

COMMUNITY VOICES:

College lets you broaden your worldview

- By ERIN AUERBACH
- Apr 23, 2021

Last fall, one of my former students told me that she was changing direction from journalism to pursue training in another profession. She feared that I would disapprove. I reassured her that I fully supported her decision. One of the many things I love about teaching young adults is showing them that their professional lives are full of possibilities. That starts with their education. It was a lesson that my parents instilled in my brothers and me.

College is the place where you not only learn valuable skills — whether that entails how to write a solid news lead or proper use of ultrasound equipment — but it is also where you seek to broaden your worldview. That will often lead students to either solidify the educational path they started with or find new directions to better suit their needs.

My own career trajectory was by no means linear. During my undergraduate education, I changed majors and transferred universities. I earned a master's degree in theater with the idea that I would eventually teach. Then I started writing show reviews for a weekly newspaper in Las Vegas and discovered that I really enjoyed journalism. I took every freelance job I could pick up. I made mistakes. Eventually, I opted to return to school to pursue a second master's degree in journalism. I was a reporter for a while before shifting to work in academic public relations.

When I was young, I was very risk averse, deathly afraid of failure. What I did not understand at 18, or 20 or even 30 years old, was that failing was an essential element of personal growth. These failures were more like steppingstones to eventual success.

When the opportunity to teach came along, I did something that was uncharacteristic of me: I took a chance. That proved to be the best decision I have ever made.

Still under the cloud of the pandemic, things remain so uncertain. Understandably sick of a year of Zoom and asynchronous classes, many may be wondering if pursuing or continuing their higher education is worth it.

It is. Community college remains the most affordable option and an ideal place for students of all ages to dabble, explore and figure out their path. From laptop loans to vaccine clinics, Bakersfield College has gone out of its way to help accommodate and support students and the community throughout this difficult period. Even in the virtual space, the school continues to present students with a plethora of diverse opportunities to learn and attend online events with important speakers.

Taking a class in welding does not force you to become a welder. But it will teach you a skill that might prove useful for future options. Opportunity abounds, so take a chance on yourself. Attend an informational meeting. Sign up for that class that looks interesting.

Oh, and Bakersfield College isn't just for recent high school graduates. One of my most enthusiastic students this semester is a retiree in his 60s who is taking classes to finish the associate's degree he started working on years earlier. He exemplifies one indisputable fact: no matter what happens in the world, no matter where you work or what you do, no one can ever take your education away from you.

Erin Auerbach teaches journalism at Bakersfield College and is the adviser for the Renegade Rip.