

The Value of Continued Education

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For most students, high school is not the end of their career preparation. Education and training beyond high school provide greater opportunities for finding and keeping a job, particularly in tough economic times. Continued education can have an impact on family well-being.

Advantages of Continued Education

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that unemployment rates between October 2010 and October 2011 for young adults ages 16 to 24 who were not currently in school were highest for those without a high school diploma. Nearly 20 percent of males and more than 31 percent of females who did not finish high school were unemployed. In comparison, those who had completed high school and those with additional education experienced lower unemployment rates. Only about 9.5 percent of males and 8 percent of females who had graduated college were jobless.

A high school graduate can expect to earn more than those who did not complete high school. The more education and experience you have, the better you can expect to do in the job market. For more information on employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, visit <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm>.

Pursuing a high school diploma is important, as is pursuing further education and training after high school. Job opportunities are limited for those who have not completed high school. Table 1 shows the relationship between employment opportunities and education.

Education and Training Programs

The number of occupations requiring at least an associate degree has risen and will continue to increase. Some occupations pay better than others, so make sure you select the right program to meet your needs. Visit <http://www.collegeboard.org/> to search programs that will help you further your education.

Beyond high school, education and training programs include community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, online education, school-to-work programs and trade school programs.

Unemployment rates and median weekly earnings, 2010

Level of education	Unemployment rate (%)	Median weekly earnings (\$)
Doctoral	1.9	1,550
Professional	2.4	1,610
Master's	4.0	1,272
Bachelor's	5.4	1,038
Associate	7.0	767
Some college, no degree	9.2	712
High school diploma	10.3	626
Less than high school diploma	14.9	444
Average	8.2	782

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

Community Colleges

There are several advantages to enrolling in a community college or two-year program:

- Most programs are less costly per semester and can be a good investment in your future.
- Expenses such as room and board can be reduced by living at home or staying with a relative. (Note: If enrolled in a public or private four-year program, you will likely have to add in living expenses, which can be costly.)
- Hands-on job training
- Smaller class sizes
- Career services

Community colleges provide the necessary skills for entering a variety of occupations. For example, enrolling in a two-year nursing program will be less costly than a four-year nursing program. Jobs available with the four-year nursing degree pay more and could provide further opportunities for advancement, but you could have a lot more debt to pay off with a four-year degree. Certain associate's degrees, such as Associate in Sciences (A.S), will pay more than a general associate's degree. Visit http://www.bankrate.com/finance/personal-finance/associate-s-degree-jobs-that-pay-well-1.aspx?ic_id=nwsltr_frug_20110419 for more information on jobs that do not require four-year degrees.

Community and technical colleges often have more hands-on programs and provide first-hand experience for the work setting. They can lead to a variety of career paths, including agriculture, construction, engineering, business, education, social work and health care. These fields are only a few available through your local community or technical college. Medical job training programs are expanding nationwide. Health care is one of the fastest growing fields in the country, and it pays well compared with most other fields.

Projected Job Growth Rates

Projected job growth rates for 2008-2018, according to employment projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, predict that the following occupations will have the highest growth:

- Registered nurses
- Home health aides
- Customer service representatives
- Food service workers
- Personal and home care aides

Growth rates vary by state and demographic area. Kentucky jobs projected to have the most openings include retail, food service and health care. Table 2 shows the occupations projected to grow in Kentucky through 2018. (Note that the jobs that have the highest growth rates may also have the lowest pay.)

Projected Kentucky Job Growth through 2018

Job	Number added per year	Pay per hour (\$) in 2010
Cashiers	2,372	8.37
Retail Salespeople	2,265	10.74
Waiters	1,926	8.41
Registered Nurses	1,796	28.19
Food Service Workers	1,622	7.97
Customer Care Representatives	1,318	13.99
Laborers and Stock Clerks	1,010	11.52
Truck Drivers	868	18.02
Nursing Aides	827	10.79
Sales/Retail	809	16.26
Child Care	762	8.97
Elementary School Teachers	750	29.01
General Managers	702	42.16

Source: <http://library.sullivan.edu/spenlex/Resources/Publications/KY%20Occup%20Outlook%20to%202018.pdf>

Visit http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm for more information on expanding occupations.

Advantages of a More Educated Workforce

Having education and training beyond high school is related to lower crime rates, improved health and stronger decision-making skills. Not only do those with high school diplomas have a better quality of life than those who do not, but college graduates clearly are also better off than those with a high school education.

Where to get your job training

Four-year universities are best for those who need to transfer from community colleges and/or will need to further their education to a Master's, Ph.D. or professional degree program. For instance, a nursing student might transfer from a community college to finish his bachelor's degree to receive advanced licensing. Those

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considering majoring in a broad area, such as history, English or art, for example, might need to evaluate what they want to do after college. A four-year school may or may not benefit them in future salary when educational costs are considered.

Weighing the costs and benefits

Weigh the cost of your education against what you can expect to make starting out full-time after completing your degree, whether you are going to a four-year school, technical college, or job training program. Regardless of which you choose, you want to make sure you will be okay financially in years to come.

For those who need more hands-on career training, a community college or trade school might be best. If you want to become an electrician, for instance, a trade school will provide you with the proper training at a lower cost. It is smart to attend a school that fits the job training you will need.

Case Study 1. Joel is a student who has succeeded in mathematics and mechanics but is not academically strong in science. He wants to be an electrician but does not know how to continue his training. In his case, it would be best to attend a trade school for on-site electrical job training rather than a university. He would save money and gain job skills while attending a technical school, whereas college would cost more without providing enough certainty for his career choice. His weakness in science might also hold him back in college.

Case Study 2. Adam wants to become an engineer. He has a GPA of 3.8 and is strong in all areas he would need to study for engineering. He decides to apply for college and has chosen an appropriate program for his career choice but the cost is too high for a four-year college. With his GPA, he is eligible for scholarships, which will decrease his educational cost. The scholarships do not need to be repaid, which is a real plus for him. Considering these advantages and his desired career, attending a four-year institution would be best for Adam. On the other hand, if Adam wanted to become an electrician, attending a four-year school would be unnecessary and too costly when he only needed two years of training.

Choosing a good school for you

The environment in which you choose to further your education can have social impacts as well. Smaller class sizes could help you not only academically but also socially. Public four-year institutions typically have larger class sizes and many students must pursue extracurricular activities to meet new people. Most technical and community colleges have smaller class sizes. They also base their curriculum around the local and regional job market, the career path of the individual and the skills students need to be successful in the workforce. Some provide co-op or internship possibilities as well.

Many institutions also offer career services to students. Some examples of these services include resume writing, interviewing and job-search training. This type of program benefits most students, including those at four-year schools.

Regardless of your financial background, financing a college education is not impossible. Scholarships such as the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) (<http://www.kheaa.com/website/kheaa/requirements?main=1>) and the Otis A. Singletary Scholarship (<http://www.scholarships4school.com/scholarships/otis-a-singletary-scholarship.html>) are available to Kentucky students who have received exceptional grades.

Most important, do not base your career choices only on what you think is available but on what you enjoy and are skilled at doing. Resources are available to help you decide what you enjoy and have the ability to do. Tools such as career interest inventories can help you decide which direction you want to go in life. Go to <http://www.careerpath.com/> for more information.

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