

Know Your College Options

Four-Year Colleges/Universities

Many students choose to go to traditional four-year colleges or universities. These generally lead to a bachelor's degree, and can be broken down into two categories: liberal arts colleges and universities.

Liberal Arts Colleges: Typically, students enrolled at a liberal arts college study courses in literature, philosophy, history, languages, mathematics, humanities, and social and natural sciences. These schools tend to be small and private.

Universities: Universities are generally larger and have a variety of degree options available. Many times, universities will contain several colleges within a campus that you have to apply to specifically.

Benefits to a Four-Year Education

- Students can change career courses and receive broader degrees
- Huge learning opportunities on and off campus, as well as opportunities to get involved around campus and the community
- High academic quality
- Most four-year schools allow students to explore different areas before choosing a major
- Preparation for the work force

Community Colleges and Two-Year Colleges

Community colleges are the most common type of two-year colleges. They are designed to prepare you to continue your education or to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. They offer some types of associate degrees that allow you to transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor's degree.

Benefits to a Two-Year Education

- Can prepare you to transfer to a four-year college
- Average price: less than \$3,000 a year for tuition and fees
- Can prepare you to enter the workforce sooner
- You can earn a certificate or degree in a career-oriented field
- You can go to college even if your high school transcript isn't strong

- You can try college to see if you're ready
- Flexible, convenient schedule based on home and work commitments
- Full time or part time
- Can explore different subjects without committing to a program right away
- Wide variety of activities and a sense of community

Trade and Vocational Schools

If you already know exactly what industry or career you want to enter, then a trade or vocational school may be for you! These schools don't require you to take classes in a broad range of subjects. Instead, you only focus on your area of interest (such as culinary arts or dental hygiene). Upon completion of your program, you receive a certificate or an associate degree.

Benefits to a Trade or Vocational Education:

- You can have a successful career and get the training necessary without needing a college degree
- Often times, schools provide you with hands-on work in your field
- You can always transfer to a four-year institution
- Employment rates are extremely high

Source: CollegeBoard, 2011