

College education should be free



Corbin Kottmann

The tempting proposal of a free college education is a hot topic that alerted many young voters to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sander's presidential campaign and still remains part of their argument to elect him into office. Other countries, ones with noticeably stable economies, have had similar systems in place for decades, yet many American voters continue to oppose the idea.

To be fair, if a person is finished with their education, the topic takes a back seat to other issues. However, promoting a more easily obtained college education has ramifications beyond getting under-privileged high school seniors off the handle of a McDonald's deep fryer. If you claim higher education exists simply to provide an individual with the skills necessary to join the workforce at a higher level, then you are undervaluing the college experience.

A college education teaches you more than just how to behave at the office and how to work a spreadsheet. College teaches skills that can be applied outside of your professional life. The critical thinking that comes alongside earning a degree is applicable to all of life's situations — professional, social and personal. The abilities to internally process information and frame judgment appropriately make an individual more valuable to society than someone who simply reacts. If this skill — and it is a skill — became more widespread, the world would be a very different place. Critical thinking isn't a solution to all of the world's, or even the country's, problems, but it does lead the way to developing solutions.

Making college more affordable presents other possible improvements over time. When deciding which institute to attend or whether to attend one at all, prospective students often consider affordability, a fact many colleges exploit in their advertising and public relations campaigns. If this factor is taken out, however, then colleges are left to rely solely on their programs' quality. By hopeful necessity, the natural competitiveness of the market would lead to a dramatic increase in the quality of these programs, making nearly any

choice a viable one for prospective students.

Some might argue the inevitable rise of college graduates each year would lead to an even more competitive job market. This is a valid point because more individuals will be applying for the same jobs. However, competitiveness is a breeding ground for new ideas, and an education provides ample support for encouraging those ideas to grow. Necessity is the mother of invention, so the country will evolve to accommodate those individuals. Right now the country has evolved in such a way to provide support programs for those who need them. If those funds and resources were applied with a greater mindset, people would be able to receive those tools and skills on a wider scale. And no, not everyone is going to receive a six-figure salary in the end. But as stated above, the goal isn't just to obtain a high end job. The goal should be to become a citizen capable of thinking on a higher level, enacting further change and obtaining results.

Truthfully, free education is a lofty idea that would cost billions of dollars to implement. That amount alone is enough to make one stagger. Yet considering how widespread the program would be, the average tax payer's increase would be negligible. And consider it is not simply a cost, but an investment that would pay dividends in the form of more individuals capable of positively impacting the country and creating the changes many current college students wish to see.

Obviously there's more to the upcoming election, and Sanders' campaign, than the possibility of free education. But if you consider that a more educated society is more capable of improving itself over time, then it really becomes the main issue all others fall under — the need for change. Even if you are finished or almost done with your college education, or if you've decided higher education isn't for you, the evolution of society affects everyone on every level, which makes it less of an educational reform and more of a societal reform. So think about how the actions of society affect you and your future, and how informed and educated you want the people acting to be.

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Has Truman made you more aware of issues in society and media?



Sammie Savala
Freshman

I'd say it has just because in classes, it's encouraged to talk about issues in society itself.



Nick Granton
Senior

Yeah, I think so. I think most people here are pretty liberal thinkers and that kind of lends itself towards that way of thinking and an accepting environment. So yeah, I think so. More so than other parts of the country that I've been.



Melissa Pittman
Sophomore

In general, I'd say yes, but it definitely depends on who I'm talking to about it and in what sort of forum it's coming up.



Maryanne Tissier
Freshman

I don't really think so, because I feel like it's not very prevalent on campus. I haven't seen much of it and, I mean, I'm not one to experience it but I haven't really seen it much with other people. So I think, if anything, it's made me think society is better because it hasn't happened. I haven't seen it much on campus.



Jacqueline Jones
Junior

I would say, overall, no because I already hear about it from other sources. Usually I read the news first and then Truman addresses it, so I don't think I learn from it, but I do think that Truman does address issues that need to be addressed.



Ryan McCallum
Freshman

I'm not really big on those things so I don't really pay attention to it. I try to kind of ignore it, I guess. But from specific people, I've heard a lot about it and been made more aware about it.

You are what you watch



Holly Fisher

There is an expression for people in this modern age — we call ourselves “media consumers.” This idea that we watch things the same way we consume food has interesting implications — so what happens when we consume junk? Television shows and movies with undertones such as sexism and racism mentally affect us the same way junk food physically affects us — which in turn affects the world we live in.

One of the great qualities of Truman State is how socially conscious everyone is, and this has made me a much more socially conscious person during the four years I've been here. I'm starting to see issues such as sexism, racism and classism everywhere, but I see it the most when I turn on my TV. I'll be watching a show, sometimes one of my favorite shows, and I hear myself muttering under my breath, “Well, that's sexist,” or, “I'm pretty sure that's racist” — yet I keep watching.

A little while back I started watching the 1982 show “Knight Rider,” and anyone who has ever seen a single episode knows exactly how sexist it is. I knew this, but I sat down, grimaced a little and binge watched the whole thing during a few weeks. I loved the action, I loved the premise and most of all, I loved the car. Even though I loved so much about the show, I hated myself for being personally offended during almost every episode and then immediately queuing up the next one after it ended.

I'm not a masochist, honestly. However, I've done this with so many other shows during the last few years, and sadly, some of them were created much more recently than “Knight Rider.”

For a while, I thought I could look past the blatant sexism, racism or classism in what I watched because they were older shows. Times were different back then and, even though most were pretty cheesy to begin with, the various undertones throughout the show didn't really degrade the quality of it, right?

I realized just how wrong I was when the same trends started popping up in modern shows.

“Supergirl,” for example, I was pretty excited about before it first aired. A female superhero lead sounded revolutionary. Clearly, the media in-

dustry was beginning to fight sexist ideology, but again, I was wrong. “Supergirl” ended up being so pro-feminist it actually was blatantly sexist. Most, if not all, of the female characters are caricatures, and they still look to the male characters in the show for direction and guidance. They even went so far as to beef up the wonderfully pathetic Jimmy Olsen so they could have some stronger male characters to balance out the women.

These same issues pop up in movies and video games too — African Americans, Hispanics, LG-BTQ individuals and anyone outside of the middle class largely are stereotyped and appear only in supporting roles. I truly would have thought we know a little better by now, but the only thing we've really improved is how subtle we are.

There's a saying my mom used to be particularly fond of. She'd say, “Trash in, trash out.” I never really cared for it before, but this is the stance I'm trying to take in regards to my own media consumption. Continually watching sexist or racist shows only serves to cement the pre-existing stereotypes we should be breaking down. In fact, we actually spread these social issues further when we provide certain shows with a mass audience they don't deserve.

There is so much media product floating around in the world that it would be impossible for any one person to consume it all, so why not be a little pickier with what we do consume? The line of production begins and ends with the consumers — us. For that reason, we shouldn't watch things just for the sake of watching things, but really consider what we decide to give our attention to.

What's more is the fact that my generation — the generation of Truman students — is moving from being consumers to being producers. We are reaching the point where we will begin to have control over what reaches the general public. This makes it all the more necessary for us to start focusing on what currently is out there and what we can do to fix the issues.

We are what we eat, and when we consume junk, that's exactly what comes out. So take some time this week to really look at what you watch, and decide if those shows or movies are actually something you need in your life.

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