

FMCC continues to work toward the future

Dr. Dustin Swanger
Leader-Herald, Gloversville, N.Y.
5/23/14

This year at FM's graduation, I was fortunate enough to address over 200 students who attended Commencement to celebrate their academic success. These students heard from me, our student speaker Casey Madsen, and Congressman Chris Gibson. Casey, Congressman Gibson, and I each spoke about the success of the students, the hard work it took to get there, and the future that is theirs to claim.

So what is the future for these students? Some will transfer to other institutions while others will go to work. Some will move away and others will stay locally. It is those who wish to stay locally that I would like to address here.

I've heard people say a number of times that to be successful, young folks have to leave the area. I disagree. For those who have an education, are willing to work, can think for themselves, and are motivated, we have a number of real opportunities to work and build a life right here in our region. There are a number of companies in the area that employ our citizens: Hill and Markes, Kasson and Keller, Benjamin Moore, FAGE, Amsterdam Printing, and many more.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, there are a number of folks in our region that are working to create more opportunities. Folks are working on initiatives that may attract new businesses to our area; helping companies expand into new facilities; looking to develop our cities and towns; and create social venues that are attractive for people of all ages.

The CEO Roundtable developed a plan to revitalize our region and we are working that plan. SMART Waters is designed to leverage one of our best natural resources in such a way that would attract new businesses to our area and create jobs. Housing developers are looking at new types of housing that might be more attractive to young couples or those mature citizens who no longer want to care for a single family home. Committees are looking to develop the city downtowns; and, many of these groups are talking together - a great step toward moving our region forward.

It is not easy to see a vision for the future. It is too easy to pine for the past. However, many people are saying that the time for change is now and only through change will our region grow and prosper.

So what kind of future is there for graduating students? I think it is bright, but it will require work. Our region is located in the middle of two major developments in our State. Albany, to our east, is gaining national acclaim for developing as a high tech region. Utica, to our west, is seeing development in a number of areas including nanotechnology through efforts at SUNY IT. Our region will benefit from these developments for the future if we work at it, and we are.

I see a future for our region in which there are several more companies in our area that are suppliers to those to the east and west of us. I see people moving into our area because they want to live in a community and not just a city. I see new social venues targeted toward those young folks who look for places to meet and interact with other young progressive professionals. I see bike trails, dog parks, and outdoor activities that are attractive to these professionals. We have it all and more.

Our region has a bright future. Many folks are working on making such a vision a reality.

Dr. Swanger is President of Fulton-Montgomery (N.Y.) Community College.