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## The Power of University

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## THE POWER OF UNIVERSITY

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Despite the pandemic, the rise and uptake of the ‘class of 2021’ has been incredible, showing dedication and commitment throughout university education. Students have graduated with degrees, representing a massive stepping-stone to their futures and careers. Universities have put students’ health and well-being at the forefront to keep them safe, while some students are living at home and others are not. However, online learning has not been effective for all students, mainly those from ethnic minorities. As a result, in this creation task, equality, diversity, and inclusion have been observed and how this has affected education and mental health. This piece comments on two published artworks: *The Aesthetics of Nature* (Luadthong, 2020) and a drawing of a young man smiling, while inside his mind a boy sits alone crying (author and title unknown, n.d.).

### Commentary

The artwork *The Aesthetics of Nature* (Luadthong, 2020) is meaningful as it represents the future lives of university students after their degree. University success in the long term is positive, as with a degree and opportunity, students can get good careers and build a future for themselves, especially if students specialize in a subject. By working up the career ladder and exploring opportunities available, long-term success can be inspirational to others. Short-term success, on the other hand, can be a struggle in regard to stepping onto the ‘other side’ straight away and getting there with little or no support. The university has opportunities for students and advice with this issue, helping them ‘get their foot in the door’ and be the best they can overall. Learning difficulties are another factor which should also be taken into consideration. Some students may not know about future job prospects in line with their degree and may struggle to find opportunities after they graduate. University life introduces students to the adult world and helps students develop their social skills through diverse societies. Geographical location has an impact on how diverse universities are in general, and can affect the number of students attending from ethnic minorities. This, in turn, can have an impact on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The second artwork—a drawing of a young man smiling, while inside his mind a boy sits alone crying (author and title unknown)—shows that, sometimes, there are barriers that university students face in terms of their mental health, racism, and tuition fees. A student can look happy on the outside, although on the inside could be burning down. There is still racism and sexual harassment that goes on behind the scenes that everyone turns a blind eye to. More must be done for people to speak out if they feel targeted or left out from certain projects and courses. They need to have a place to go if they feel they are not being heard with their concerns. Tuition fees have become a concern during the pandemic, with teaching being transferred to online learning. This suggests some learners, such as those who learn best kinesthetically, may struggle to develop with this teaching method. Therefore, there should be other opportunities available for

face-to-face learning for those who want to receive it. Fees could also discourage students from going to university, especially during the pandemic if they have little or no support.

## **References**

Author unknown. (n.d.). Available at <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/650629477402393413/>

Luadthong, T. (2020). *The Aesthetics of Nature*. <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-aesthetics-of-nature-tithi-luadthong.html>