



## Summary of Blog Comments

### Our Economy, Our Communities, and Our Global Readiness

- I think that the future of education lies in open source education. For a better explanation of what I'm talking about check out the presentation by Richard Baraiuk at <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/25> We need to make significant investments in education delivery methods through technology to support the increased enrollment required by our institutions.
- I still believe that nothing beats a face to face education. Maybe our professors need to make their lesson plans more innovative and our universities need to retrofit our classrooms, but the physical presence of a professor is essential. As a young person, I do admit DE course offerings are still appealing.
- Honestly, I have both my undergraduate and graduate degrees from a North Carolina university and am having a difficult time finding employment. I think some of the older programs at the universities that no longer apply in the real world are being held onto by profs., those who can not and will not change. Those resources can be redone to support better distance education development and training for the educators. It is a changing world and we are simply not keeping up.
- It is important that degrees reflect qualified training rather than a dumbed-down credential to meet the extra demand. The UNC system should focus on raising its acceptance criteria in order to still attract qualified, driven students. It may also increase its tuition but not enough to drive away qualified applicants.
- A lot has changed since the "old days" when if you saw a child out on the street playing during the day you would find out why he/she was not in school that day. Getting back to that place may be difficult, so I agree that the first step will be redefining the village. The village can no longer be black communities for black kids and white communities for white kids and so forth. The community today is institutions - the education system, law enforcement, recreational centers.
- We need to revitalize our villages, not redefine them. The concept of the "village" is a theoretical construct taken from our connection to Africa--villages protected children, reared them...together as one people. Today, we are bogged down by multi-culturalism and assimilation and we seldom encourage our black boys to embrace their black heritage.



- The biggest problem I see is that the black young males that we are speaking about don't have true role-models to look up to. Not because they aren't out there, but because they don't know who they are or how to find them. When they turn on the tv/computer or open a magazine all they see are big chains, fancy cars, and tattoos. Who do we expect them to look up to?
- The drive these kids have to become either a multi-million dollar rapper or athlete instead of using their brain and other talents to better society and their "village" is a major root in the shortcomings in their education. These kids would be able to name more rap artists than the former Presidents. Their definition of success is so narrow-minded.
- Public education has not failed anybody. Families have failed their children. It is not the purpose of a basic education to search for courses that motivate certain people. It is for people to step up and want to get a basic education. It is for parents to hold their children accountable for going to school and doing their work.
- A college education results from a deliberately planned, integrated, and holistic experience that begins the moment a student sets foot on campus and continues until the sheepskin is delivered.
- The "it takes a village" theme results from a flawed assumption that "success" requires a greater governmental role in education. I would argue just the opposite as agendas such as tuition credits, affirmative action, and other government intervention subsidizes those less likely to do well in higher education at the expense of those who are more likely to do well. This type of policy goes against a meritocracy and a needs-based assistance plan, and in fact, can make a person worse off by erroneously influencing them to unsuccessfully attend college at the expense of lost wages that could have been earned in the same period.
- Somewhere we got the idea that the purpose of education is only to get a good job. Where along the way did we forget that a viable democracy requires engaged citizens who are not only aware but also critical of societal issues? Not only is an education required for self-governance, but we also need knowledge and skills that will help us make good decisions for ourselves and for our families.
- On the poll, the first thing I clicked was "oral and written communication." I did so because while I was a grad assistant, I had to read over some papers and it



absolutely amazed me the lack of basic writing and grammar skills that students had. This is something that must be addressed

- General education requirements across the system should be restructured to focus on soft skills.
- Of course soft skills are important, and while the phrase "soft skills" may be new, the skills are not. It has always been important for employees (and good citizens for that matter) to be able to think on their feet, interpret a chart, get to work on time, be organized and work well with others.
- I am just wondering - are online courses just as effective as courses in the classroom? I took an online course, and I found it extremely easy. The material is there, but I find it hard to actually learn without engaging and interacting. Is this really an issue or am I simply unfamiliar with the approach?
- Ability to get along with all different kinds of people and ability to appreciate differences, even value them. Also everyone doesn't need to have them all but hopefully everyone has some of the soft skills.
- "Soft skills"... the new buzzword that sounds great but ultimately amounts to very little. Basically when people ask for a person/employee with soft skills, they want a well-rounded and resourceful individual (the same thing they have wanted for years). They're NOT quantifiable. How can you measure soft skills? Soft skills have more to do with personality types and personal goals than being told repetitively "critical thinking is great!"
- Without a doubt these "soft skills" need to be addressed in our education.
- For years now science/engineering departments have realized the importance of developing these "soft skills" in their graduates by encouraging students to participate in co-op programs.
- Soft skills are not for the faint of heart, nor are they a skill set reserved for university graduates only. High school and community college graduates need them too.
- All graduates of any institution should be able to identify and use their soft skills.
- In order to get these "soft skills", teachers should involve these in their everyday class.
- Some soft skills you should learn in elementary and high school.



- As an older student at RCCC and an already-working-adult student, I know first hand how important it is to not only have soft skills, but to be able to show or prove these skills.
- The ability to effectively communicate with others has been lost in our technology driven society. More and more time is being spent interacting with various electronic devices and less time is spent engaged interpersonally. I believe that these skills need to be addressed not only in our college system, but in our lives as a whole.
- Soft skills are an important focus of most employers today, and I think that making soft skills a major focus in the class room would really help the students that are applying for jobs after college.

### **Our Health and Our Environment**

- Our country needs all the help it can get to reduce energy consumption and manage environmental degradation. We need more engineers working on these problems, and more engineering research at UNC schools. Distance education at UNC-A's engineering program is working beautifully - churning out smart students who are mostly staying in North Carolina.
- I second the comment about our state's engineering programs meeting critical challenges for the future. Energy, transportation, and environment - all benefit by investment in new directions through engineered solutions. I have witnessed firsthand how UNC System Distance Education has brought excellent engineering education to many across the state. Yet another example of efficient use of resources.

### **Our Children and Their Future: University Access and Public Education**

- Online classes are one of many ways that the UNC system can address these issues, but it is important that these online classes are coupled with in-person classes so that interpersonal, interactive and relationship skills are developed along with reading, writing and arithmetic. Video classes, "off-campus" classes and student led instruction are all ways to complement the online jungle that awaits.
- I believe the University should embrace this growth as an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness of the admissions processes on its constituent campuses. It's no secret that the University has some institutions that are less selective than others (and that is not necessarily a negative when



- Two of the most important ideas for campuses to embrace are (1) more online/video/cable course offerings and (2) better implementation/integration of summer programs across many disciplines.
- I believe it depends on the person taking the course and the subject matter. So we should offer different options. If you want to take a course in person that should be an option. If you want to take it online that should also be available. A certain amount of face to face is nice even if it's just with the other students for discussion and brainstorming.
- I think that as we look at how to grow our university system we must look at both on-line education as well as traditional growth. While I think that on-line education can work well for professionals who find it difficult if not impossible to fit into the traditional educational system when pursuing advanced degrees while still maintaining a full time job and in a lot of cases a family. I don't think that online courses are able to develop soft skills and facilitate discussions and interaction with faculty and other students in the way that traditional education can.
- soft skills and in depth interaction and discussions with faculty and other students thrive in liberal arts type education settings where classes are no bigger than 15-20. In these types of settings traditional liberal arts education settings traditional education style produces the interaction and soft skills necessary for graduates and undergraduates.
- I would also say that to educate all of our university students in classes of 20 would in my book be an amazing accomplishment for higher education.
- In terms of workforce development, I think we need to be putting a greater emphasis on collaborating with the community college system on technical - skill jobs. I think the University is great but I have to admit I'm a little worried that as a whole, society has placed too much emphasis on the idea of obtaining a university degree and not a technical degree, with which a person can be just as successful.
- I wonder what happen to the villagers from Asian American or newly arrived North Carolinian such as the legal admitted refugee's community. If NC Tomorrow is going to succeed, the leaders of this project must be inclusive of these communities as well. There is a myth



that ALL Asian American are A students when in fact, many are just barely making it. Please include as well in this process.

- Are children ready for education so early, and could it be that there are long-term effects of this education later in life, such as being burnt out and not wanting to continue immediately?
- I think it comes down to the fact that we have yet to update classes in high school to cater to what is going on in the job world these days. People already don't know what they want to do in life, so why keep requiring them go to the same social studies and science class that doesn't have anything to do with a future career.
- I have to agree with anonymous in their statement that our education system is too static. Education is a very personal thing and high school students need to feel like they are an individual to avoid dropping out.
- I absolutely agree with the statement on standardized testing. I'm not sure what can change that, it seems necessary, but it definitely only gears classes to teaching to a test!
- I think one simple step that hasn't yet been mentioned is better advertisement from the Universities about what they offer. I consider myself and some of my friends pretty bright people but most of us had no idea that there were so many options and paths for a student to pursue once they are in college.
- One thing we do poorly is provide a training safety net for people who have lost their jobs to foreign competition. Maybe people wouldn't be so afraid of immigration and free trade (two things that greatly benefit the US (and world's) economy as a whole) if they had more confidence that losing a job was not a mortal blow.
- By the time someone graduates high school they are burned out from all of the information that they are given that they don't WANT to go to school. It doesn't matter to them at the time that they need that college degree to do well. Also they don't know what they want to do with their lives.
- If we want to foster creativity we need to reexamine how we admit students. Right now we base entrance exclusively upon SAT's (which measures ability in liberal arts), essays, grades, and sometimes extracurricular because those are the things we can measure easily. Measuring someone's creative ability is much more difficult, but it's a problem that will have to be solved.



## **Our University's Outreach, Engagement and Innovations**

- There is no doubt that the role of the university in economic development is changing across the nation. We are holding the university system to a higher caliber these days, and it is imperative that we maximize the State of North Carolina's economic competitive advantage.
- I'm terribly concerned about the direction being taken by the UNC System. The "needs of the state" are represented as monolithic. It is assumed that economic development is synonymous with equity in wealth distribution, when all data show, economic development as currently defined results in the accumulation of wealth among the top quintile of the population.
- The University system has a great history of research with benefits in economic development throughout the state. This is the University's strength and should be built upon. The NC Arboretum is an excellent example - it is part of the UNC System.
- One reason students leave education is that they don't see the connection between academics and "the real world." An exception to this is the internship program.
- I think it's important to understand why we don't necessarily know of everything our schools are doing. I feel that institutions in smaller communities or cities have an easier time leaving a visible impact than those where the ratio of student to non-student resident is less.
- Too few people know that the NC Arboretum in Bent Creek.
- In order to create job opportunities in areas that have less business density, the UNC system would need to focus on entrepreneurial measures at every campus.
- Universities can serve as a spark for the intellectual discussion of a community.
- That being said we need to be sure we are fostering opportunity for our students and faculty to pursue the subject matter they are most passionate about. If we fail to do this then we aren't maximizing the value of the students and faculty. Basic research provides many opportunities and benefits that applied cannot.

## **Other**

- It is great that the UNC Administration has taken the initiative to begin this process. We all know what wonderful services the University has provided to the state of NC in the past, but this effort will allow the UNC System to take the next step in meeting the needs of our state.



- There is no such thing as the "needs of the state". Many of our needs are mutually exclusive, and any attempt to decide whose needs should be met MUST be democratically planned.
- The fundamental problem with the idea that a 4 year degree is going to lead to better financial well being is flawed in the fact that the "value" of an undergraduate degree is diminishing. This is happening for a number of reasons but the main reason is the fact that UNC campus admissions officers have been working the state over to ensure that everyone and his brother is getting a college degree.