Why I Burned My College Degree

I was a freshman student at Slippery Rock University in 2008. The very next year I dropped out and decided to enter “the real world”. Truth be told I was a young, rebellious nineteen year old who really didn’t know what my future held. I returned to Slippery Rock University in 2012 until I graduated this past year. On the surface, it seems like the typical college run.

It’s a lot deeper than that.

As I declared my major, Emerging Technology & Multimedia, a majority of my classes were starting to become very hands-on. Many professors took note of the video work that myself and a colleague, Jake Miller, were producing. Our work was entered into the University’s research symposium; other pieces were sent out for national competition.

Last year we had a video place as a finalist in the National Broadcasting Society 2015 Convention. The University was proud to showcase the work of their students, and sent us to the convention. We were also given the opportunity to present our work to the University’s Board of Trustees, *on numerous occasions*, who were nothing but proud of what the University’s Communication Department students were creating.

Fast forward to 2016.

Jake and I have had our hands in a number of University related projects. In addition to the video that received national attention, we were also paid to produce a film chronicling Rock Football’s journey to Michigan’s Big House. The dubbed “Back to the Big House” was a venture that was to be paid for by both SRU Athletics and the SRU Communication Department. I still have yet to receive payment from the SRU Communication Department for the project that was completed over a year ago.

More recently, Jake and I had two videos get nominated for the National Broadcasting Society 2016 Convention. I was told that we would be going to the convention in Los Angeles this coming March. Until yesterday, when I received word that the University refused to pay for my portion of the trip. I was told that “*since I am not currently enrolled in any Spring courses*,” my portion of the trip and convention registration would have to be paid for out of pocket.
But you see here’s the thing…

I GRADUATED. I AM ALUMNI. No, I’m not taking Spring courses.

Just like that, kicked to the curb like a day old hooker. That’s when I really started to realize how much my work was just being exploited. All of those times we presented to the Board of Trustees were nothing more than a front for the Communication Department to try and get in good graces with the ‘big-wigs’ in charge at the University. All of the “*we’re so proud of what*

you've done" & the "*you are doing great things*" were really just "*wow, these kids have got us **SET!***"

Let's look at some facts:

- Until the time of my graduation, and possibly until this day, the University offers the "latest emerging technology". In class we were forced to use **Final Cut Pro 7**. At my house, I was using **Final Cut Pro X (10)**.
- During my Editing for Video class, I was told that one of my videoes was **plagiarized**. The truth of the story is, I had used a video that I created outside of the realm of the University, and ***thus I plagiarized myself!*** I was given the ultimatum to either receive a C in the class or try to fight it. My professor, who was also my academic advisor, told me that "*he's never lost one of these battles*" and that I would not win.
- As I prepared to exit the University we were forced to take a one credit course called Senior Seminar. Our final project was to write a complete reflection of our time at the University, and how we achieved each bullet pointed goal in the Department's course curriculum. I thought, "*here's my chance to finally express my feelings.*" I was wrong. We were told verbatim "***if you write anything bad about the Department, anyone in it, or the University in general, you will fail.***" Well, then…

My main purpose here is to point out that yes, while Slippery Rock University did give me the opportunity to showcase my work they **DID NOT** provide me with the necessary skills or tools to create what I did on my own.

Yes, I was the kid who skipped class. Yes, I was the kid who "goofed off".
I was the kid who realized that I could accomplish more outside of the classroom than I ever could in it.

All too often we rely on the guidance of others to lead our lives. We become complacent.

Wake up, and realize the potential you already have inside of you. I know this message will come off differently to every person who reads it. At the end of the day, **I spent 7 years of my life putting off my dreams** just to get a piece of paper that might open some doors.

You don't need to open doors, because that only means there are walls around you.

Kick a hole through that wall and get to your dreams on the other side.