The WHATs, WHYs, and HOWs of College

The WHATs:
Four-Year or Community College

When people talk about “college” they usually mean four-year college. Yet, community colleges, also known as “two year colleges,” can also provide a valuable experience. Here’s a quick break down:

Four-Year College:

- Issues bachelor degrees and higher degrees
- May be more prestigious than community college
- Is usually selective in who it admits

The WHYs

Adults with some form of education or training beyond a high school diploma earn between $7,384 and $66,702 more each year than those who stop after high school or a GED. (Source: U.S. Census)

Turn the page!
Four Year (continued):

- May be public or private
- Offers a wide range of options for study
- Can provide a “college experience”

Community College:

- Issues associate’s degrees
- Open to the public – not selective
- Much more affordable than public four-year college
- May offer fewer options for study than a four-year college
- Offers some vocational training

*Some students complete two years at community college and then transfer to a four-year college. They receive an associate’s degree from the community college and a bachelor’s degree from the four-year college.

Getting more education (and thus earning more money) increases your chances of having better health: you are more likely to be able to pay for healthy food options, get the healthcare you need, and make informed decisions about your lifestyle. (Sources: multiple)

More education increases your social status (Sources: multiple)

More education gives you more job opportunities and thus more chances to find a job you like.

Myth: College isn’t for me

College – two-year, four-year, or both, is for you.

Concern: I’m not smart enough for college

Solution: Of course you are! But if you need to brush up on a subject or two before starting, community colleges have special courses to help you catch up.

Concern: I can’t afford college

Solution: Look at your options before saying that. Check out the next page:
Paying for College

There are three types of financial aid from the federal government.

**Loans**: borrowed money you must pay back with interest.

**Grants**: Money that you don’t have to pay back.

**Work-study**: work to help you pay for school.

Start by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (US citizens and legal residents only) at [fasa.ed.gov](http://fasa.ed.gov).

**Scholarships** are money from your school or a private source that you do not have to pay back. Apply for these separately.

**Undocumented students** can pay in-state tuition rates to California public schools and receive financial aid from the state. Check out the resources in the College Month folder.

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**College Application**

**Community College Requirements:**
- High school diploma or GED
- Application (on college’s website)
- Program-specific requirements may vary

**Four-Year College Requirements:**
- High School diploma or GED (A-G courses for UCs and CSUs)
- Have a high school GPA of at least 2.0
- SAT scores
- Application (on college’s website)
- Essay(s) (on college’s website)
- Letters of recommendation from a teacher and/or other adult such as your work supervisor or sports coach. Make sure this person knows you well!

**To apply:** Follow the instructions on each college’s website. Get a waiver from your guidance counselor to avoid paying application fees (and SAT fees).

More resources:
- www.collegeboard.org
- [http://californiacolleges.edu](http://californiacolleges.edu)
BUT I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO STUDY!

Don’t worry: Lots of students don’t know what they want to study in college, and many more think they know but end up changing their minds. There’s plenty of time to explore your interests before committing to a major. One strategy is to identify possible careers you might like and then work backwards to identify majors that could lead to one or more of those careers. Check out these resources:

- Careeronestop.org
- Californiacareers.info

Don’t forget, your high school guidance counselor, teachers, and School on Wheels staff and volunteers can all help you find information and answer questions. You can also call or email colleges directly. Don’t be shy. It’s your future!