which they will not be able to draw from later. Yet the myth persists that illegal immigrants drain the system, which leads many people to generalize that immigration as a whole should be kept at a minimum.

However, if Congress focuses on security, they miss an opportunity to make citizenship easier, which in turn is missing an opportunity to help the economy. Like illegal immigrants, legal immigrants can boost the economy in several ways.

Immigrants increase the standard of living by increasing Americans' wages and lowering the price of goods, according to a Jan. 30 Time magazine article. These are distinct benefits to the economy the U.S. could access simply by making it easier to become a legal citizen. Focusing on paths to citizenship also could help solve a problem American colleges and universities are beginning to see. More than 40 percent of students in STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — are immigrants, according to a Jan. 31 CNN article. This would be great if these students were staying in the U.S., but as the CNN article explains, many leave because of the difficulties associated with legally working here. Thus, the U.S. loses a percentage of highly-skilled workers.

Immigration reform focusing on citizenship before security would also benefit agriculture. Farmers currently have

difficulty hiring domestic workers, forcing them to rely on foreign workers who are largely undocumented, according to a Jan. 30 Ag Alert article. If undocumented immigrants or employers of illegal immigrants were punished, as McCaskill advocated, the impact on the agriculture industry would be huge. Farmers would have to scramble to find new employees and the stability of the industry would be put at risk. Creating a system where undocumented workers can become citizens while continuing to work is key to maintaining that stability, according to the Ag Alert article.

Lastly, immigration reform focusing on citizenship could help Missouri cities like St. Louis. A 2012 study by Saint Louis University concluded more immigrants working in St. Louis would greatly contribute to its struggling economy, according to a June 2012 St. Louis Post-Dispatch article. Of the top 20 cities, St. Louis has the lowest share of immigrants. It also has the second lowest growth rate of the top 20 cities, according to the Post-Dispatch article, so increasing its share of immigrants is key to increasing growth.

Illegal immigrants aren't a drain on our country — they're people and families that contribute to the U.S. and deserve a chance at citizenship. Combined with all the economic benefits of more immigration, there's no reason politicians, including our senators, shouldn't stress paths to citizenship as the most important remedy related to immigration reform.

Sarah Muir is a freshman political science major from Lee's Summit, Mo.

What do you think about amnesty for illegal immigrants?

"It would be ideal for an immigrant wishing to live in the United States to come through by the correct process, but that can take a long time. In some cases, their decision to come to the U.S. is between life and death."

Conner Katsev
sophomore



"To an extent, if someone is suffering from a debilitating disease we should try to help, but only so much financial help should be given to immigrants in comparison to citizens."

Chris Sotraidis
junior



"I don't believe they should receive assistance like financial aid from the government. That being said, however, illegal immigrants are still human beings and should be treated as such."

Rachel Knox
junior



"We cannot, in good conscience, force people to return to countries where they are victimized. Therefore, I strongly support a simplified path to citizenship."

Caitlin Blatt
senior



AROUND THE QUAD

God does not choose sides during sporting events



Dan Mika

The Super Bowl was played last Sunday, so I would like to offer my congratulations to the Baltimore Ravens.

While the victorious players recover from hangovers that must feel like there is an offensive lineman

sitting on their heads, I'd like to talk about a quirky statistic. Three out of 10 Americans believe God plays a role in determining which team wins a sporting event, according to the Public Religion Research Institute.

When I read the poll's findings, I was intrigued. Instead of asking what makes 30 percent of Americans believe God is fixing games, I wondered why God would care about the outcome of the Super Bowl and other sporting events. The following are a few of my theories.

"He has money riding on the game."

I'm not going to delve into the theological questions that arise from this, such as why money is a concept that exists in Heaven. Also, who would even try to gamble with an omnipotent being? The best I can

guess is that Saint Peter has won the Heaven-wide pool a few years in a row and it's time to change that.

"He's scared of Patrick Willis, linebacker for the San Francisco 49'ers."

OK, that's probably not true. Patrick Willis is absolutely terrifying, though.

"He's an omnipotent being."

If you had unlimited power to do whatever you want, you wouldn't need a reason to mess with sports either.

But I digress. All I can say for certain is some athletes truly believe God is helping them perform better during games, and I don't believe that nonsense for a second. The psychological effect of believing God is supporting athletes during a game shows just how attached humans can

become to a sport. We're looking for anything that gives us an edge to see our teams win championships that we'd believe there is divine intervention. If legitimate miracles have occurred in the world, the Music City Miracle certainly isn't one of them.

Also, what happens if two opposing players are both asking for divine support? It would be like fighting with a sibling over which kid is dad's favorite, except not as sad if you lose.

What irks me the most is that even more Americans believe religion factors into sports. Just more than half of Americans believe God bestows good health and success to religious athletes, according to the Public Religion Research Institute. I'm not sure why a higher power would favor those whose job it is

to throw or catch balls, shoot balls into a basket or hit balls with various equipment, but I'm pretty sure they're not as in need as regular folk since they make millions of dollars by playing a game.

It's time to take a time-out when it comes to sports and religion. It's comforting to think God is wearing a Rams jersey on Sunday or a Chicago Blackhawks sweater during game-days, to me, at least. Just like church and state, America needs to separate spirituality and sport because in the end, the whole idea of God favoring players is just silly.

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