

SSC Gives A Graduation Speech

Posted on May 23, 2014 by Scott Alexander



Trigger warning: *deliberately provoking horror about graduates' real-world post-college prospects.*

Epistemic status: *intended as persuasive speech, may somewhat overstate case.*

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Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to have been invited to speak here at the great University of [mumble]. Go Wildcats, Spartans, or Eagles, as the case may be!

I apologize if what I have to say to you sounds a little unpolished. I was called in on very short notice after your original choice for graduation speaker, [Mr. Steven L. Carter](#), had his invitation to speak rescinded due to his offensive and quite honestly outrageous opinions. Let me say in no uncertain terms that I totally condemn him and everything he stands for, and that I am glad to see the University of [mumble] taking a strong stand against this sort of thing.

Ladies and gentlemen, probably the most famous graduation speech in history was Kurt Vonnegut's "Wear Sunscreen" address. I'm sure you've all heard about it. He told an MIT class that they should wear sunscreen. Because for all he knew any more substantial advice he gave might be wrong, but that at least was on a firm evidential basis.

Well, I come here before you to explain that there is now serious controversy in the dermatological community. A 1995 paper found that people who used more sunscreen [had a much higher risk of malignant melanoma](#), the most dangerous type of skin cancer. Eight years later, [a review article](#) claimed that the original paper was confounded by fairness of skin, and that likely the relationship between sunscreen use and melanoma is zero. But the story was further complicated by the finding that sunscreen use may increase cancers of the internal organs, either through [vitamin D dependent](#) or [some vitamin D independent](#) pathways. My understanding is that a majority of dermatologists are still in favor of sunscreen, but that the issue is by no means settled.

But think about what the disagreement means. One of the smartest men in America came before an auditorium just like this, and said that there was only one item of advice of which he was completely certain – that you should wear sunscreen. Absolutely certain. And years later, we know that not only is this a very complicated question on which no certainty is yet possible – but it may very well be that if you follow his advice, you will get cancer and die.

Sometimes the things everybody knows everybody knows just aren't true. Like, did you know [Vonnegut never wrote a graduation speech about sunscreen at all?](#) So with this spirit of questioning assumptions in mind, I want to ask you a question. Today many of you will be completing your education. Sure, some of you are going on to graduate or professional training, but it is clearly the end of an era. Seventeen years, from kindergarten to the present, and I want to ask you:

Is education worth it?

This sounds like the introduction to every college graduation speech ever. The speaker will ask if education is worth it, say of course it is because something something the human condition, and everyone will cheer and head off to the reception. So in order to keep you on your toes, I want to make the opposite point. What if education, as you understand it – public or private or charter schooling from age four or five all the way to university as young adults – is, on net, a waste of your time and money?

In order to move beyond platitudes in evaluate whether education is worthwhile – to give it the same kind of fair hearing we would want to give sunscreen – we need to list out some of the costs and benefits. Of benefits, two stand out clearly. The philosophical benefits of feeling connected to the beauty of mathematics, the passion of the humanities, the great historical traditions. And the practical benefits of being able to get a job and afford nice things like food and shelter.

We will start with philosophy. Human knowledge is pretty great. Your life has been enriched with the ideas of brilliant thinkers, of giants upon whose shoulders you might one day hope to stand. Isn't this enough?

But as [86% of you know](#), you can't just observe an experimental group has experienced an effect and attribute it to the experimental intervention. You have to see if other people in a control group got the same benefit for less work.

What would be the control group for school? Home-schoolers [do much better](#) than those who attend public or private schools by nearly any measure. But this is unfair; it's what scientists call an "active control". What we really need to do is compare you to people who got no instruction at all.

It's illegal not to educate a child, so our control group will be hard to find. But perhaps the best bet will be the "unschooling" movement, a group of parents who think school is oppressive and damaging. They *tell* the government they're home-schooling their children but actually just let them do whatever they want. They may teach their kid something if the child wants to be taught, otherwise they will leave them pretty much alone.

And this is really hard to study, because they're a highly self-selected group and there aren't very many of them. The only study I could find on the movement only had $n = 12$, and although it tried as hard as it could to compare them to schoolchildren matched for race and family income level and parent education and all that

good stuff I'm sure there's some weirdness that slipped through the cracks. Still, it's all we've got.

So, do these children do worse than their peers at public school?

Yes, they do. [By one grade level.](#)

About college we still know very little. But if you'd stayed out of public school and stayed home and played games and maybe asked your parents some questions, then by the time your friends were graduating twelfth grade, you would have the equivalent of an eleventh-grade education.

Another intriguing clue here is [Louis Benezet's experiment](#) with mathematics instruction. Benezet, an early 20th century superintendent of schools, wondered whether cramming mathematics into kids at an early age had a detrimental effect. He decreed that in some of the schools in his district, there would be *no* math instruction until grade six. He found that within a year, these sixth graders had caught up with their peers in traditional schools, and furthermore that they were able to think much more logically about math problems – figure out what was going on rather than desperately trying to multiply and divide all the numbers in the problem by one another. If Benezet's results hold true – and on careful reading they are hard to doubt – any math education before grade six is useless *at best*. And it's hard to resist the urge to generalize to other subjects and children even older still.

Why is it so easy for the unschooled to keep up with their better educated brethren? My guess is that it's because very little learning goes on at school at all. The proponents of education speak of feeling connected to the beauty of mathematics, the passion of the humanities, and the great historical traditions. But how many of the children they spit out can prove one of Euclid's theorems? How many have been exposed to the *Canterbury Tales*? How many have experienced the sublime beauty of the Parthenon?

These aren't rhetorical questions, by the way. According to the [general survey of knowledge among college students](#), 3.3% know who Euclid was, 7.6% know who wrote *Canterbury*, and a full 15% know what city the Parthenon's in.

36% of high school students know that an atom is bigger than an electron, rather than vice versa. But a full 59% of college students know the same. That's a whole nine percent better than chance. On one of the most basic facts about the fundamental entities that make up everything in existence.

“But knowledge isn't about names and dates!” No, but names and dates are the parts that are easy to measure, and it's a pretty good bet that if you don't know what city the Parthenon's in you probably haven't absorbed the full genius of the Greek architectural tradition. Anyone who's never heard of Chaucer probably doesn't have strong opinions on the classics of Middle English literature.

So in contradiction to the claim that education is necessary to teach beautiful and elegant knowledge, I maintain first that nearly

nobody in the educational system picks this up anyway, that people who don't get any formal education at all pick it up nearly as much of it, and that people not exposed to it as children will, if they decide to learn it as adults, pick it up quickly and easily and without the heartbreak of trying to cram it into the underdeveloped head of a seven year old.

What about the claim that education is practically useful for getting a job and making money?

Even more than most young people, you've had the privilege of getting to watch your dreams implode in real time right before your eyes. [About fifteen percent of you](#) will be some variant of unemployed straight out of college. Another ten percent will find something part-time. And another forty or so percent will be [underemployed](#), working as waiters or clerks or baristas or something else that uses zero percent of the knowledge you've worked so hard to accumulate. The remaining third of you who get something vaguely resembling the job you signed up for will still have to deal with wages that have stagnated over the last decade even as working hours increased and average student debt [nearly doubled](#).

But don't worry, I'm sure the nice folks at Chase-Bear-Goldman-Sallie-Manhattan-Stearns-Sachs-Mae-FEDGOV will be happy to forgive your debt if you mention you weren't entirely happy with the purchase. You did hold out for the satisfaction-guaranteed offer, right? No? Uh oh.

As bad as the job market is, staying in school looks worse. Economists warn that [attending law school is the worst career decision you can make](#), so much so that newly graduated lawyers have nothing do to but [sue law schools for not warning them against attending](#) and established firms offer an [Anything But Law School Scholarship](#) to raise awareness of the problem. Doctors are so uniformly unhappy that they are committing suicide in record numbers and [nine out of ten would warn young people against going into medicine](#). Graduate school has always been an iffy bet, but now the ratio of Ph. D applicants to open tenure track positions has hit triple digits, with the vast majority ending up as [miserable adjunct professors](#) who juggle multiple part time jobs and end up making as much as a Starbucks barista but without the health insurance.

I'd like to thank whoever figured out how to include URLs in speeches, by the way. That was *the best* invention.

But here I cannot honestly disagree with the conventional assessment that going to school raises your earning power. As bad as you will have it, everyone who didn't graduate college still has it much, much worse. All the economic indicators agree with the signs from the desolate wasteland that was once our industrial heartland: they are doomed. Their wages are not stagnating but actively declining, their unemployment rate is a positively Greek thirty-five percent, and prospects for changing that are few and far between. Some economists blame globalization, which makes it easy to out-source manufacturing and other manual labor to the Chinese. Others [blame technology](#), noting that many of the old well-paying blue-collar jobs are done not by foreigners but by machines. Both trends

are set to increase, turning even more factory workers, truck drivers, and [warehouse-stockers](#) into burger-flippers, Wal-Mart greeters, and hollow-eyed unemployed.

But don't let your schadenfreude get the better of you. Twenty years from now that's going to be you. Sure, right now machines can only do the easy stuff, and the world isn't interconnected enough to let foreigners do anything really *subtle* for us. But lawyers are already feeling the pinch of software that auto-generates contracts, and programmers are already feeling the pinch of Indians who will work for half the pay and email their code to Silicon Valley the next morning. You don't need to invent a robo-drafter to put engineers out of business, just drafting software so effective it allows one engineer to do the work of three. And although there are half-hearted efforts to stop it, it seems more and more like King Canute trying to turn back a tide made of hundred dollar bills.

Once machines can do everything we can better and cheaper, the inevitable end result is employment for a few geniuses who invent and run the machines, immense profits for the capitalists who own the machines, and what happens to everyone else better left unspoken.

“Is this a vision of what shall be, or of what might be only?” Well, a visionaries as diverse as Martin Luther King, Richard Nixon and Milton Friedman have proposed something called a [Basic Income Guarantee](#). When society becomes so advanced that it produces more than enough for everybody – but also so advanced that most individuals below genius level have little to contribute and no way

of earning money – everyone should get a yearly salary just for existing. Think welfare, except that it goes to everybody, there's no stigma, and it's more than enough to live on. This titanic promise has run up against a giant iceberg with BUT HOW WOULD WE PAY FOR IT written in big red letters on the front. If we cancelled all existing welfare and entitlement programs – which makes sense if we're giving everyone enough money to live comfortably on, we would only free up enough money together for [a universal income of \\$5,800](#). I don't know if you can live on that, but I'd hate to have to try.

But we've gotten off track. We were counting the benefits of formal education. We did not do so well in trying to prove that it left you more knowledgeable, but it did seem like it had some practical value in getting you a little bit more money. With your shiny college degree, you can confidently assert "I've got mine", just as long as you take care not to notice the increasingly distant hordes of manual laborers or the statistics showing that the yours you've got is less and less every year.

What of the costs of education? What have you lost out on?

Well, first about twenty thousand hours of your youth. That's okay. You weren't using that golden time of perfect health and halcyon memories when you had more true capacity for creativity and imagination and happiness than you ever will again anyway. If you hadn't had your teachers to tell you that you needed to be making a collage showing your feelings about *The Scarlet Letter*, you proba-

bly would have wasted your childhood seeing a world in a grain of sand or Heaven in a wild flower or something dumb like that.

I'm more interested in the financial side of it. At \$11,000 average per pupil spending per year times thirteen years plus various preschool and college subsidies, the government spends \$155,000 on the kindergarten-through-college education of the average American.

Inspired by [a tweet](#): what if the government had taken this figure (adjusted for inflation) and invested it in the stock market at the moment of your birth? Today when you graduate college, they remove it from the stock market, put it in a low-risk bond, put a certain percent of the interest from that bond into keeping up with inflation, and hand you the rest each year as a basic income guarantee. How much would you have?

And I calculate that the answer would be \$15,000 a year, adjusted for interest. We can add the \$5,800 basic income guarantee we could already afford onto that for about \$20,000 a year, for everyone. Black, white, man, woman, employed, unemployed, abled, disabled, rich, poor. Welcome to the real world, it's dangerous to go alone, take this. What, you thought we were going to throw you out to sink or swim in a world where if you die *you die in real life*? Come on, we're not that cruel.

So when we ask whether your education is worth it, we have to compare what you got – an education that puts you one grade level above the uneducated and which has informed 3.3% of you who

Euclid is – to what you could have gotten. 20,000 hours of your youth to play, study, learn to play the violin, whatever. And \$20,000 a year, sweat-free.

\$20,000 a year isn't much. The average mid-career salary of an average college graduate is nearly triple that – \$55,000. By the numbers your education looks pretty good. But numbers can be deceiving.

Consider the life you have to look forward to, making your \$55,000. The exact profession that makes closest to that number is a paralegal, so let's go with that. You get a job as a paralegal in a prestigious Manhattan law firm. You can't afford to live in Manhattan, but you scrounge together enough money for a cramped apartment in Brooklyn, which costs you about \$2000 a month rent. Every morning you wake up at 7:45, get on the forty-five minute subway ride to Manhattan, and make it to work by your 9:00 AM starting time. Your boss is a kind of nasty lawyer who is himself upset that he can't pay back his law school debt and yells at you all day. By the time you get back home around 6, you're too exhausted to do much besides watch some TV. You don't really have time to meet guys – I'm assuming you're a woman here, [sixty percent of you are](#), I blame the patriarchy – so you put out a personal ad on Craigslist and after a while find someone you like. You get married after a year; your honeymoon is in Vermont because his company won't give him enough time off to go any further.

You have two point four kids, and realize you've got to move to a better part of town because your school district sucks. Combined

with your student debt, that puts a big strain on the finances and you don't have enough to pay for child care. Eventually you find a place that will do it for cheap, and although it looks kind of dirty and you're shocked when Junior calls you a "puta" which isn't even a proper *English* curse word the price is right and they're the only people who will accept four tenths of a kid. The older kids keep asking you and Dad for help with homework, which you can't give because you haven't really had time to keep up with your math and grammar and so on skills, what with the paralegal job and the television-watching taking up all your time. So you tell them to ask their teacher for extra help, which their teacher doesn't give because she's got forty other kids asking for the same thing and only twenty-four hours in a day. Despite all of this Junior gets into college and *you* sure haven't saved up the money to put him through there tuition has spiraled to twelve gazillion dollars by this point and Chase-Bear-Goldman-Sallie-Manhattan-Stearns-Sachs-Mae-FED-GOV can't lend him that because gazillion isn't even a real number, and ohmigod what if Junior ends up one of those high school graduates with the Greek-level unemployment rates standing forlornly in front of a decaying factory in the Rust Belt? Worse, what if he ends up *living with you*? You beg him to go back to the bank and offer to pay whatever interest rates they ask. And so the cycle begins anew.

Or consider your life on a \$20,000 a year income guarantee. No longer tied down to a job, you can live wherever you want. I love the mountains. Let's live in a cabin in Colorado, way up in the Rockies. You can find stunningly beautiful ones for \$500 a month – freed from the mad rush to get into scarce urban or suburban ar-

eas with good school districts, housing is actually really cheap. So there you are in the Rockies, maybe with a used car to take you to Denver when you want to see people or go to a show, but otherwise all on your own except for the deer and squirrels. You wake up at nine, cook yourself a healthy breakfast, then take a long jog out in the forest. By the time you come back, you've got a lot of interesting thoughts, and you talk about them with the dozens of online friends you cultivate close relationships with and whom you can take a road trip and visit any time you feel like. Eventually you're talked out, and you curl up with a good book – this week you're trying to make it through Aristotle on aesthetics. The topic interests you since you're learning to paint – you've always wanted to be an artist, and with all the time in the world and stunning views to inspire you, you're making good progress. Freed from the need to appeal to customers or critics, you are able to develop your own original style, and you take heart in the words of the old Kipling poem:

And none but the Master will praise them
And none but the Master will blame
And no one will work for money
And no one will work for fame

But each for the joy of the working
Each on his separate star
To draw the thing as he sees it
For the God of things as they are

One of the fans of your work is a cute girl – this time I'm assuming you're a man, I'm sure over the past four years you've learned

some choice words for people who do that. You date and get married. She comes to live with you – she’s also getting \$20,000 a year from the government in place of an education, so now you’re up to \$40,000, which is actually very close to the US median household income. You have two point four kids. With both of you at home full time, you see their first steps, hear their first words, get to see them as they begin to develop their own personalities. They start seeming a little lonely for other kids their own age, so with a sad good-bye to your mountain, you move to a bigger house in a little town on the shores of a lake in Montana. There’s no schooling for them, but you teach them to read, first out of children’s books, later out of something a little harder like Harry Potter, and then finally you turn them loose in your library. Your oldest devours your collection of Aristotle and tells you she wants to be a philosopher when she grows up. Evenings they go swimming, or play stickball with the other kids in town.

When they reach college age, your daughter is so thrilled at the opportunity to learn from her intellectual heroes that she goes to Chase-Bear-Goldman-Sallie-Manhattan-Stearns-Sachs-Mae-FEDGOV and asks for a loan. They’re happy to give her fifteen thousand, which is all college costs nowadays – only the people who are really interested in learning feel the need to go nowadays, and supply so outpaces demand that prices are driven down. She makes it into Yale (unsurprising given how much better home-schooled students do) studies philosophy, but finds she likes technology better. She decides to become an engineer, and becomes part of the base of wealthy professionals helping fund the income guarantee for everyone else. She marries a nice man *after* making sure he’s

willing to stay home and take care of the children – she’s not crazy, she doesn’t want to send them to some kind of *institution* Your younger son, on the other hand, is a little intellectually disabled and can’t read above a third-grade level. That’s not a big problem for you or for him. When he grows older, he moves to Hawaii where he spends most of his time swimming in the ocean and by all accounts enjoys himself very much.

You’re happy your son will be financially secure for the rest of his life, but on a broader scale, you’re happy that no one around you has to live in fear of getting fired, or is struggling to make ends meet, or is stuck in the Rust Belt with a useless skill set. Every so often, you call your daughter and thank her for helping design the robots that do most of the hard work.

Would you like to swing on a star? Carry moonbeams home in a jar? And be better off than you are? Or would you like to get a formal education?

We’re finally getting back to the point now. I’m sorry it’s taken this long. I can see the Dean of Students checking her watch over there with a worried look on her face. I think she’s worried I’m trying to filibuster your graduation. You know legally if I can keep speaking until midnight tonight, the graduation is cancelled and you have to stay in school another year? It’s true. Those are the rules.

Because I don’t want to talk about the very broad social question of whether Education the concept is worth it to Society as a con-

cept. I want to ask *you*, standing here today, was *your* education worth it?

Because this is a college graduation speech, and I am legally mandated to offer some advice, and the specific advice I give will be tailored to your response.

Some of you will say yes, my education was worth it. I am the 3.3%! I know who Euclid was and I understand the sublime beauty of geometry. I don't think I would have been exposed to it, or had the grit to keep studying it, if I hadn't been here surrounded by equally curious peers, under the instruction of enthusiastic professors. This revelation was worth losing my cabin in Colorado, worth resigning myself to the daily grind and the constant lurking fear of failure. I claim it all.

And to you my advice is: if you've sacrificed everything for knowledge, don't forget that. When you are a paralegal in Brooklyn, and you get home from work, and you are very tired, and you want to curl up in front of the TV and watch reality shows until you are numb, remind yourself that you value knowledge above everything else, that you will seek intellectual beauty though the world perish, and read a book or something. Or take a class at a community college. Anything other than declaring knowledge your supreme value but becoming a boob.

Others of you will say yes, my education was worth it. Not because of what I learned about ukulele or eucalyptus or whatever, but be-

cause of the friends I made here, the proud University of [mumble] spirit of camaraderie, which I will carry forth my entire life.

And to you my advice is similar: if you've sacrificed everything for friendship, don't forget that. When you are a paralegal in Brooklyn, or a market analyst in Seattle, or God forbid an intern in Michigan, and you get home from work, and you are very tired, and you want to curl up in front of your computer and check Reddit, remind yourself of the friends you made here and give them a call. See how they're doing. Write them a Christmas card, especially if it is December. Anything other than declaring friendship your supreme value and drifting out of touch.

Others of you will say yes, my education was worth it. Not because of what I learned about the Eucharist or eucere or whatever, but because of the connections I made, the network of alumni who will be giving me a leg up in whatever I choose to pursue.

And to you my advice is, again, similar. If you've sacrificed everything for ambition, be ambitious as *hell*. When you are a paralegal in Brooklyn or whatever, claw your way to the top, stay there, and use it to do something important. If you've sacrificed everything for ambition, don't you dare stop at middle manager.

Others of you will say yes, my education was worth it. Not because of what I learned about yucca or the Yucatan or whatever, but because it helped me learn civic values, become a better person who is better able to help others.

And to you my advice is once again similar. If you've sacrificed everything to help others, don't let it all end with donating a tenner to the OXFAM guy on the street now and then. Join [Giving What We Can](#) or go volunteer somewhere. If you've sacrificed everything for others, make sure others get something good out of the deal!

Others of you will say yes, my education was worth it. Not because of what I learned about eukaryotes or Ukraine or whatever, but because formal education in the school system *taught me how to think*.

And to... sorry, one second, HAHAAHAHAHHAHAAAHAAHAHAHH-HAAHAHA HAHAAHAHAHAHA HAHAAHAHAHAHAH HAHAAHHHH-HAAAHAAHAHAHAH HAHAAHHA HAHAAHHHHAAHAH HAAHHHAAHA HAAHAHAHAHA HAHAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA AHHHHAAHAHAHAHA HAHAAHAHAHA HAAAHAAHHAHAAHHAHA AHAAHAHAHAHA hahaha haha ha hahaha haha heh heh heh okay.

I'm sorry. Ahem. To you my advice is, again, similar. If you've sacrificed everything to learn how to think, learn how to think. When someone says something you disagree with, before you dismiss a straw man it and call that person names and slap yourself five for your brilliant rebuttal, take a second to consider it fairly on its own terms. Go learn about biases and heuristics and how to avoid them. Read enough psychology and cognitive science to figure out why your claim might *kind of* inspire hysterical laughter from people even a little familiar with the field. Just don't sacrifice everything to learn how to think and end up only rearranging your prejudices.

And finally, some of you will say, wait a second, maybe my education *wasn't* worth it. Or, maybe it was the best choice to make from within a bad paradigm, but I'm not content with that. And I wish someone had told me about all of this more than fifteen minutes before I graduate.

And to you I can offer a small amount of compensation. You have learned a very valuable lesson that you might not have been able to learn any other way.

You have learned that the system is Not Your Friend.

I use those last three words very consciously. People usually say "not your friend" as an understatement, a way of saying something is actively hostile. I don't mean that.

The system is not your friend. The system is not your enemy. The system is a retarded giant throwing wads of \$100 bills and books of rules in random directions while shouting "LOOK AT ME! I'M HELPING! I'M HELPING!" Sometimes by luck you catch a wad of cash, and you think the system loves you. Other times by misfortune you get hit in the gut with a rulebook, and you think the system hates you. But either one is giving the system too much credit.

Every one of the architects and leaders of the system is fantastically intelligent – some even have degrees from the University of [mumble]. But every one of the neurons in my dog's brain is a fantastically complex pinnacle of three billion years of evolution, yet

my dog herself can spend the better part of an hour standing motionless, hackles raised, barking at a plastic bag.

To you I don't have very much advice. I'm no smarter than anyone else – well, I know who Euclid is, but *other* than that – and if I knew how to fix the system, it's a pretty good bet other people would know too and the system would already have been fixed. Maybe you, armed with a degree from the University of [mumble], will be the one to help figure it out.

On the other hand, someone a lot smarter than I am *did* have some advice for you. Poor Kurt Vonnegut never did get to give a real graduation speech, but one of his books has some advice targeted at another major life transition:

Hello babies. Welcome to Earth. It's hot in the summer and cold in the winter. It's round and wet and crowded. On the outside, babies, you've got a hundred years here. There's only one rule that I know of, babies-“God damn it, you've got to be kind.”

I don't know how to fix the system, but I am pretty sure that one of the ingredients is kindness.

I think of kindness not only as the moral virtue of volunteering at a soup kitchen or even of [living your life to help as many other people as possible](#), but also as an epistemic virtue. Epistemic kindness is kind of like humility. Kindness to ideas you disagree with.

Kindness to positions you want to dismiss as crazy and dismiss with insults and mockery. Kindness that breaks you out of your own arrogance, makes you realize the truth is more important than your own glorification, especially when there's a lot at stake.

Here we are at the end of a grinder of \$150,000, 20,000 hours, however many dozen collages about *The Scarlet Letter*, and the occasional locker room cry of "faggot" followed by a punch in the gut. Somewhere in another world, there are people just like us in nice cabins reading Aristotle and knowing that nobody will have to go hungry ever again. The difference between us and them isn't money, because I think the \$155,000 the government gave you could have gone either way – and even if I'm wrong about that there's more than enough money somewhere else. The difference isn't intelligence, because the architects of our system are fantastically bright in their own way. I think kindness might be that difference.

Technically kindness plus coordination power, but that's [another speech](#), and the Dean of Students is starting to make frantic hand signals.

I don't know if it's really possible to afford to give everyone that cabin in Colorado. But I hope that the people whose job it is to figure that out approach the problem with a spirit of kindness and humility.

In conclusion, both sides of the sunscreen debate have some pretty good points. It will certainly decrease your risk of squamous and basal cell carcinomas, it probably has no effect on the malignant

melanoma rate but there's a nonzero chance it might either cause *or* prevent them, and its effect on internal tumors seems worrying at this point but is yet to be backed up by any really firm evidence.

I understand this is complicated and unsatisfying. Welcome to the real world.

Congratulations to my girlfriend Ozy, who graduates college this week!