Online college vs. traditional college

Online College vs. Traditional College I have both taken classes online and on campus. They are completely different atmospheres, but they also have things in common and I feel that you can gain a quality education from either source. When I first graduated high school I attended Westfield State College for about a half a semester until I got real sick and could no longer attend. Shortly after that I attempted to go to a local community college in my city and I just didn't have the motivation to go to school anymore.

It could have had something to do with the strict Catholic High school I attended. I guess I just didn't want to go to school anymore. Fast forward ten years and I have now been in the military for eight years and I am ready to work on my degree. I am more focused now and with the economy I feel that it is important to have a backup plan because even the military is cutting back. Many more adults are going back to college these days now that college is available online. Online colleges are great for adults who need a little bit of flexibility in their schedules.

For parents, military members, and people with busy work schedules, online classes are just the best option for them. The biggest factor in my deciding to attend classes online is the convenience of it all. I can work on my assignments anytime I want: weekends, in the middle of the night, or during the day if I have time. The best part of all is I could sit there on my couch in my pajamas and who would know? Attending college online allows me to not have to choose between going to school and working.

Online college just makes life a little easier to work around when you don't have the time to attend classes during the day or even in the evening if you

have children. An online learning study done by the Sloane Consortium in 2010 showed that enrollment rose by almost one million students from a year earlier. This is an increase of 21%, the largest single-year growth on record. The survey of more than 2, 500 colleges and universities nationwide found that approximately 5. million students were enrolled in at least one online course in the fall of 2009 (Sloaneconsortium. org). Some people feel that online colleges are the wave of the future. The late legendary business and management expert, Peter Decker, once said " Universities won't survive. The future is outside the traditional campus, outside the traditional classroom. Distance learning is coming on fast" (Gubernick). While I don't think that traditional colleges will ever go away completely, I do feel that online learning will someday soar past traditional learning.

A lot more adults are attending college, but I think most out of high school students will still want to attend college on campus. Financial reasons can also be a big factor in a person's decision to either attend college online or on campus. Traditional campus learning can cost more money in the long run for a few reasons. First, if you live on campus then you have to worry about room and board costs (which I can assure you, usually aren't that cheap). Second, if you choose not to live on campus, then you are most likely commuting to school which would include paying for gas.

Third, you can usually keep working while you are taking online classes while it is hard to maintain a full-time job while you attend school on campus. Military members are one of the largest growing populations for online college communities. They can earn a degree from practically anywhere, whether it they are stationed in the US or overseas in places like Iraq and

Afghanistan. It's great to be able to earn a degree while at the same time serving your country. While there are sometimes actual classes offered on bases, you are not afforded the same amount of time to attend class on an actual college campus.

These days it is also a good career choice within the military to have a degree, because the higher in rank you get, the better it looks on you to have a degree. There can also be some major issues with military members attending college online. For-profit schools now account for 29% of active-duty enrollment in 2009. I'm sure that this number has risen greatly. For-profit colleges are now taking over higher education of the US military, lured by the Department of Defense's pledge of free schooling up to $4, 500 a year for active members of the armed services.

This is leading to education shortcuts from certain " diploma mill" colleges and allowing overzealous advertisers to market the military. Several online colleges are a big concern on military bases because some of their practices exploit soldiers and the federal monies they are promised (Golden). A lot of the colleges that are advertising mainly to military don't even have the proper accreditation. This can lead to service members having a hard time finding a job because many companies won't even look twice at a degree obtained through one of these " diploma mills. Some people think that online classes are easier than traditional on campus classes, but this just isn't true. Depending on what school you decide to attend, the classes can be just as demanding if not more. Most students attending class on campus do so during the day, which will allow them to do certain things in class like discussions and reading; something you have to do on your own time when

taking classes online. There is usually more reading done in online classes because there's no instructor there to actually teach the lesson face-to-face.

An online college instructor, Todd Gilman, said that in his experience " good students in a traditional classroom also make good online students because the key to online learning is initiative and a strong sense of responsibility, qualities that all really good students seem to have. " He also goes on to note a few differences between online classes and traditional classes. In a traditional classroom students can skip class, avoid the reading, and discussions, yet still somehow still manage to pass as long as they pass the tests and quizzes and turn in their papers.

In comparison, when taking classes online, students are required to be full time participants in their learning process. This includes not just taking a seat in the class, but logging into the classroom, actively engaging in discussions and turning assignments in on time (Gilman). All of this while still maintaining a full time job, taking care of your kids, helping them with their homework, or defending your country. There are still some things that online colleges can't offer you that traditional colleges can, such as participation in activities, clubs, and sports.

Also it is not very easy to attend a study group because more than likely you don't know the other students or they live across the country somewhere. So, if you're looking to play sports in college or join the drama club, then online is probably not the best bet for you. It is also a lot easier to ask your professors for help in person than it is online. Sometimes the things that people type could be misconstrued and they will end up with an answer that

doesn't help. This can lead to late assignments or papers turned in that are completely off topic if the professor isn't readily available online.

One of the biggest differences between online college and traditional college is the social aspect of it. A lot of students want to participate in the full " college experience" which would include living on campus and away from home for four years, joining fraternities and sororities, and just being socially interactive with other students. That is not entirely possible in the online world. While online colleges do usually offer a way to interact with the professors and other students via discussion boards or chat rooms; it's just not the same.

It could be a good thing for some people because not everyone does well with public speaking and giving their opinions in front of others face to face. So taking classes online could set them at ease. In today's world most people spend a lot of time online anyway, so why not work on your degree at the same time? One thing that you know when attending a college on campus, is that more than likely they are accredited. This isn't always the case with online colleges, which is why you must be very careful in selecting one to attend.

I know in my personal experience after reading about certain schools, I changed my mind and decided against them. There are lots of resources available to students online these days and one of the best is reading online reviews and articles. Lots of college review websites will list the top online colleges and will also list the ones that are mainly " diploma mills. " But you must be careful and make sure that it isn't a scam website. A good college

degree can be obtained from both sources as long as you make sure that you are attending a good college and reputable college.

I wouldn't want to end up like those students who paid good money for their education and then can't find a job. Sources: Gilman, Todd. " Combating Myths about Distance Education. " Chronicle of Higher Education; 2/26/2010. Vol. 56, Issue 24, pg. A41-A43. Golden, Daniel. " Online Colleges Surge with Marketing to Military. " Businessweek. com; 12/16/2009. Gubernick, Lisa and Ebeling, Ashlea. " I Got my Degree Through Email. " Forbes. com; 06/16/1997 Sloane Consortium. http://sloanconsortium. org/publications/survey/class_differences