

# OPINION

## The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition their Government for a redress of grievances.



### Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

### Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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## Are rising costs, scandals devaluing college degrees?



that was canceled three years ago.”

Blank stares from our kids. I explained that the only free-ride scholarship we could provide will have already been spent on food, shelter and their unlimited texting and data plans.

My wife and I have attended very helpful scholarship fairs where local community organizations provided information about the many scholarships available. In addition, we've attended work-

shops discussing everything from how to apply for federal education grants, to tips on interviewing and properly filling out scholarship applications. What we discovered about the scholarship application process is that there is a lot of money out there, available from local organizations and clubs as well as county, state and federal funds specifically earmarked for college education.

It's essentially our tax dollars at work. And since I've been paying taxes nonstop since I was 17, I have no problem getting a return on my investment to help our kids and others receive a college education.

Here's the problem: Af-

ter 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 much.

In fact, if I didn't know

\$9,410.

Which, by the way, is still \$9,310 more than we'll have saved up for our youngest daughter's college fund.

I should probably point out that I did not attend college and never aquired a degree. That said, it's not that I'm advocating against receiving a college education; I'm just saying that 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 doctor without a medical degree operating on the average lawyer?

Most likely.

The question is whether the rising cost of higher education — coupled with the revelation that those wealthy enough to do so can buy their child's way into a prestigious college through acts of fraud — are devaluing those degrees and our system of higher education as a whole?

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.

### From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

While reading about the college scandal involving payments by dozens of wealthy parents to William Rick Singer to assure their children's acceptance into the upper echelons of higher education, I had to shake my head once again at the need to overhaul our college educational system and its dependency on rising tuition and high profile athletics.

As parents, my wife and I have been very honest with kids 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

shops discussing everything from how to apply for federal education grants, to tips on interviewing and properly filling out scholarship applications.

What we discovered about the scholarship application process is that there is a lot of money out there, available from local organizations and clubs as well as county, state and federal funds specifically earmarked for college education.

It's essentially our tax dollars at work. And since I've been paying taxes nonstop since I was 17, I have no problem getting a return on my investment to help our kids and others receive a college education.

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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, insomnia, vision loss, vomiting, loss of appetite...

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



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