

State Rep. Tom Tangretti
Remarks to graduates of Triangle
Tech Greensburg
Feb. 23, 2007

Thank you for having me

Welcome, and congratulations to the graduates.

Over the past several years, I've had many opportunities to visit the facilities at Triangle Tech and speak to the graduates of its programs, and I have always been extremely impressed with both.

Many of the graduates from Triangle Tech here in Greensburg are my constituents, and it is great to see how they earn not just a degree, new skills and the promise of a good-paying job, but also a terrific boost to their career momentum and their personal pride.

I think all of those things are something that each of this year's graduates can look forward to, as well.

The cost of a four-year college degree keeps getting more and more expensive.

While my colleagues and I try to find a way to help ease that cost for Pennsylvania students – and believe me, ~~we are trying~~ – many young people, and others of all ages, ^{→ even some who already have college degrees} have discovered that programs like Triangle Tech's can give them the skills and the start they need to a successful career and life.

But whether you choose a program like the one here at Triangle Tech, or a four year baccalaureate program, or some other higher education opportunity, I want to stress ^{today} how important that decision is, and how important I think it is for those of you who have graduated from this program

to share your wisdom with others who might not be inclined at this point to seek a higher education.

Believe me it matters.

Statistics published by the U.S. Census Bureau show that the average annual income for a person who drops out of high school is about \$19,000.

That's \$1,000 BENEATH the federal poverty guideline for a family of four in the United States.

For students who complete high school, the average salary jumps to \$28,600 – nearly \$10,000 more a year just for finishing high school!

But even then, with a family, you are just scraping by, most likely living paycheck to paycheck, unable to start any real savings or plan adequately for the future.

But what about those folks who pursue a higher education and receive a degree?

- You are salary
Their average salary right now is about \$51,500.

That's almost double what people with just a high school education are earning.

There is no doubt, then, that a higher education makes a huge difference in salary later on in life.

Higher education is also crucial in a number of other areas regarding your future.

First and foremost, it vastly expands the number and type of jobs available to you.

Let's face it...it's not 1970 anymore...good-paying jobs in factories or other places that require just a high school degree aren't that plentiful.

There was a time when jobs for young people – even people who had dropped out of high school – were plentiful.

Many people who dropped out of school got jobs for a factory or company in their town and worked for 30 or 40 years in that same job, and retiring with a nice house and a nice pension, too.

Anyone who reads the papers, or talks to their parents, knows that just doesn't happen anymore.

The number of jobs that require a college degree or where education beyond high school is a ^{necessity now.} ~~plus is~~ definitely increasing.

At the same time, the level to which you can rise in your career without a higher education is ~~shrinking~~.

virtually impossible

In previous generations, there were many levels of jobs available for those without a college education, or in some cases, even a high school diploma.

Baby boomers can tell you stories about how they started out in the company mail room and ended up running the company.

But that doesn't happen anymore.

Many employers want you to show what you can do in the classroom before you can even get into the mail room, and rising through the company without continuing your education is almost unheard of.

Your level of education is also likely to impact the type of job you do.

The importance of a ^{higher education} college degree in scientific, manufacturing and engineering fields cannot be understated.

You yourself have had access to a highly specialized field of education, and have earned degrees directly related to the work ^{setting} you will most likely end up in.

The careers you are embarking on are just some examples of the highly specialized fields that are now in demand – specialization that was unheard of just 10 or 20 years. ^{ago}

And, while obtaining a specialized degree is necessary in some fields, sometimes just having some form of higher education is important, regardless of the field of study.

That's because employers want to know that their employees are well-rounded, knowledgeable about the world and experienced about its challenges.

The advantage of a higher education will be proven when your resume is chosen over those who did not make the commitment to seek that education.

I've already mentioned how salary is often dependent on whether you have some type of higher education, but let's not forget the things beyond just your take home pay – such as health insurance and other benefits.

These are also often impacted by your level of education.

Jobs that do not require a higher education often have fewer of these kinds of benefits, and many times provide no retirement or health insurance.

Many families are discovering these days that these kinds of benefits can be imperative to their financial security and stability.

Getting an education past high school is the best way to prepare for a career that pays well and provides a means to a secure future.

All of you are hardworking and determined, I'm sure.

You have taken a significant step in your further education and are ready to begin a career that you *we all believe* ~~hope~~ will provide financial security and personal fulfillment – and eventually the path to a secure retirement.

But, of course, that doesn't mean you are finished.

I would encourage all of you to continue seeking even further education.

As you get jobs and settle into careers, take advantage of the opportunities that the good salary and benefits many of you will receive give to you.

Get more training, take college classes, even earn a bachelor's or advanced degree.

*who are on a education
long continuous*
Educated citizens are active and engaged citizens,
IN THEIR and your community, Pennsylvania and the nation *and we*
need many more of those.

You will find that the more you learn about other things, the more you learn about yourself, and the more you will want to become involved in the lives of those around you.

Remember that in the future, society will be depending on you not just to design their buildings, wire their businesses and heat and cool their homes, but also to move society forward by participating as a citizen and by raising healthy and active families.

You are taking a huge step toward your future now, but you have many more steps to take.

Continuing to educate yourself can make those steps easier, and will result in countless benefits for you, your family, your neighbors and your community.

Again, congratulations, and thank you for allowing me to share this very special event with you.

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