

Why Go to College?

How 2 Choose, University of North Texas
March 23, 2010

Consider these statistics:

- 1 • The average four-year college education at a public university in Texas (in-state tuition and fees) costs about \$19,434 — less than the average price of a new car.
- 2 • The annual income for a person with a bachelor's degree is nearly twice that of someone with only a high school diploma.
- 3 You'll get more mileage out of a college education than you will from a car, and a four-year education will likely enable you to buy a car or two and many other things in your lifetime. In making the decision of whether — and where — to attend college, you and your parents should consider those four years as a lifetime investment, not just as annual expenses for job training.

Factoid

- 4 A college education can challenge you to explore and broaden your interests, attain your goals and meet some of the best friends you'll ever have.

Starting a new chapter

- 5 Many high school students look forward to putting high school behind them and moving on with their lives. At college, you'll explore and broaden your interests, pursue your goals, meet lifelong friends and define yourself in ways you can only imagine now. This website will guide you through the sometimes confusing process of selecting a college so that you can concentrate on starting a new chapter of your life.

The big payback

- 6 The competitive advantage is yours if you choose to graduate from college. Experts who have researched the performance and job success of college graduates have concluded that, nationwide, college graduates with a bachelor's degree earn 74 percent more per year than those who only complete high school. In fact, those whose education stops with a high school diploma may see their real wages decline over time.

The big picture

- 7 Right now, it's probably tough to imagine where you'll be in a year or two, much less 10, 20, 30 or 40 years down the road. Where do you expect to be, and what do you want out of life? By attending college immediately after high school, you get a head start on answering those important questions.
- 8 But you don't have to sign a four-year contract, and you don't even have to decide immediately on a major area of study. College is a time to test yourself and to see what you can achieve. Academic advisors and professors are accessible on campus, and tutoring and other forms of academic support are available. At most universities, a counseling staff is available to help see you through tough times.

- 9 You'll be able to pursue your own interests through extracurricular activities and perhaps discover a career direction you've never considered or a talent that's been waiting to blossom. College gives you the chance to say "yes" to you.

Which college is best?

- 10 Two key words are missing in that question. It should read, "Which college is best for you?" Your choices depend on your interests, career goals and academic record. Talk to your high school counselor about your options and attend College Night at school. Most Texas high school seniors are allowed a certain number of days to visit college campuses.
- 11 You may discover that you prefer the intimacy of a smaller campus or the setting of a community or church affiliated college. On the other hand, you may be ready for the swirling activity and myriad opportunities of a large university. The only way to find out is to visit. You'll get the most value out of your four-year investment by being open to many possibilities now, while you're still in high school.

Great expectations

- 12 As you outline your future, spend time considering what you want to do with your life. As with any major purchase, you'll want to be a wise consumer: look at the choices, compare prices, think about what's important to you and go for the best quality your money can buy. College doesn't guarantee happiness and success, but it does help you make the best of your own life.

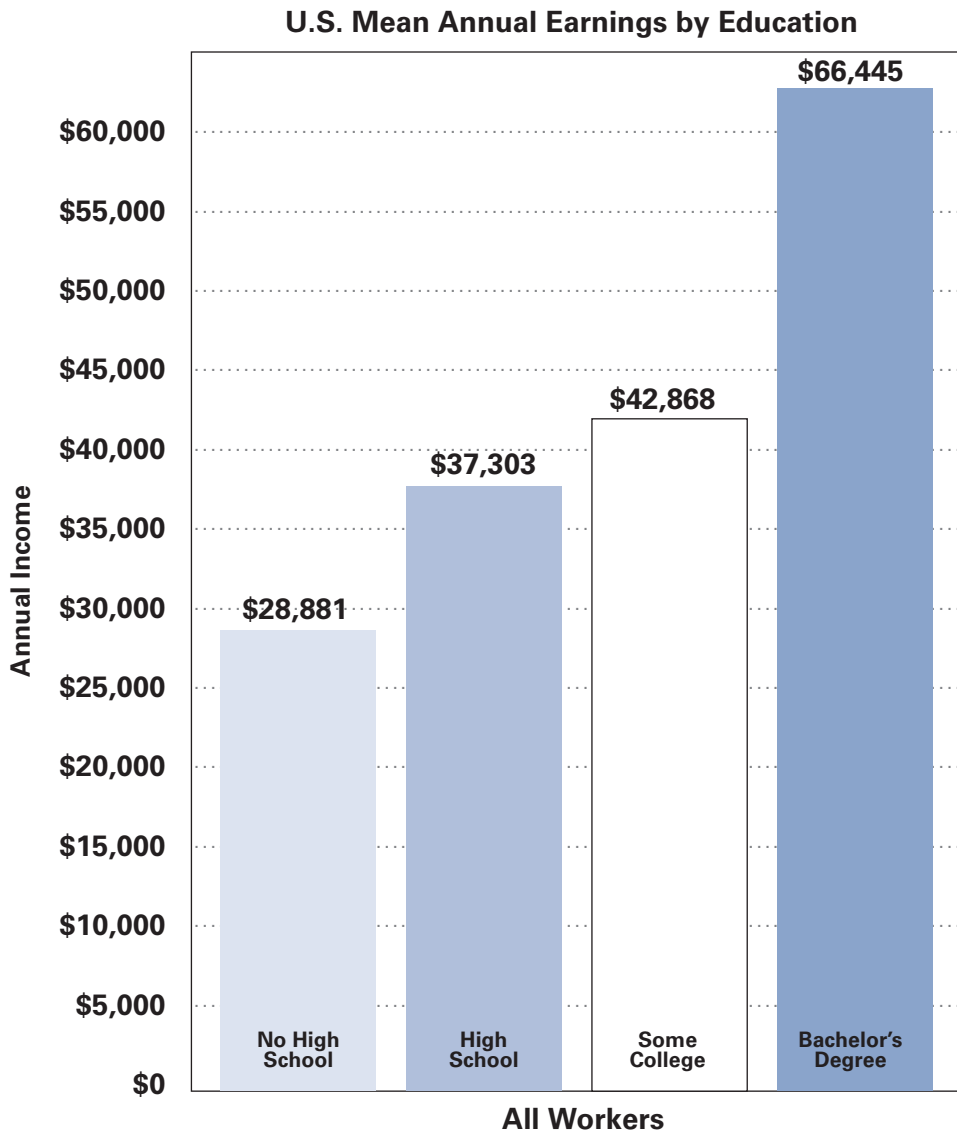
What, no money?

- 13 Financial aid is available to everyone with a desire for a college education. Scholarships, loans, grants and prepaid tuition programs are out there, and this website will help you find them. On-campus jobs are also available, with flexible schedules that allow you to attend classes.
- 14 Whether you attend a public or private institution, you can expect to receive financial aid information from your high school counselor and college representatives. Incidentally, earning a degree from an Ivy League school or an expensive private college is no guarantee that you'll land the best job and have the highest earning potential. In fact, the effect on future earnings may only be marginal.

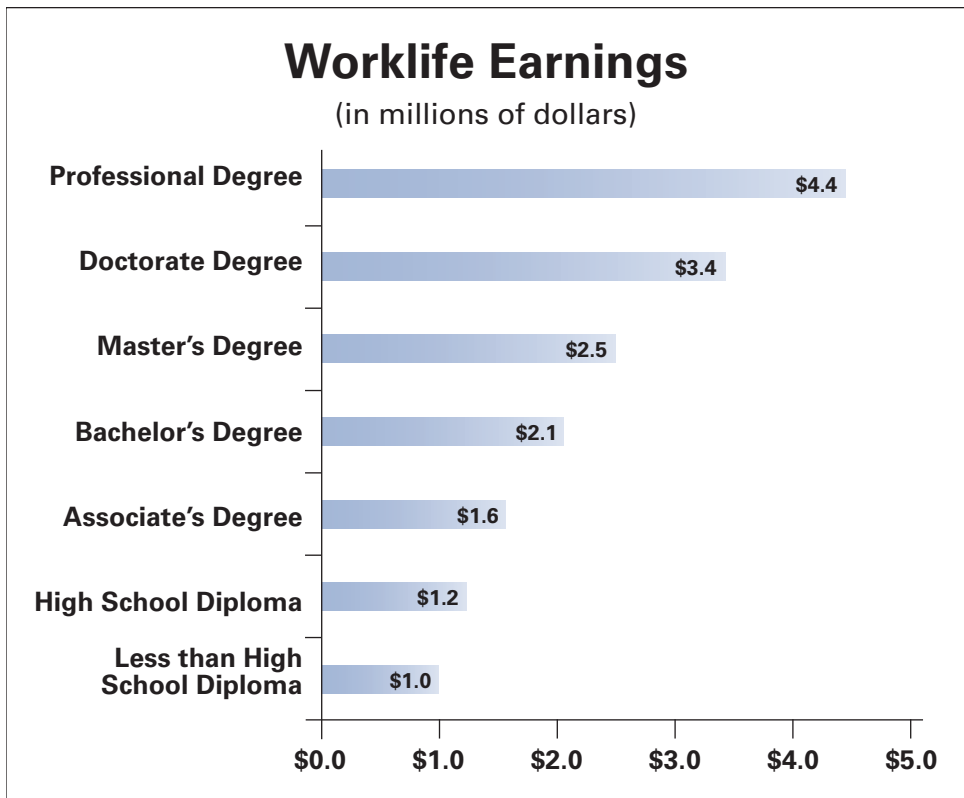
Are you better off going to college?

- 15 A high school graduate is confronted with the choice of accepting a job or entering a four-year college program. Is the student better off going to college? Because college graduates can expect to earn a salary almost double that of high school graduates, the student is much better off going to college. The difference in salary earned compounds over a lifetime.

U.S. Mean Annual Earnings by Education	
Education	Annual Income
No High School	\$28,881
High School	\$37,303
Some College	\$42,868
Bachelor's Degree	\$66,445



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



(Earnings for full-time, year-round workers by educational attainment for worklife of approximately 40 years.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

Worklife Earnings	
Education	Earnings (in millions of dollars)
Professional Degree	\$4.4
Doctorate	\$3.4
Master's Degree	\$2.5
Bachelor's Degree	\$2.1
Associate Degree	\$1.6
High School Diploma	\$1.2
Less than High School Diploma	\$1.0

Earnings for full-time, year-round workers by educational attainment for work life of approximately 40 years. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.