



My intuition tells me our kids will be drowning in tuition

Ned Hickson

As parents, my wife and I have been very honest with our three teenagers about the level of financial support they can expect from us for college. To do this, I used my annual donation to our local public broadcasting station as an example.

"You know how they have different levels of supporters? And how the more money you contribute, the nicer the gift they send you as a show of their appreciation for your support — like a T-shirt or really nice backpack? Or if you're a gold-level member an entire season of your favorite PBS show in a special limited edition boxed set on Blu-Ray?"

Our kids nodded. "As a gift, we received a refrigerator magnet for a show that was canceled three years ago."

Blank stares from our kids. "So yeah, the only free-ride scholarship you're going to get from us will have already been spent on food and your unlimited texting and data

plans." Because of this, and because our teenagers were still staring blankly into space with their mouths open, my wife and I attended a scholarship fair where local community organizations were providing information about the many scholarships they offer.

In addition, there were three workshops discussing everything from how to apply for federal education grants, to tips on interviewing and properly filling out scholarship applications.

It wasn't long before, much like our teenagers, my wife and I were staring blankly with our mouths open.

Here's the problem. After much consideration and analysis, including a mathematical formula involving median income combined with cost projections, annual inflation predictions and an old abacus I found at a garage sale, I was able to determine what I believe is the biggest financial challenge facing students and their families when it comes to continuing their education beyond high school:

Colleges cost too dangd much.

In fact, if I didn't know better I'd say colleges are being run by pharmaceutical companies — which would make sense since, coincidentally, most of the side effects found on drug labels are the same symptoms I felt while researching annual tuition costs: headache, chest pain, shortness of breath, vision loss, diarrhea, vomiting, paranoia...

According to the American College Board, the average annual cost of tuition at a private college is \$32,405, or if you're looking for a real bargain, \$23,893 a year to attend a public college from out of state.

However, your best bet is to enroll in a community college as an in-state resident, where the average tuition is \$9,410.

Which, by the way, is still \$9,310 more than we'll have saved up for our oldest son's college fund. Fortunately, there are lots of scholarships for students who consistently earn a 4.0 grade-point average.

Ours just don't happen to be any of them. They are average students who excel in subjects they are interested in.

Truth be told, they're a lot like their father.

Who, I should probably mention, never went to col-

lege. It's not that I'm advocating against receiving a college education. I'm just saying I've owned two homes and done alright without one because ultimately, with or without a degree, what matters most is a drive to succeed and willingness to work hard for it.

No degree can guarantee success over an individual's desire to be successful.

Do I want my doctor to have a medical degree?

You bet.

Should a lawyer be required to have a law degree?

Certainly.

Would I be OK with a doc-

tor without a medical degree operating on the average lawyer?

Most likely.

If our kids choose to attend college, we'll find a way to make it happen. The question is whether the rising cost of higher education is making it less valuable, especially when compared to what can be achieved with a high degree of dedication and hard work instead.

And the freedom to pursue your life's passions debt free.

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, "Humor at the Speed of Life," is available online at Port Hole Publications, Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble. Write to him at nededhickson@icloud.com

North Jetty Road open to limited access next week

Starting Dec. 21 and continuing through Dec. 23, North Jetty Road past Harbor Vista County Campground will have only limited access due to road improvement projects.

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