Florida Governor Rick Scott announced last week that he wants Florida’s public funding to support practical majors with good employment prospects. Governor Scott apparently believes such majors include the physical sciences, engineering and mathematics, and not social sciences like anthropology, psychology and history.

While I agree with the governor on the importance of study that prepares an individual for a fulfilling career – and that the STEM disciplines are certainly practical and fulfilling – this narrow definition of what qualifies as a practical major is seriously flawed.

Social sciences and the liberal arts are indeed practical courses of study for success in today’s global economy. Today’s workforce is rapidly diversifying, and the geographical boundaries that once existed are fading. Uncertainty in global markets and advances in technology demand adaptability and creativity. Problem-solving, critical thinking and communication skills have never been more crucial.

Liberal arts students have those skills. They learn how to think, not what to think. They learn to make connections and challenge the status quo. They acquire knowledge and experience that allows them to adapt easily to change. And they are able to learn about and master new concepts and issues in a very uncertain and challenging environment.

In some of his public comments, Governor Scott singles out anthropology. Interdisciplinary in nature, anthropology teaches students to think deeply about human culture, understand human interaction and interpret ethnographic data. Further, anthropology is an affirmation of the uniqueness and richness of difference in culture and identity.

These skills prepare graduates for success in the workplace – in many different careers. Anthropology majors at Connecticut College, for example, have gone on to become city planners, corporate CEOs and vice presidents, business owners, lawyers, graphic artists, web developers, guidance counselors, teachers and professors, in addition to many others.

The career path for anthropology students – and other liberal arts students – is not always obvious, and it is not always linear. It is a mistake, however, to assume that this means these majors are not practical ones with prospects for employment. In fact, it is just the opposite; these students are best prepared to grow and adapt to today’s changing employment landscape.

It is true that few anthropology students go on to be professional anthropologists. Some do, but the vast majority of students effectively transition their skills to positions in education, health care, business management, government, marketing, sales, publishing and forensics. And they do so with a profound awareness of human interaction and culture.

Many more pursue graduate degrees, and find that a background in the social sciences – which emphasize problem-solving, critical thinking, careful analysis of complex materials – is excellent preparation for the demands of graduate study.

These careers may not require a background in anthropology, yet it is their training in this specific discipline and in the liberal arts that makes these students so successful in their chosen fields.