



Education doesn't guarantee advantage

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Bob King, president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, had a quote in Friday's Daily News that caught my attention.

King was commenting on a recently released study by the University of Kentucky: "While it's widely known that a college degree increases personal earnings, employment and improves health, this report makes very clear that raising educational attainment levels of our workforce generates tremendous benefits to our economy and makes a significant positive impact on the state's treasury and taxpayers."

Although King is essentially correct, the full story on how education influences the economic status of either the individual or society is more complicated. Having a more educated populace, in and of itself, does not necessarily guarantee any advantages to anyone.

Colleges and universities need to become a lot more purposeful with the academic advising and career services they provide. On one hand, I believe everyone should be encouraged to follow their dreams. It is difficult to be successful in a vocation you are not passionate about.

On the other hand, institutions are capable of doing a better job of providing students with employment projections and the related economic information they need in order to make informed decisions about what majors will be most likely to enhance their quality of life post-graduation.

The key to economic prosperity for individuals and societies is greater alignment between what students major in and what the actual need will be for those majors. The ongoing proliferation of some interdisciplinary certificate and degree programs, for example, could potentially be doing more harm than good and deserves more intense scrutiny.

Our present efforts notwithstanding, aggressively helping students' secure appropriate employment after commencement should be more of a priority than simply increasing the number who make it to the finish line.

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