

Life learning

College teaches better lessons than what's on the course syllabus



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Ladies and gents, it has arrived. The end of the year (already!). Can you believe it? My, how time flies. About this time each year, I like to sit myself down and evaluate how much I've learned. Yeah, I really do this. I know, it seems odd to attempt to comprehend what one has gotten out of his/her yearly college experience. I think we're just supposed to smile and nod and come back for more.

Not me. I'm not doing that anymore. Oh, believe me, I'm coming back for more (much, much more). I've just decided that I don't enjoy "smiling and nodding" very much. I'll save that for job interviews.

I'm here to learn, so now I need to get an understanding of whether or not that has happened.

I'd like to attempt this now by taking some time to break down what I've learned in my educational experience this year at NU. Maybe once I get it all on paper, I'll know for sure. Ladies and gentlemen, Erin's scholarly breakdown:

1. I now know why the sky is blue.
For real. I took liberal arts physics last summer (feel free to snicker) and I actually know the answer to the age-old question asked by millions of children to their bewildered parents. (I better write the answer down while I can still remember it, so that I can tell my wondering kiddies someday, huh?)

This is one thing that I'm actually a little upset to know the answer to, though. A lifelong wonder has been explained to me, and I'm missing the mystery. Bummer.

2. I now know that people are going to change and there's not a damn thing you or I can do about it.
More people I know have done

180s this year than I've ever noticed before. They're wanting to do things that they never thought they would, such as getting married and having babies and settling down. Or give up on math or medicine in the pursuit of expressing themselves as someone art.

I think of myself as someone who thrives on change, but maybe I don't anymore. Maybe it's just little changes in myself that I'm a fan of, and not those in others. But I'm learning to deal with it. People who've come into my life are exiting it, and that's going to keep happening. It stinks, but it's OK, because that's life.

3. I now know that Lincoln drivers are the worst drivers in the United States of America.

I just want to re-emphasize one more time that no one sucks more. Period.

4. I now know that just when you stop looking for it, love will find you.

It's a strange phenomenon and the hardest one to buy.

I looked hard for a lot of years and I finally decided I didn't have time for it. And just like that, plunk, it fell into my lap. The weird part is that, even though I don't have much time for it, I somehow do. It sort of makes its own time (sounds like something from the X-Files, eh?).

This one is two-part, though. I can't leave out the section about the uselessness of trying to stop it from happening. It's cliched, but it's true - if it's meant to be, it'll find a way of being. Fighting it just doesn't work too well. You'll never get to experience the ride it'll take you on if you try to get away from it.

5. I now know that getting canned may be the best thing that could happen to you.

This is another one that's difficult to swallow. Hear me out, because this time, I just may know what I'm talking about.

I was removed from what was, well, my life of the past 2 years in March. I screwed up a couple of times and can't call myself an SA anymore. I was pretty devastated and fought it tooth-and-nail for awhile, but now I've accepted it.

Now I think I may be embracing it.

For the first time in two years, I can actually concentrate on myself.

I'm not expected to baby-sit adults who don't need baby-sitting anymore, and man, it's a great feeling.

I actually have time to do my schoolwork. Oh wait, isn't that what I'm supposed to be doing as a college student? Sorry Res Ed, I think I'm enjoying being thought of as a student a lot more than as a staff member.

6. I now know that I can't take any more Pepsi, even when it's being given away.

Pretty self-explanatory, I think.

7. I now know that trying to be Super Woman (or Super Man) will eventually burn you out, no matter who you are.

I thought I had the drive and the time to do everything there is to do at the U, all at once. So maybe I did have the drive, but no one has the time. It stinks, but sometimes you have to choose.

Going crazy running from one thing to another is no way to go through your time here. Sure, try it for one year, but give yourself breathing room to enjoy the experience of just being here. You just might feel more fulfilled by doing less.

8. I now know that someday, all of this construction will be done.

I may have to hang around here for 30 more years, earning multiple degrees, but eventually I'll see the campus in one lovely piece. I'm just glad the union was finished before I graduated. Now if they'll just unlock the doors to that balcony, all will be well.

9. I now know that, if I don't want to, I don't have to grow up.

Just like everyone else here, I think too much about how I'll have to act when I get out of college. I just picture myself becoming this mucho seriouso adult, and it's a bit unsettling.

I don't want to feel unsettled, dangit! I want to feel like I can still embrace frivolity. (Maybe that's why I want to do theater - I don't want to stop playing.)

The beauty of life is that I can embrace frivolity as long as I want to. We all can. We can make life our own never-ending game of freeze tag if we want. All we need are people to play with.

So, that's it. Not too much, not too complex and nothing that my professors lectured me on. Yes, of course I learned a wealth of info in my classes. I just happen to feel that maybe these things are a little more important than being able to tell you the difference between Futurism and Dadaism

(sorry, Dr. Grange). Maybe I'll discuss that one next time. ...

Here's hoping you learned as much as I did this year. Happy dead week, happy finals and happy summer everyone.



Save our souls

Society has failed humans; faith must take over



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The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Galatians 5:19-21

I wonder if Louis Armstrong would still want to sing "What a Wonderful World" after all of this.

I'm not just talking about the killing in Colorado. I'm talking about the status of our entire planet. A world whose countries thrive on hatred and perform ethnic cleansing. A nation that embraces an unethical

and power-hungry president. A state that ponders treating sexuality as simply a lifestyle. A city whose citizens kill each other in cold blood over drug money. A university that conspires to hide the remains of thousands of humans.

We want to think it's all society's fault. We want to blame it on bad parenting. We say it's the media or the movies. We need more laws. We need to reform our environment, because that's what has caused all of this.

Well, maybe we need to quit pointing our fingers and stop talking about what we can do to solve our moral dilemma. Let's stop blaming and take a break from discussing.

We've come to the point that we can no longer shift the burden onto someone or something else. We need to stop and think that maybe, just maybe, it isn't something that society has gained or lost. It's not the courts and not politics or entertainment or education. It's ourselves. And it's called human nature.

This idea definitely doesn't sit well with Americans. We want to think that we really are the kings of the world. We have freedom: life, liberty, and the pursuit of whatever we want to fill up that void inside with. Speech, religion, press, assembly - anything we want as long as it doesn't hurt anybody else.

And we think that we're good. Hey, we do our part. That five bucks to the United Way each spring, and a birthday card to Mom. Open a few doors, try to remember to say please, and everything's peachy. We all can go about our lives, doing our own things, and it'll work out in the end.

But we fail to realize something very important - that along the way, in that glorious quest to get what we want without hurting others, that we hurt others. A lot. And deeply.

It's not because we screw up along the way or we weren't raised correctly. It's because each of us is prey to the nature with which we are born. We choose to turn our heads and cover our eyes, but the truth hurts. We are bad people. All of us.

When someone makes us angry, we want to hurt them. We can only hope to learn to control ourselves. When we see something we want, we want to get it. Even if it hurts someone. If it feels good, we want to do it. Regardless of the consequences.

Think of a baby. He eats and sleeps, the only things he thinks he needs. And if he doesn't get what he wants, he cries. His needs come first; nothing else matters.

Only later in life do we learn that we can't always get what we want. And that we need to be patient. And unselfish. Loving. Caring.

Respectful.

And over the past century, we've come to rely on society's structures to teach us those things. More bureaucracy should lead to satisfying everyone. And the government can direct us to help the underprivileged. The schools can teach values. The community can keep us accountable.

That's really where we made the mistake. Just for a moment, somewhere along the way, we allowed society to take over for a small part of our lives. We thought it would make things easier and more efficient.

But we forgot about that pesky thing called human nature. That some people would let it get the best of them and take advantage of the system. And the entire system went under. In a big way.

The whole ball of wax caught on fire and all the lobbying and public speaking in the world couldn't put it out. Eventually the people whose human nature overtook their morality, started clinging to that inherent nature. They started embracing it, and saying that we're all faulty. We all make mistakes.

No doubt we do, but when we put our human nature on a pedestal and divert to it every time we screw up, we're in a world of hurt. Clinging to human nature is really a perversion of the truth. Mark Twain said it best:

"Isn't human nature the most consummate sham and lie that has ever invented? Isn't man a creature to be ashamed of in pretty much all his aspects? Is he really fit for anything but to be stood up on the street corner as a convenience for dogs? Man, 'Know thyself' - and then thou wilt despise thyself, to a dead moral certainty."

I think that's what we really need to do - know ourselves. If we as a nation can again realize that we aren't good, and that we aren't anywhere near perfect, then we'll be on the right track. This human nature plagues us all, so let's all conclude that we need to deal with it again. Society has failed, so we need a grass-roots effort to make any new progress.

It's a pride issue. Let's humble ourselves and know that we cannot stand alone in our society. That temptation is just giving into that human nature, and we can try to fight it. And we can win.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."

- Galatians 5:22-24