

# Higher education advantages and disadvantages



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## Does Higher Education Really Matter?

Everyone has their own opinion of whether obtaining education beyond a high school diploma really matters or not. Many individuals enter into institutions of higher education yearly with hopes of receiving a piece of paper that somehow validates four or more years of late night studying and academia induced stress. At the end of the day, some real question that must be answered are is it really worth it and does it really matter? This topic has been debated for many years with a number of sufficient facts and statistics showing that furthering ones education matters. This paper will address both the advantages and disadvantages of higher education as well as the implications and benefits of having a higher education degree.

One of the main advantages of obtaining a higher education that many people can agree upon is a future with some type of financial security due to a steady profession and income. According to College Board's Education Pays 2013 report, individuals with higher levels of education earn more and are more likely than others to be employed. The report also states that college graduates earn about 65% more than high school graduates and those with advanced degrees earn two to three times as much as high school graduates. The earnings premium increases as workers move further along their career paths (College Board, 2013). It is very clear and understandable that the more education one has the more opportunities they have, as long as they are willing to invest their money, their effort and their time. Higher education not only provides better employment opportunities, it also influences health and provides knowledge to living healthy lifestyles. Being

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better educated can increase people's knowledge and cognitive skills, allowing them to make improved decisions in regards to their health, healthcare and managing their medical care. According to an article written by the Commission to Build a Healthier America, greater educational attainment has been associated with health-promoting behaviors including increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and other aspects of healthy eating, engaging in regular physical activity, and refraining from excessive consumption of alcohol and from smoking. Statistics show that college educated adults are less likely than others to be obese and children living in households with more educated parents are less likely than other children to be obese (Education Pays, 2013). It has been established that higher education is correlated to higher paying job with an income that affords them the ability to live in neighborhoods that have minimal to no crime rates with access to recreational facilities. This is an example of a health promoting environment that encourages and enables people to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors (Commission to Build a Healthier America, ) therefore permitting for a longer life. People with higher education also tend to participate actively and contribute to society. This means that these individuals are open to volunteering in their communities by providing assistance to homeless shelters and those that are less fortunate as well as keeping their communities clean. These individuals also are aware of the government and its policies, their civic responsibilities, voting and other political interests. This offers individuals a sense of satisfaction and happiness.

Benefits also come with costs or disadvantages. When it comes to attaining a higher education one of the biggest disadvantage is debt. The cost of college is very expensive and the average student cannot afford the cost, causing them to have to use government/federal loans or private loans in order to pay for their education, unless they have full scholarships or financial aid to cover the cost of tuition. The cost of college tuition is increasing at a fast rate yet students who cannot afford to go to college, continue to enroll. The Wall Street Journal reported that according to an analysis of government data, the average college student is burdened with debt after graduation of at least \$33, 000. and every year the number of students taking on debt increases. Student debt now is overwhelming the older generation. In 2012, there were 6. 9 million student loan borrowers 50 and over that together owed \$155 billion with individual average balances between \$19, 521 and \$23, 820. According to the US Congress Joint Economic Committee, about 60%of 2011 college graduates have student loan debt balances that are equal to 60% of their annual income.

Another disadvantage of higher education is unemployment. Although the chances of finding a well-paying job after graduating from an institution of higher education are higher than finding one right after college, research showed in 2010 that only 4. 1% of college graduates were unemployed, that number is now at 7. 9% according to USA Today's research of 2014 College Graduates. Compared to the 13. 8% of unemployed High School dropout students, it does show that having higher education reduces your chances of unemployment, but according to an Article from 2010 in the *Huffington Post* people with higher education or advanced degrees were as vulnerable to

long-term unemployment as people without higher education once they are unemployed. In 2011, 50% of US college graduates under the age of twenty five were only employed part-time or had no job (Huffington Post). Most employers would rather higher people with experience over a degree because having experience and training shows you have skills that those with a college degree lack. There is no guarantee that with higher education you will get a job after graduating.

Another disadvantage of obtaining a higher education is the delay of entering the real world as well as a lack in real world involvement. Going to college means foregoing valuable opportunities to work and gaining hands on skills, learning and training. The Time/Carnegie Corporation of New York (2012) survey reported that 40% of undergraduate students believe that the purposes and goal of completing a bachelor's degree is to gain new knowledge and skills for a career. For instance, Lagemann and Lewis (2012) have suggested that the public purpose for attending colleges and universities has less to do with the pursuit of economic or employment benefits and much more about preparing young adults with generic skills and civic education such as, civic values, ideals, and virtues. They argued that college students must “ develop generic skills and dispositions to listen intently and empathetically to other people ... analyze rationally what is said, read, and observed; ... present thoughts clearly; ... confront unsupported assertions; and ...identify reasonable strategies to take necessary action” (Lagemann & Lewis, 2012, p. 12). Majority of students do not feel they learn these skills in college, making the purpose of attending a four year institution of higher education useless.

There are a number of factors to take into consideration when deciding whether obtaining a higher education can be a positive decision or a negative decision and if a person should or should not pursue. The advantages of attaining a higher education range from guaranteed employment, improved healthy lifestyles, higher income, to social recognition. While the disadvantages of attaining a higher education range from increased debt to delay of real world experience. Going to an expensive or private four year institution rather than going a regular public or community college is also a decision that many people have to decide. Some people feel that the level of education you will attain is greater at a private school because of the cost and that teachers are more passionate about what they are teaching but at a public college or university you are getting what you pay for, less. Whether a person attends a four year private or public institution of higher education, it does not matter as long as they finish because obtaining a degree is a very huge achievement in life. It is one of the American dreams due to all the years of hard work and stress. Whether a person decides to attend a public or private school does not matter because at either one they will be exposed to people of different diversities with different ideas. College is an investment that many should take that chance at investing in. According to a 2011 Pew Research survey, 86% of college graduates believed college was a good investment.

The degree type obtained by the individual as well as the career choice and the economy play a huge role in assisting with the decision making of whether obtaining a higher education really matter. The individual's eagerness to learn should also be a factor in deciding whether to further

their education and attend an institution of higher education. Besides the mentioned advantages and disadvantages, people must also decide what their end goal in life is. They need to understand that what you put in is what you should expect back. Many American value a college education, character is valued even more. 61% of young people say that ethic is extremely important in being able to succeed in the world (Pew Research, 2011). A person does not have to attend a four year institution in order to reap all the advantages or benefits that a person who did attend experienced.

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