

# **The State of Education Today and the American Dream**

## **An Introduction for my EE351 Students**

by Kenneth A. Kuhn

July 6, 2008

I am going to give you a brief lecture on the state of education today. I warn you in advance that I do not believe in the moronic concept of political correctness which by the way is always wrong by its own definition. I am going to tell it to you straight because that is what you need to hear and think about. What I am going to tell you may make you mad. That is good. Perhaps I will make you mad enough to put forth the effort to succeed in life. However negative I may sound, my intent is positive and comes from over thirty years of observations in what is referred to as the “real world”.

In every class that I teach I see good students that I know are going to become the movers and shakers of tomorrow. Some of you in this class will undoubtedly fall in that category. I do not know who you are yet but that will become obvious as the course progresses. But sadly, I see too many students who have been allowed to pass through the system without learning the fundamentals required for this course. It is not that the material was not taught properly, it was as evidenced by the good students who will apply what they learned in those classes and succeed in this class. The blame is clearly on the students for not fulfilling their obligation to learn. That is right – you have an obligation that you must fulfill. It is an incredible waste for someone to be given the privilege of being in school but not making an effort when there are people out there who would work hard if only they could be granted the privilege. After graduation they would repay society’s investment in them many times over rather than just consume more from society.

I do not teach for the money. I make many times my teaching salary on Wall Street with only a tiny fraction of the time and effort. I teach because I possess special skills and knowledge in electronics and was asked to teach these courses. Those skills were developed mostly by self study after graduation. I am here to pass on many of my skills to you if you will only make an effort to learn. If there were no good students in the class I would not waste my time being here. But there are good students and teaching them is one way for me to repay debts to those who taught me years ago.

I teach to the good students and let the rest fall behind – I do not have time to waste caring. I have always been opposed to the idiotic “no student left behind” concept. A good student is not necessarily one who earns A’s but anyone with a real interest in learning and is actually trying – not just making an illusion of effort – the usual giveaway is that they have nothing but excuses. Even C students can be classified as good students if they are trying and perhaps struggling. Some of them will also be the movers and shakers of tomorrow. I struggled in school so I know what it is like. I made my share of C’s and below but I persevered and the lack of a top GPA never held me back in life.

In case you do not know, let me inform you that modern education, like many things of today, is a racket where the cash flow in is more important than the product or service

## The State of Education Today and the American Dream

going out – you can thank politicians for this. Individual departments within each school have varying standards, but for the most part as long as money, from whatever source, is flowing to the school and the student does not commit any serious wrongs, then in all likelihood the student will be given a diploma after serving the required time and doing some minimum of work. That diploma is worthless unless the graduate can actually do something and be an asset to some employer. Employers are well aware of this fact and carefully screen job candidates for graduates that did the *maximum* of work – the good students. Exceptions that have existed in the past for privileged groups are fading fast. Highly competent people from all social groups are available now and employers seek those to satisfy antiquated quotas. Actually, those people would be (and are) hired anyway without regard to quotas for they are assets – that is all an employer should care about. So anyone who thinks they are going to slip through school and then be given a high paying paper clip counting job is in for a reality shock after being given a diploma. I know of people with a degree in electrical engineering who never have and never will be employed in that field.

I meet engineers across the country and they all express the same frustration with modern graduates not knowing anything. I was talking to one engineer from Oklahoma at a professional gathering and the first thing she asked me when I mentioned that I teach engineering was, “Do they cheat?” Regrettably, I had to answer in the affirmative. That is a common theme across the country.

On the bright side, I see young engineers who are knowledgeable and are assets to society. The problem is that there are just not enough of them. Some of you will join their ranks in a few years.

I tell you these things because pampered Americans are increasingly becoming known as lazy and useless as America transitions to a socialist republic. What I have previously stated is evidence of this. Being addicted to entertainment they are consuming wealth generated in the past without creating new wealth. People from other countries come here, legal or otherwise, to build their American dream by working hard – just as traditional Americans did years ago. Unless Americans wake up, they will eventually find themselves doing custodial and chambermaid work in the mansions of the immigrants. There are Americans who are not addicted to entertainment and do work both hard and smart. It takes both to succeed. You see them everywhere including here in this class. They are referred to with disrespect as the lucky, the fortunate, and the greedy. By some not well understood phenomena considered by many to be unfair, it seems that the real wealth flows towards those who work. No amount of socialism is ever going to change that. What socialism in the United States has accomplished is to lure the young into an addictive trap where they are stuck voting to enrich clever political demagogues and their cronies who hand out just enough money to maintain the trap walls. No doubt that a number of you are in that trap. You can escape but you are going to have to work at it. The choice is still yours. You can work to build your American dream, or from inside the trap you can watch others build theirs.