

EDUCATION

FACE OFF: IS THE PRICE OF COLLEGE WORTH IT?

No.



Julian Fedorchuk
Managing Editor

Everyone has heard again and again the whole “go to college, get a degree, get a good job” spiel, but to be honest, college is not for everyone.

Today, college is a massive investment, and you can’t just get a part time job over the summer to work through it anymore. The average class-of-2016 graduate has about \$37,000 in student loan debt, which was increased by six percent from 2015 according to International Business Times. Paying a huge amount of money like that simply isn’t feasible for everyone, and people need to be aware of their own financial situations.

Even with that massive investment, you aren’t guaranteed a return on it. According to a Harvard study, only 56 percent of people who enroll in college or university graduate within six years.

But let’s say you do make it all the way through and graduate—you still don’t magically get handed a job.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 44 percent of young college graduates are underemployed, meaning that they are employed in a job not requiring a degree, and six percent are unemployed.

Having a degree is not the special key to employment anymore. Having your Bachelor’s no longer sets you apart from all the other applicants for a business; you need experience and a padded portfolio to be special.

Simply put, not everyone is suitable for college. It can be hard enough for people who are actually motivated, but nigh impossible for those who aren’t. If you don’t have the innate drive to succeed in schooling, then you are far better off trying something else to advance into your future.

College can also add a huge amount of stress to someone’s life, not only from the classes they are taking, but from the finance problems looming overhead. Stress like this can really mess someone up, and it definitely doesn’t help when they are supposed to be “getting ahead.”

According to the National College Health Assessment, about one-third of US college students had difficulty functioning in the last 12 months due to depression, and almost half said they felt overwhelming anxiety in the last year.

Mental health issues can be a huge burden, and having college dumping them on you early in life can make everything afterwards much more difficult.

College also doesn’t teach people many of the real-life skills that get you ahead in the workplace, like leadership or maturity. To succeed, you need to have personal drive and motivation, you need to be able to negotiate and have people skills. Successful people learn by *doing*, not being taught how to do.

Technical skills can provide jobs that are highly important and won’t be going away anytime soon. There will always be a need for plumbers and electricians. Who else is supposed to fix all the problems those “educated” office workers have?

Many people in high school already have some form of technical skill they can transfer into a career, and vocational and trade schools are much cheaper than normal college. Why go to a university and pay \$30,000 a year when you can pay \$20,000 to go to a technical college for two years learning to weld, and then reliably earn up to \$59,000 a year? Fun fact, some specializations of welding can even earn upwards of \$90,000, according to the American Welding Society.

For a lot of people, taking away four years of possible career building and then having over \$30,000 in debt is probably the worst way to move up the economic ladder.

Granted, all of this is coming from someone who is going to college next year (unless something major happens). But I know that college is a good and viable option for me. I’ve put a lot of thought into my future, and for me it’s not just something to go and do because I can.

College is not something everyone should do. You need to think long and hard about your future before investing so heavily in it, and it doesn’t guarantee you a spot in the middle/upper class. You can’t simply follow the yellow brick road to your perfect job.

If you know for a fact that college is the right path for you, by all means go right ahead. But be careful, and stay motivated to succeed. Otherwise, follow a path that works for your needs.

Yes.



Natalya Swartz
Staff Reporter

I have always known I was going to college. My parents never told me I had to go or pressured me to get good grades to get into a prestigious school, but I always knew I had to. It was a decision I made on my own as I looked around me at the people I saw succeeding.

I saw my grandparents with their PhDs, having beaten the odds from tiny Iowa towns to become professors at Ferris State university. I saw family friends with engineering degrees and successful careers spending their summers in their house on Glen Lake and putting two kids through college. I saw every person I knew getting a degree and doing well for themselves.

Going to college is important experience in a lot of successful people’s lives.

According to the U.S. Census, 1 in 3 people earn a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Sure, the odd famous actor or writer dropped out of school to pursue their career, but that is a one in a million shot.

According to Georgetown University, “The United States is more educated than ever: In 1973, workers with postsecondary education held only 28 percent of jobs; by comparison, they held 59 percent of jobs in 2010 and will hold 65 percent of jobs in 2020.” As the job market expands and diversifies, the need for education and individualized education increases. Employers want educated and driven people in their work force.

Even if you don’t need to go to college to be successful it is an important social experience. You lose the vast majority of friends you have in high school to the changes that happen in college. You grow up at college in ways you never could have imagined in high school and make friends that last decades.

Living in a dorm and spending late nights up studying and simply being immersed in the quintessential college culture is something that most Americans can relate to. It gives you stories and a handful of relatable experiences that you can use in interviews and important interactions for the rest of your life.

Going to college also allows you to make important connections. Professors and mentors know people and the field you plan to work in and can give you contacts to people in the industry.

According to the University of Rochester, the human

brain is not fully developed until 25. This means that your early college years are significant factors to brain function. You are still young enough to learn new skills quickly and well. College is a wonderful opportunity to become fluent in a language, further your understanding of Calculus or read books that will open new horizons for you.

Many people don’t go to college because they don’t know what they want to do for a career.

The problem here is that you are passing up an incredible opportunity to find out just that. College provides courses in hundreds of different areas that might be exactly what you’ve been waiting your whole life to study. You could also attend a trade school, which is a wonderful option. Trade based careers can provide great starting salaries and fulfilling jobs. However, the kinds of jobs that you can get are hard work and limited.

“50 percent – 70 percent of students change their majors at least once, most will change majors at least three times before they graduate,” according to a study by the University of La Verne.

You are not tied to the major you walk in with. It is possible, and probable, that you will find a myriad of other things you never knew interested you.

Another reason people don’t go to college is the fact that they simply can not afford it. This is a reasonable argument. College cost in the current world is astronomical. However, if you want to put a little skin in the game you can make it work.

According to NerdWallet 2.9 million dollars in college aid is left unused every year. Many students forgo filling out even the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that could have earned them Pell Grant money that doesn’t need to be paid back. You can also look into merit scholarships provided by the schools you are applying to or by third party organizations. You can also apply to a community college. Tuition there is significantly cheaper than a university or private college and you can always transfer to a big school later on after getting credits at a cheaper community college. You can also see if you qualify for a work-study if you apply for FAFSA. Work study programs allow students to earn financial aid by working a part time job. This can help you both gain work experience and financial aid.

College is important. It is a learning experience and a life experience unlike anything else. You can make it happen if you put your mind to it and have some great years ahead of you.

Opinion

Okemos Montessori system is accommodating but isolating

Gabe Hales
Staff Reporter

Where you go to school as a kid is never really your choice.

Your parents place you in an environment they feel will be the best for you as an aspiring human. That place might be at home, in a boarding school, or, in my case, a Montessori school.

Don’t get me wrong, my time in Montessori during my early years was almost perfect. Children in this type of classroom have a lot more freedom than others—every week they get a sheet of assignments is handed to you, and it’s your job to complete them by the end of the week.

The process was very hands-on, which I loved, but after a student (me) hit sixth grade and began to be integrated into non-Montessori classrooms, along with this new thing that was called ‘puberty,’ I realized this system was viewed as ‘weird’ by other students. At the ages of 12-14, a male’s mind is at its peak of embarrassment

and discomfort, so when a student of this age is part of a segregated program in the middle of a general education building, it often doesn’t go very well in their favor.

Before I go deeper into all the negatives, I want to account for how Montessori was good for me and my childhood. My grandpa has always said, “Always be positive! And if you can’t be, try and cover up the sh*t-storm with some scented toilet paper or something.”

As a young, hyper ball of crazy, Montessori was the perfect place for me to learn to take my energy and direct it into different, creative tasks. As I said above, everything was hands-on and it was all done at a pace of our choosing. If we were learning how to multiply, we either did a project on it in a way we wanted to, or we would use some form of education that involved tinkering with our tiny hands.

In kindergarten through fifth grade, we had many poetry slams and lots of opportunities to read independently (which were my absolute favorite). Sadly, this all slowly faded as we moved up the ranks of the public school system to middle school. Our cubbies turned into lockers, our collaboration stations into

desks, and our hands-on art projects turned into lectures and actual lessons on all the “normal” (boring) school subjects.

Of course, those subjects were what we needed to go on to high school, but the thing that really got me and my newly-tightened braces in a bunch was the fact that we still had to be put in this “sectioned-off” portion of the middle school. It was like we were isolated as ‘the weird kids.’ I remember hearing other kids talk about Montessori in a variety of ways. Some thought it was for kids who excelled in some subjects, while others thought the opposite. But no matter what they thought, most saw us as different and strange.

We didn’t have much contact with the “outside world,” and usually only talked to people who were in our classes, even though we had the same recess, gym and lunch as kids who were in the “traditional” school system. Of course there were some exceptions, as some students were graced with more social skills at that age, but being the awfully awkward middle schooler I was, with my buzzcuts and thrift store clothes, I

didn’t do much to branch out.

Not only did we have to deal with isolation, we had to put up with some weird ‘Montessori’ traditions throughout middle school, which thankfully ended by the time we were put into the merged building. Every concert we had to sing this weird cultish song called “*Peace, Love, Hope and Joy.*” We paired this with sign language movements, and every time it was performed, the entire school had to pack on stage and sing with one of the teachers accompanying us on the piano.

Although it was weird, it turned out to be a good character builder, with which I agree to some extent. I honestly have to say, I probably wouldn’t be the same person I am now without these classes. Going through Montessori helped me develop my own unique look on learning and how the education system works.

Of course I ended up (somewhat) normal, but honestly I never tell people about my Montessori past, because deep down, I’m still afraid they’ll think of me differently when I explain my upbringing.

Touching on what Maria Montessori once said, “One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.” It seems the system should be changed a bit, because I was indeed *not* a happy child.

However, the fact still remains that Maria Montessori probably didn’t intend to have the system work out like it does in the Okemos school system. She even stated that ages 12-18 are the third plane of development, and emphasized the instabilities and difficulties during this time in a child’s brain. She included that this is a period where students minds are at their peak of learning about how to become a functioning member in society. So maybe this isn’t a fact about what’s wrong with Montessori, but about how the merging could have been done differently in my school system. Maybe fully integrating Montessori and traditional could have worked better, but no matter what, something needs fixed.

New administration generates uncertainty regarding education

Julian Fedorchuk

Managing Editor

Education was not debated much during the election cycle, but since Donald Trump won, there has been a great deal of discussion circling the topic, especially following Trump's controversial pick of Betsy DeVos for Education Secretary.

Much is still unknown about what Trump plans to do with education, but has made some things clear, most of which can be put into three points: that he is against Common Core (federal educational initiative that details what students should know), a proponent of school choice (getting to pick schools that best fit you) and that he has promised to eliminate the Department of Education.

"I would say, and looking back at history,

the Department of Education has had a critical role in creating national standards for civil rights," Whitmyer said. "When you had, or have, certain localities and certain states that haven't been very forward thinking or moving on the matter of civil rights specifically, that's where the federal government has stepped in and made and enforced federal standards that have done a lot for a lot of people."

Despite most of his plans being left unspoken, Trump's choices for Vice President and Secretary of Education have given people a clue as to what his policy goals are.

Vice President Mike Pence has a clear agenda from his voting records in the House and his time as the governor of Indiana. Pence is a supporter of school choice, and he voted against "No Child Left Behind" while in the House. His goals seem to align with Trump's, and many believe that he will

have a lot of influence in policy.

Trump's Education Secretary pick, Betsy DeVos, is perhaps the most contentious nomination there has ever been. She has been classified by Charles Schumer and democrats as a whole as extremely unqualified and unpopular, mainly due to her lack of experience with public schools. DeVos herself never attended a public school, and struggled to show familiarity with the Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). She has been quoted as saying that education reform was a way to "advance God's kingdom."

"I'm not going to make judgements on her, but, I feel pretty safe in saying that there's a good collection of people in this building that have a better resume and higher levels of credentials for her job than she does," Kortney Whitmyer

(Social Studies) said.

Here in Michigan, her home state, she has done much to push for reform and has helped spread charter schools throughout Michigan, despite them recording lower than average test scores, according to Politico.

With all this though, we are still unsure of what to expect from the new administration in terms of education. Education does not seem to be a major issue for the first part of Trump's term.

However, there are many predictions about what is to come.

Both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have promised to fight many of Trump's educational plans, so there will likely be a lot of fighting between teachers and the administration.

Community colleges will receive a lot more attention due to Trump's heavy focus

on jobs and rebuilding the workforce. Expanding these ways of education and advancement would help Trump push his agenda of economic expansion.

At the same time, Trump has also spoken about how universities with high tuitions should be required to spend more on student scholarships or risk losing their tax-exempt status.

One thing that nearly everyone agrees on is that if there is going to be action taken, it most likely will not be massive or quick. No matter what happens, pushing things through Congress takes time and is likely to face a lot of opposition.

"Based on what I know now, I don't think you're going to see a ton [of changes in the classroom in the next four years]," Whitmyer said.

Staffer recounts international academic experiences

Hawraa Alsaedi

Staff Reporter

School. Most of us complain about it and very few of us actually want to be here. However, my experiences with different education systems have given me a broader perspective.

When I was five I went to an all-girls elementary school in Baghdad, Iraq, which only had about 100 total students.

Our dress code was a white shirt under an overall dress, usually navy or black, tights and black shoes.

Our classes changed everyday; we had math one day and science another.

Academically, the curriculum was much more challenging than in the U.S. By middle school, students were learning chemistry and advanced algebra. We were also taught English from first grade on,

whereas here only two years of a foreign language are required.

Many schools in the Middle East have a class for religion, most often Islam. We had to bring hijabs because we had to dress appropriately when reading the Quran. Forgetting your hijab meant not going to class and also meant a trip to the office.

When I was seven years old, we moved to Syria. Even though the school I went to in Syria was co-educational, it would be considered conservative compared to many here.

We were not allowed to talk back even if teachers were in the wrong. They also had the power to hold students back even if parents wanted them to move on to the next grade.

The dress code was the same for boys and girls; the school provided a blue tunic, blue pants and an orange necktie.

The latter school had swings and slides and a large courtyard for us to run around. In the former, we played hopscotch or jumped rope instead.

In both schools, there were kiosks in the

courtyards to buy snacks; lunch was not provided.

Both schools were very strict about homework: it had to be done and done correctly.

Teachers in both schools could also hit students for being disrespectful or answering incorrectly, but it's become less prevalent as more parents are pushing for more regulations. You had to hold your palm out and would be struck with a wooden ruler.

When we moved here, I went to a school in Lansing and it's safe to say it was a rough experience.

Everything was different: the schedules, the students, the teachers, the language and the kids were not the nicest. Fitting in was hard, but I gave up quickly because I didn't want to change myself for a couple of bullies.

The first thing that intrigued me there was the library, something I had never had in a school before.

The librarian would let me flip through books during lunch, even though I couldn't read half of them, just to marvel at their beauty.

A couple months later, we moved to Okemos; mostly for the higher education available. I started fifth grade at Kinawa and have been here since.

My first teachers in the U.S. did not try as much to include me in class activities as teachers did at Okemos, so it was definitely a good change to have someone to talk to. Okemos' teachers were much more engaging, almost forcing me to interact with them or other students.

They were also more patient and relaxed than any of my teachers back home—far more lenient with due dates and did not enforce as much as I was used to.

I always looked forward to orchestra, which also was not offered back home. I later tried band and choir, and though I didn't like them too much, it was nice to even have the experience.

The education here is better and provides me with courses I would have never had back home.

The plentiful resources and opportunities offered here are not appreciated enough as most students see these as "the norm."

Most students here are privileged, since they are raised in a relatively wealthy community and expect nothing less than the best education.

Teachers who allow open discussion, encourage understanding, respect all opinions, allow extra time for assignments and act as equals should not be taken for granted.

I've had teachers back home who were compassionate about their jobs enough to give me great memories of my elementary education, so I am not saying all teachers are mean back home.

My family moved here only to give me and my sibling a better education, and I think Okemos provides me with the best one possible.

Scholarship opportunities reduce lofty college expenses

Haley Robins

Associate Editor

With springtime quickly approaching, juniors and seniors will be making decisions about college. No matter what grade you are in, for most, the cost of a higher education is a major factor in what you will do after high school. Scholarships are a great way to subsidize the high price of attending a college or university. A bulk of scholarships available are merit-based scholarships.

Katie Betterly will attend Central Michigan University in the fall and received Academic Merit scholarships from three different universities, as well as the Board of Trustees scholarship from CMU.

"Most colleges have academic awards or merit scholarships that they give to most people," Betterly (12) said. "All you have to do to qualify for that scholarship is apply and have certain SAT or ACT scores.

Others [you] have to write essays or fill out a form for."

In other words, schools will look at your grade point average and other academic factors to determine if you are eligible for the scholarship. However, according to Hannah Henry (Guidance), there is abundance of untapped scholarships awarded based on ethnic background, religion and more.

"There are tons of scholarships out there and they are not really utilized," Henry (Guidance). "There are some scholarships out there that no one applies for, so there are hundreds of thousands of dollars sitting out there for the taking; you just have to apply."

Chelsea Benson (12) received a full ride scholarship to Ohio State University, as well as several private scholarships to cover room and board.

"Unlike many scholarships, this one was very unique," Benson (12). "It was less about grades and had nothing to do with financial background. Instead, it focused on one's ability to bring diversity and inclusion to the university. Essentially someone who can embrace diversity throughout campus. Some of the key things this scholarship looked at were volunteering, ability to bring

diversity— whether that is religion— race or culture and grades obviously played a slight factor."

Depending on the particular scholarship, the college or university will be looking for many different things.

"Each scholarship is going to have different criteria and it could be anything from your ethnic background, to where you work, to if you have a relative that is from Iceland," Henry (Guidance) said. "There are a ton of different things that they ask for so it is really important to make sure you that when you are looking for scholarships, that you are basing it off of your own personal criteria and reading exactly what they want."

During the scholarship search, it is important to do your research so you can provide exactly what the school is looking for. Sometimes to apply for a scholarship, you need to submit an essay or a portfolio. Some require little more than your name and GPA.

"I found my scholarship on Ohio State's website and when visiting campus they talked about it a lot. When looking for scholarships, I would start at the school you're planning on attending and then branch out from there. Many of the schools offer a variety of

scholarships through their departments," Benson said.

While Benson found her scholarship on the school's website, there are many other resources to provide a helpful place to start while narrowing down the scholarship you want to apply for and how to apply for it. Typically, the website of the college or university will have scholarships for merit or other criteria. There are also private scholarships available from external sources. The counseling office recommends Fastweb.com.

"We also have a scholarship binder up here in the counseling office which anybody can come browse through and it is set up by application deadline so you can see what is being offered locally or maybe from the state and things like that," Henry (Guidance) said.

Although grades are important in the scholarship process, it is important to know that they are not everything.

"When it comes to scholarships it's important to build up your 'resume' prior to senior year," Benson (12) said. "Whether that is participating in clubs, sports, or just being involved in the community. Obvi-

ously grades are a huge factor but through scholarship searching I've learned that a lot of them are looking for people to be active in their community."

Scholarships vary in how many are given out, depending on the university or college you are looking at.

"[From Ohio State], around 300- 400 are given out," Benson (12) said. "They range from in state tuition cost, then in state/out of state (what I received), lastly there is the top one which covers everything."

If you have the grades to qualify for merit based scholarships and apply early on, it is likely you will receive some kind of scholarship, even if it is small.

"In general, in the previous schools I have worked in, I would say for merit based, with good GPA's or academics, most everybody that qualifies for those will get something," Henry (Guidance) said. I have not seen a student apply for a scholarship and not get something, so it is always good to apply, even if it is for a small like 100 dollar private scholarship, it is great to apply because any money in your pocket will help."