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Name Here ENG 122 Source Based Argument Paper July 21, 2012 Higher Education: A Ticket to Success? Statistically speaking, the more education you acquire out of high school, the more money you will make. According to the US Census Bureau individuals over 18 with a Bachelor's degree earn an average of \$51, 206 annually vs. \$27, 915 earned by their high school diploma-bearing counterparts. With these, and other similar statistics available, many people feel that a college degree is the cure- all for financial, security. However, in the recent economy it seems that these highly sought after college degrees aren't holding up their end of the bargain. Although higher education can be valuable, it is not absolutely vital to becoming successful. Higher education may throw an impressive diploma on an office wall, but contrary to popular belief does not always warrant its professed benefits. Sadly, a big reason why college degrees don't always promise success stems from a weak job market flooded with candidates also possessing degrees and similar qualifications. Put simply: college grads are a dime a dozen. This results in accepting positions wherever they are available, whether it is in a different field of study, or even in a position that requires no college education whatsoever. Emily Cohn discusses why this is in her article " In Weak Job Market, One In Two College Graduates Are Jobless or Underemployed", she states that " Young adults with bachelor's degrees are increasingly scraping by in lower-wage jobs — waiter or waitress, bartender, retail clerk or receptionist, for example — and that's confounding their hopes a degree would pay off despite higher tuition and mounting student loans" (Cohn, Emily). Why are these educated grads with Bachelor Degrees keeping blue-collar jobs that require a high school diploma or even

less? Last year alone 53.6%, or about 1.5 million individuals, possessing bachelor's degrees under the age of 25 were unemployed or underemployed. And shockingly, that number is on the rise. This economy results in employers demanding requirements for applicants, that previously weren't required. Jobs are being cut rather than created, and have much more competition per open position. On average, many people will accept lower than standard salaries for positions for the sake of being employed. This accounts for half of the 1.5 million grads from the earlier statistic, while the other half is unemployed and still searching. In either case, now that they have graduated one thing is certain: They now are responsible for all those glorious student loans. Annually the cost of a 4 year college averages anywhere from \$12,000 for a public school to upwards of \$40,000 for a private school according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Based on those numbers alone a college student will amass a minimum of just under \$50,000 of debt over the course of a 4 year college career. That, of course, is under the assumption that the student finishes their bachelor's degree within that 4 year window. However, the trends in higher education don't support that idea. Time magazine states that "40% of kids who enroll in college don't get a degree within six years" You read that right; 40% fail to achieve any degree within 6 years. At a minimum cost of \$12,000 a year, that's an extra \$24,000 added to an already high amount of debt and all in the name of financial security. Now, I'm not a financial advisor but amassing large amounts of debt doesn't seem like a starting off point for financial security. Quite the opposite, if you ask me. If this economy's job market could sustain the high saturation of college grads and compensate them

accordingly this could be considered an investment towards the students future as well as society's. However, with the job market and 53% of grads being unemployed or underemployed it's a formula for disaster. Upon graduation the student becomes responsible to start paying off their student loans, however over half do not have the means to do so. I recognize there are scholarship programs and other outlets that students can utilize to lower the amount of loans etc. Unfortunately this cannot be a rule of thumb for the average American student. Ultimately, with the high-cost, low success rate and the job market the way it is, a college degree doesn't quite have the pay-off it once did and for many is not worth the investment. What about online schools that come with the promise of an education while you work? The ones that allow you to go about your normal life while pursuing a higher education. For-Profit Colleges are becoming more and more common. These colleges have mass advertisements that state that college is essentially a breeze. 'The courses are only 8 weeks long and online!' they say. Definitely convenient, however, what's the catch? Kevin Carey's article "Why Do You Think They're Called For-Profit Colleges?" states that "A large and growing number of graduates of for-profit colleges are having trouble paying... loans back. Horror stories of aggressive recruiters' inducing students to take out huge loans for nearly worthless degrees are filling the news" (Carey 217). Because obtaining a degree is a prominent pressure amongst Americans, these convenient schools are attractive to the stereotypical mom who works full-time and wants to better herself. Unfortunately, many employers are aware of these schools being for-profit colleges who put students on the "fast track" and frown upon their presence on resumes. Carey describes this

as “ fast-developing methods of teaching students over the internet have given the velocity of change a turbo boost” (220). These colleges practically allow students to pay for their degrees and promise convenience while learning. It seems as though these universities are missing the whole point of what college is supposed to be all about: growing as a person and studying subjects that will allow the individual to become successful. The success of for-profit-colleges and the high rate of failure from standard brick and mortar colleges stem from the same sentiment; college is a right of passage. It is an understanding amongst most Americans that after graduating high school, you must attend college. It’s not something many 18 year olds question, or fight for that matter. American youths are prepared throughout high school to look ahead and anticipate college life. The statistics show that college graduates earn much more than high school graduates that do not have college degrees. However, because the average American youth is packed up and shipped off to college before he or she knows it, proves to be less of a choice for the student and more of conforming to pressure from society. On top of all this, society pressures young students to pursue majors that they normally wouldn’t chose. Sanford J. Ungar reveals this in his article “ The New Liberal Arts”. He discusses that these pressured majors include the “ STEM fields-- science, technology, engineering and mathematics” while assuming liberal art majors result in worthless degrees (Ungar 193). It’s becoming more popular for students to push aside their passion for, say, foreign languages to pursue majors in business or mathematics because otherwise they are inevitably doomed. Ungar further debates the misconception that “ the liberal arts are particularly irrelevant for low-income

and first-generation college students" (192). He develops the theme that the liberal arts are open to all those who are able to understand it, despite their various backgrounds. He encourages students who are interested in liberal arts to pursue it rather than cower towards what society recommends will prove successful. With students pursuing majors in fields they are not passionate about, or even all that interested in, it makes it that much harder to succeed academically. Take for example law students. Some go to law school because they always knew, since freshman year of high school's debate class, that they would become great attorneys. But let's face facts: Some, if not most, attend law school mainly because of the promise of financial prosperity and a secure future. Of course, wanting a secure future isn't a crime. However, if that is the main objective and motivation behind pursuing a specific degree a student may lose interest and join the 40% of those who do not obtain a degree in 6 years. We start to wonder what other occupations a law student may pursue if they weren't motivated by the dollar signs associated with a law degree and if the rate of success would be higher in circumstances where a student pursues what they are passionate about. Aside from feelings of indifference, another reason for a 40% failure rate has to do with the college lifestyle. College campuses are notorious for being heavy on the alcohol and light on the studying. In fact, the Princeton Review does an annual survey of colleges and compiles various lists as to which college is the best for each aspect of college life. Can you guess which list is the most popular? If you said the list of top academic schools at the best value, you would be completely wrong. If you guessed the top party schools, you would be absolutely correct. To quote the Princeton Review, "

By far the list that gets the most attention is the ranking of the top party schools in the nation. " We see the interests of high school graduates haven't changed in the slightest. What does the Review use as a benchmark to determine the top party school in the nation? " The ranking is generated based on survey questions relating to student use of alcohol and drugs, hours of study done each day, and the popularity of the Greek system at the school. " It's safe to say that these " party schools" probably don't offer the best educational value to their students, yet, they are attractive to high school graduates. Even Hollywood movies portray the college experience as being an opportunity to party so as to forget college is, first and foremost, an educational institution. What people do in their free time is completely their own prerogative; the point is that focus is taken away from studying and advancing one's education so much that almost half of college students can't even accomplish what they set out to do on their first day of freshman year. This is not to say that I am anti-college or think that college is a waste of time. In fact, I think college and universities are absolutely necessary for society's functionality. I would refuse to go to a doctor that didn't go to medical school. What I do believe, however, is that people put college degrees on an unnecessary pedestal to achieve success. Take for example an article written by Jin Sheng called " Academic Inflation". It tells this story about a girl named Jessica. Jessica has a bachelor's degree from Florida State University and decided she would acquire her masters degree in International Business. As she got ready for class one Monday morning, she styled her hair as usual and did her makeup. On her way to campus, she decided to finally stop hiding her dream and pursue it. She dropped her

classes and started training at a hair salon. She was the happiest she had ever been and never looked back. Although Jessica wasn't making as much money as she would have with her degree in International Business, she was happy and thus, successful (Sheng 1). The moral of this story is not that we should all drop our classes and become hair dressers, but rather follow our dreams, passions and find success in them. Those who go to college shouldn't blindly throw their money into something that society pressures them into. Instead, each individual needs to establish what is important to them and pursue it. In a nutshell, we learn that in today's economy, many are competing for jobs. So, the few employers who are seeking for people to fill positions are interviewing two groups of people: One may be the fresh, new graduate of a prestigious university and the other may be an older man who is willing to take a pay cut in order to provide for his family, has 10 years experience in the field, was recently promoted in his company and of course, graduated from the same university. Who will they pick? Well, obviously they will chose the candidate with the experience to fill the roll. This is happening more and more. We see young brilliant graduates who worked so hard in college employed at burger king to slowly pay off an overwhelming student loan. Excuse me, slowly pay off the interest on their student loans. And of course these students apply to the far and few between positions that become available, but sadly with no avail. This proves the point that a degree from a college or university doesn't automatically ensure you a career. Yes, that's right, those thousands of dollars put towards your higher education doesn't buy you success. That you have do do on your own. Arianna Moor Works Cited Cohn, Emily. " In Weak Job Market, One In

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