

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1791 The Future of Higher Learning – Part 1

For the last several years, I have heard complaints about higher education. The costs keep going up, but the product's value is questionable. We've seen graduates of Guam's high schools and colleges come into the workforce, and many of them are just not ready for prime time. Some need basic math and language skills, and some have no idea how to deliver value to an employer. It's not every student that graduates, but it's more than anyone is comfortable with. I'm Jerry Roberts, colleges here and in the mainland have been criticized over this issue, and the barking is getting louder. We're going to talk about this important topic this week, and try to approach it from multiple angles. We get underway next on The Extra Point.

For the last several years, colleges and universities across the nation have been under fire for not meeting the needs of employers.

Educators are getting it from people like Mike Rowe, star of TV's *Dirty Jobs*, who believes that a good-sized chunk of young humanity should not go to college, and instead pursue technical training or a trade.

Rowe has pointed out that there is now a shortage of workers in numerous fields, with starting salaries close or equal to what college graduates might pull in — and they get this without the cost of college, which usually is in the form of debt that follows you for years.

Now, Silicon Valley has chimed in, and their voices are loud, powered by massive companies that see college as possibly a hurdle to one's success. Wait, a "hurdle"?

The words being thrown around are "outdated curricula", which is a major complaint. Business is saying that the world is moving too fast, and higher education can't keep pace.

Another phrase often heard is "opportunity costs." Essentially, this refers to the idea that you could be involved in highly valued projects if you weren't mired in what critics see as low

value studies. Again, these are the thoughts expressed by people who would seek to direct young people away from a traditional college education.

Some of these voices are getting louder. Major names like Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal, and Alex Karp, CEO of defense contractor Palantir, who now advocate for skipping college altogether.

They argue that the rapid pace of technological advancement renders formal education obsolete. Now, obviously, there will be an army of college professors and administrators who would be happy to debate this subject, and I believe they should.

In fact, I think it would be wise for educators, employers, as well as students to huddle together and make contributions to the discussion on where higher learning is headed. More important than the *where* is the *why*.

We have to know what we're going to need in the future so far as skills are concerned, and then how we're going to produce people with them.

The idea is that if we had a really good feel for the jobs and skills Guam's employers will need in the next 10 years, we'd probably put most of our focus on creating programs for them.

Maybe we could shift other programs to high schools or charter schools. Our educational institutions would be less general in terms of offerings, and we'd see more specialization. Is that desirable? Is that possible?

What would such a plan do to the funding of colleges? Would education become more or less expensive?

One thing is clear to me. There is a battle for the higher learning dollar looming on the horizon, and Guam is not going to escape it entirely. (Con't.)

It will be driven by big money, both from the private sector and government. The models that once worked are being challenged as ineffective. Major changes are on the way.

We'll jump back into this topic tomorrow. There's a lot more to go over.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

