

Our view: It's time to say yes

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"If someone offers you a job, say yes. Say yes as often as you can. And don't be afraid to make a mistake, because you can't be young and wise at the same time."

Those were the words of wisdom University of Connecticut President Michael Hogan imparted upon graduates of UConn's class of 2009 last weekend. It's sound advice for the thousands of young people who will be graduating from colleges across the state this month, and into an economic climate that, on the surface, initially offers little to be excited about.

We might take exception, however, to the latter part of his advice — it is possible to be young and wise. And never before might it be more important than it is today.

Since the beginning of the year, Connecticut has seen more than 3,400 businesses close their doors. We've witnessed more than 19,000 jobs eliminated. Unemployment has risen from 7.3 percent to 8.5 percent. And economists predict things will get worse before the downward spiral finds the bottom. The uptick from that point will take even longer.

But we agree with Hogan's sentiment of don't be afraid to make a mistake. That's good advice for the graduates and business leaders.

As it has often been said in recent months by many, there is opportunity to be found in a time of crisis. It takes patience, determination and conviction — traits that both college graduates have exhibited the last four years on their road to successfully completing their educational journey, and business leaders who have discovered innovative ways to weather this economic storm.

What we need today is for both college graduates and business leaders to seize upon the opportunities that exist — a ready, willing and talented young work force eager to make its mark on the world, and the opportunity to provide that work force with the chance to put its talents to work as an investment for the future.

During the past year, we have supported efforts aimed at stemming the tide of our talented young people fleeing the state for opportunities elsewhere. We've also noted our highly skilled work force is growing older and the stream of equally talented young people to replace them continues to dwindle.

Encourage growth

We've applauded efforts such as those of the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board to bring together educational leaders, government, employers and employees in developing programs that teach the skills to fill today's — and tomorrow's — needs in the workplace. We need to continue fostering those kinds of programs in order to maintain a healthy, vibrant economy.

What we cannot afford to do is make it more difficult for businesses to invest in our state.

Increasing taxes on businesses will only stifle growth, and eliminate the opportunity for business to invest in our young — leaving them no other option but to look elsewhere to fulfill their dreams. Government has an opportunity to make Connecticut a more competitive home for industry — an advantage that should not be squandered.

We talk often about the importance of providing our young people with the educational resources that will enable them to compete in a highly competitive global economy. In the coming weeks we will see the results of that investment at graduation ceremonies throughout the state.

It's time now to capitalize on that investment and take advantage of the opportunities it offers. It's time we all said yes, and as often as we can.