

CHARGE TO GRADUATES

DR. NÚÑEZ

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I want to tell you a story.

One hundred years ago, the great American inventor Thomas Edison was alleged to have said that “A college education is useless.” Now it should not come as a surprise to anyone that Mr. Edison never went to college. In fact, he never even went to high school. He was so prolific as an inventor that he might have gotten away with saying something so crazy. But he didn’t.

You see, one of Mr. Edison’s contemporaries said “You’re wrong!”, and boldly called out the “Wizard of Menlo Park” when he replied “The value of an education in a liberal arts college is NOT the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.”

Now let’s take a moment to process this. Let it sink in. I’ll repeat it in case you didn’t catch it all . . . “The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.”

And who do you suppose was this champion of a liberal arts education; who stopped the great Edison in his tracks; who taught himself Calculus at age 12 and was reading the German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant at age 13? It was Albert Einstein who said that nothing was more important than a liberal arts education!

Now I share this story with you for several reasons. It illustrates that attacks on a college education in general, and on a liberal arts education in particular, are not new, and often come from those who genuinely believe they did just fine without the benefit of a college degree. And perhaps they really did do well, but they represent the exception, rather than the rule. A 2022 article posted on Money.com cited an earnings study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of

