

Commentary

Tom Palaima REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR

33 million foreign college graduates will soon be job hunting

In the next decade, according to McKinsey & Co. consulting firm, over half a billion more households in other countries will reach the "middle-class" standard of \$5,000 in annual household income. And 33 million university-educated young professionals in developing countries will compete aggressively with their counterparts in developed countries, whom they outnumber two to one.

Think about this. If you have children younger than college age, think about it seriously.

Those 33 million foreign college grads will be willing to work for lower salaries than those paid in Europe and the United States. They are hungrier to be well-educated. They will have a command of English and other second languages.

They will negotiate working conditions with international corporations without the regulations that our government has set in place historically to protect the safety and well-being of employees and their families.

There is no need to play Chicken Little. The picture is clear. Still, most Americans see only our own here and now.



Christian Abraham CONNICTICUT POST
American students may be facing a world in which competition for jobs is fiercer and salaries lower.

Take, for example, indebtedness from loans that two-thirds of our college graduates need to finance college education. One student, highlighted in a recent American-Statesman editorial, owes \$22,000 — \$4,000 above average — and laments that her entire paycheck goes to pay off bills and school loans.

She cannot sleep at night when she thinks of sacrificing for 10 years to pay off the financial obligation that has given her a better chance in these difficult times.

What are the realities here? First, welcome to the consequences of 25 years of cutbacks in state support for higher education. When state appropriations cover well under 20 percent of annual operating costs at the University of Texas at Austin, individual students and their families have to bear the burden.

Wealthier students get a big bargain. Talented and highly motivated poorer students, who would benefit from redistributive scholarship set-asides from increased tuition income, have it hard.

Second, imagine what the situation will be like in a few years, when the salaries of recent graduates ratchet downward toward their lower international equilibrium.

Third, try to see the world as it really is, or even as it really was not too long ago.

What do the expectations of younger Americans privileged enough to get college educations look like when

viewed from an international or historical perspective? How would the complaints of our sample student play out in households in Pakistan, China, Lithuania or Nigeria that have crossed the \$5,000-a-year prosperity threshold? What do Americans who remember life before the 1980s think when they hear such complaints?

If your imagination fails you, rent an old film noir such as "Kiss of Death" (1947), starring Victor Mature and featuring Richard Widmark as sociopathic killer Tommy Udo. As you enjoy this classic, notice where people live, how few clothes they own, the Spartan level of their creature comforts.

I wonder what a typical American college graduate considers a necessary bill these days. Austinite Herbert Ganz does, too. He rents out the modest 1930s house he owns just north of the university. Herb and his wife began raising their two children there. The house has two small bedrooms. The only closet is the one Herb installed in the single bathroom. It was and is a good house in a good neighborhood.

Austinites who need McMansions to be happy should pick up "Que Paso? And Other Texas Stories" by

89-year-old Aleta Lutz. Lutz now lives in Manor. Her stories offer scenes from her life of service as a teacher and social worker down in the Valley. She graduated a long time ago from Southeastern State College and Phillips University in Oklahoma. Lutz observes the human condition with warmth and humor.

She writes about the old handmade desk and marble-top table that she "inherited" from different friends, and the hand-me-down clothes she has worn throughout her life. She estimates that her total belongings come nowhere near the \$30,000 in gifts the Clintons had to return to the White House.

She has always stayed in motels that advertise rooms for \$29.95, but tack on \$3 for a second person. So, she thinks about having her husband sleep out in the car.

Lutz made ends meet by knowing what she could do without. She saved her sleepless nights for things that mattered, the real problems that people poorer and less gifted than herself had to face and that she spent her life helping to solve. They sure don't make college graduates like they used to.

Palaima is Dickson Centennial Professor of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin.