

Colleges and Careers 2026

It's A New World



The Carolinian

Life Skills For Teens To Master By Age 18

Rustic Pathways — Life skills for teens are the practical abilities that prepare students ages 12–18 to handle school, work, and independence. Unlike academic knowledge tested on exams, most essential life skills are tested in real moments: managing a budget in a foreign currency, navigating a city without GPS, or resolving a conflict with a roommate 6,000 miles from home.

Your teen can code in Python but can't do their own laundry. They have 1,000 Instagram followers but freeze when meeting new people. Does that sound familiar?

Here are essential life skills every teen should master before age 18, and how structured travel accelerates each one.

Who this guide is for: Parents building independence at home, educators coaching “adulthood” skills, and teens who want a clear checklist before 18.

Foundation Skills

These skills let teens take care of themselves. Without them, everything else falls apart.

1. How to Groom and Be Clean

Only about half of teens wash their hands after using the bathroom, and even fewer use soap.

Personal grooming isn't glamorous, but it's a foundational life skill. Cleanliness affects social interactions, physical health, and self-respect. Teach your teen to ask: Do I stink? Clean clothes, clean space, consistent hand washing. The basics prevent a lot of social friction.

Camps and travel reinforces self care and daily routine. Sharing a room with new friends for two weeks enforces hygiene faster than any lecture. (Hand washing refresher from Johns Hopkins)

2. How to Perform First Aid

Teens should know how to clean and bandage wounds, perform CPR, administer over the counter medications, and help someone who's choking. These valuable life skills are the difference between panic and action when something goes wrong.

3. How to Have Social Skills and Manners

Knowing how to interact with others is one of the most important life skills. Saying “please” and “thank you,” listening when others talk, making eye contact, introducing yourself to strangers—these aren't outdated formalities. They're how people decide whether to trust you, hire you, or be your friend.

How travel develops social skills and healthy relationships: On a Rustic Pathways program, teens introduce themselves to host families, thank community partners in their language, and navigate group dynamics with 12-18 students they just met. Two weeks of daily practice beats years of reminders.

4. How to Stay Organized

Time management and organization are executive functioning skills foundational to everything else. A teen who can't track homework, chores, and extracurricular activities will struggle with jobs, finances, and relationships later.

The system matters less than having one: calendars, to-do lists, phone reminders, whatever works. Being ahead reduces stress; being behind compounds it.

How travel builds time management skills: Packing for two weeks, keeping track of a passport, sharing space with roommates, and making a 6 AM departure teaches organization faster than any app.

5. How to Swim

Swimming can save your teen's life, or someone else's. Teens should know how to float, tread water, and perform basic

strokes before they're on their own near open water.

6. How to Use Tools

Knowing how to use tools like hammers, screwdrivers, and wrenches helps teens fix small problems on their own. This do-it-yourself set of key skills builds confidence. Moreover, being able to tighten a loose screw or hammer a nail might save teens time and money.

Independence Skills

Once teens can care for themselves, they need to function alone: managing money, making food, solving problems without a parent standing by.

7. How to Budget and Manage Money

More than half of teens lack financial literacy. The life skill isn't complicated: track what comes in, plan what goes out, save the difference. Make the bank of mom and dad a luxury, not a necessity.

Start with an allowance and make them budget it. Teach saving for emergencies and big purchases. If you get to investing and compounding before graduation, bonus.

8. How to Buy and Make Food

Teens should know how to roast a chicken, make rice, boil pasta, and scramble eggs. Basic cooking saves money, builds healthier habits, and eliminates dependence on takeout. Add grocery shopping: making a list, choosing fresh produce, comparing prices. Add knife handling, kitchen appliances, and managing a gas stove. These aren't optional life skills for someone about to live on their own.

9. How to Dress and Care for Clothing

Teens should know how to dress for an interview, a funeral, and a hike. They should also know how to wash, fold, and iron what they own. Add laundry to the list: sorting colors, reading care labels, running a washer and dryer. Sewing a button or mending a tear saves money and extends the life of clothes.

10. How to Communicate and Cope with Emotions

Communication means speaking clearly and listening carefully. Active listening is understanding not just what someone says, but what they mean. These skills build relationships and help teens succeed in school, work, and friendships.

Emotional coping is the other half. Anxiety and depression are widespread among teens. Sadness, anger, and fear are normal. The skill is managing emotions constructively: deep breaths, healthy coping strategies, and support networks of friends, family members, or counselors.

11. How to Problem Solve

Problem-solving is identifying what's wrong, breaking it into smaller pieces, brainstorming solutions, and thinking through consequences before acting. It sounds obvious, but most teens have never flexed critical thinking skills with real stakes.

The goal isn't to prevent problems. It's to build teens who can handle them.

12. How to Master Basic Educational Skills

Reading, writing, and arithmetic remain foundational regardless of technology. Teens who struggle to read closely, write clearly, or calculate quickly will hit walls in every career. Add information literacy: evaluating online sources, recognizing bias, distinguishing fact from opinion. The goal isn't quizzing multiplication at dinner. It's making sure the foundation stays solid.

How travel reinforces essential life skills in reading and math: Navigating foreign signs, reading maps without GPS, journaling daily experiences, and calculating

exchange rates puts educational basics into real practice.

13. How to Set Goals and Manage Time

Goal-setting and time management are linked. Set a goal using the SMART framework: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Break it into smaller steps. Track progress. Without time management, goals stay wishes.

Use planners or calendars. Learn to say no to what isn't essential. The teen who manages time will outperform the teen who doesn't, regardless of talent.

14. How to Make Decisions

Decision-making starts with listing options, weighing pros and cons, and considering how each choice aligns with values and goals. Then: commit. Indecision is a decision to let circumstances choose for you.

How travel builds decision-making skills: Every day on a Rustic Pathways program presents choices: which activity, what to eat, how to spend free time, when to push through discomfort. Low-stakes practice builds the muscle for high-stakes decisions later.

Resilience and Agency

Life will knock them down. These skills determine whether they get back up.

15. How to Be Employable

Most teens will need jobs. Fewer than half feel confident they have the skills to compete for them. Teamwork, communication, leadership, and problem-solving are what employers actually hire for. Practice them through volunteer work, extracurriculars, or anything with real stakes. Before graduation, teens should also know how to write a resume, search job boards, and submit an application.

16. How to Drive

Driving is one of the most dangerous things a teenager will do. Teach traffic laws, safe habits, and zero tolerance for distractions. Seatbelts every time. Speed limits always. No phones. Basic car maintenance matters too: checking oil, changing a tire, understanding dashboard warning lights.

17. How to Be a Self-Starter and Cope with Failure

Initiative means acting without being asked. Teens who wait for instructions will always be behind teens who figure out the next step themselves.

Failure is the other half of initiative. It's inevitable. The skill is learning from it rather than dwelling on it. Everyone fails. It doesn't define worth.

18. How to Stand Up for Yourself

Assertiveness is expressing needs and boundaries clearly without aggression. Teens who can't advocate for themselves get overlooked, overcommitted, or taken advantage of. The skill is saying what you need and holding the line.

19. How to Handle Change

Flexibility and adaptability rank among the most desirable employee traits. Teens who can adjust when plans fall apart will outperform those who freeze. The essential skill is staying effective when circumstances shift.

20. How to Tackle Challenges with Grit

Grit is the ability to keep going when quitting would be easier. It's not taught in a classroom. It's built through exposure to people who have it.

Megan Kahrs made five trips with Rustic Pathways. After visiting a Tanzanian village, she described what she saw:

“Many of the school kids would spend up to 5 hours walking, round-trip, to get to school and back home. They didn't have access to a shower or clean clothes. That was their

daily routine, and it quickly became ours too. Education was so important to the families of Hayedesh. They would send their young, unsupervised children walking for hours in the dark, on dirt roads to get to school and learn.”

That's grit. Teens who witness it come home different.

Perspective and Purpose

Seeing beyond themselves. Understanding others. Finding what matters.

21. How to Volunteer Your Time and Help Others

Volunteering helps others and builds purpose. It also develops skills and expands social networks beyond school friends. Look for opportunities that align with your teen's interests and your family's values.

22. How to Use Your Voice Bravely

Most teens are fluent in texting but freeze when asked to speak in front of a group or advocate for an idea. Practice matters: debate teams, class presentations, dinner-table discussions about complicated topics.

23. How to Understand Diverse Viewpoints

Listening to people who see the world differently is a skill. It requires setting aside assumptions, asking questions, and resisting the urge to debate. Teens who only interact with people like themselves miss the practice.

How travel exposes teens to different voices: On Rustic Pathways programs, teens live and work alongside communities in 38 countries. They interact with villagers in Cambodia, families in Tanzania, students in South Korea. Daily immersion teaches empathy in ways that reading or discussion can't replicate.

24. How to Help Others Through Empathy

Empathy is understanding what someone else is experiencing and responding appropriately. It's built through exposure, not lectures. Teens who spend time with people facing different circumstances develop the instinct to help, not just the intention.

25. How to Be a Leader Through Independent Thinking

Teens default to following the crowd. Leadership means gathering information, weighing options, and making a decision before the group decides for you.

26. How to Foster Growth Through Curiosity

Curiosity is natural in young children. It wanes over time unless it's fed. The skill is staying interested in how things work, why people behave differently, and what exists beyond the familiar.

27. How to Find Your Path Through Initiative

Initiative comes easier when teens care about what they're doing. The challenge is helping them discover what that is. Purpose isn't found through thinking. It's found through trying things.

Modern Adulthood

The practical realities of being an adult in 2026: paperwork, navigation, technology, and knowing when to stop.

28. How to Prepare for Natural Disasters

Teens should know what to do in an emergency: evacuation routes, where to find flashlights and water, how to contact family. Create a household plan and practice it. Stay informed about risks in your local area.

How travel builds emergency awareness: Traveling to new regions exposes teens to different risks (hurricanes, earthquakes, monsoons) and how locals prepare for them. Awareness transfers home.



How Student Loans And Financial Aid Are Changing

Danielle Douglas-Gabriel

The Washington Post

The landscape for financial aid is about to change.

In 2026, the federal government will curb access to billions of dollars in student loans, reconfigure how borrowers repay their debt and provide new grant money for short-term career training programs.

All of these changes are slated to take effect in July and are results of the One Big Beautiful Bill signed into law last summer. The financial aid provisions in the law, which extends tax cuts from President Donald Trump's first term, will affect how families pay for higher education. Since November, the Education Department has been negotiating the terms of the policies with a panel of experts, as required by Congress. Terms for the new rules will be finalized early this year, with few expected changes.

While some higher-education experts say the changes will deliver commonsense reforms, others worry they could discourage college enrollment and persistence. Either way, students entering college in the fall of 2026 will encounter a very different federal financial aid system.

Here's what you need to know.

Student loan limits

In one of the largest revisions to federal student loan policy in decades, the Education Department will impose new caps on the amount of money graduate students and parents can borrow from the government.

The Grad Plus program, which lets students borrow up to the full cost of attendance to pay for graduate degrees, will sunset on July 1 for new borrowers. At the same time, people pursuing a master's degree will have their borrowing capped at \$20,500 a year and \$100,000 over a lifetime. Those working toward a professional degree — say, an aspiring doctor or lawyer — will be capped at \$50,000 a year and \$200,000 in total from the federal government.

In all, students will now face a lifetime maximum borrowing limit of \$257,500 for undergraduate and graduate school federal loans combined. If those amounts are

not enough to cover costs, students will have to pay the rest themselves or turn to private lenders.

The distinction between graduate and professional degree programs has been a lightning rod for controversy. Nurses and others have railed against the Education Department's proposal to exclude their fields from the higher loan limits. They worry that the agency's move to restrict the professional degree classification to 11 fields will discourage people from enrolling in other advanced degree programs.

The proposal must still be published for public comment before it can be finalized, which allows its detractors to fight for a broader classification.

Researchers say a substantial number of students pursuing master's degrees will be affected by the new limits. An analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found that one-third of graduate students with federal loans have borrowed more than the new limits will allow. Research from the Postsecondary Education & Economics Research Center at American University found that students in professional programs are more likely to borrow in excess of the new limit.

Beth Akers, a senior fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, said she suspects that many people will be caught off guard by the new constraints on graduate borrowing, and she says colleges are not doing enough to prepare.

"There could be a private-sector solution that covers the gap," Akers said. "But I suspect that the coordination that's necessary for that to happen by next fall will probably not happen."

There have been a lot of conversations among schools about offering institutional loans to help graduate students in need, said Scott Z. Goldschmidt, a partner at the law firm Thompson Coburn who works with higher-education clients. He said colleges are also exploring private loan alternatives and trying to identify scholarship opportunities.

Limits on parents

While the tax bill left undergraduate loan limits intact, it will affect how much parents can borrow to support students working toward an associate's or a bach-

elor's degree.

Parents and caregivers could previously take out as much as their child needed to attend college through the Parent Plus program, which is designed as a supplement when other types of student aid have been exhausted. Starting July 1, the program will set new limits of \$20,000 a year, or a total of \$65,000 per student.

Because relatively few families use Parent Plus loans, researchers at the Urban Institute think tank estimate that the new limits will affect just 2 percent of students. Still, among families who rely on the loans, nearly a third will be affected by the annual cap, and 17 percent will run up against the \$65,000-per-child total cap.

"It will have a significant impact on a small number of people, and it will be people who we're particularly concerned about, like disadvantaged populations who tend to use those resources the most," Akers said.

She hopes that colleges will provide more financial aid to lower the cost for students.

Current borrowers are exempt from both of the new caps for three years.

Fewer repayment plans

The federal student loan repayment system is notoriously complex, with a multitude of options and terms that can be difficult to navigate. Instead of having seven repayment plans, new borrowers will have just two options after July 1: one standard plan and one new income-driven repayment (IDR) plan, called the Repayment Assistance Plan (RAP).

The new standard plan will stretch monthly payments out from 10 to 25 years. The larger the debt, the longer the repayment term. Someone with an outstanding principal of less than \$25,000 will repay the debt for no more than 10 years, while a borrower with more than \$100,000 in federal loans will be in repayment for up to 25 years.

Payments on the new income-driven plan will be based on a borrower's total adjusted gross income, ranging from 1 to 10 percent depending on earnings. The plan cancels the remaining balance after 30 years of payments, instead of the current 20 or 25 years.

Borrowers have to make a minimum monthly payment of \$10. Those who make timely monthly payments will have their unpaid interest waived to prevent negative amortization, which happens when payments are not enough to cover the principal and interest. The plan also provides a monthly subsidy of up to \$50 to ensure that borrowers pay down their principal balance by at least that amount.

An analysis from American University suggests that the principal subsidy could result in faster loan forgiveness for low-income, low-balance borrowers. Still, researchers said they worry that higher payments and a longer time before forgiveness for many low-income borrowers are likely to increase the rate of loan defaults.

People who are currently repaying their loans can remain in any of the three existing plans that are not tied to income. Current borrowers on an income-driven plan can stay put until July 1, 2028, at which time they can switch to RAP or the original income-based option. That income-based plan will give Parent Plus borrowers, who are barred from the new IDR plan, a repayment option tied to their earnings.

There are some complications in consolidating the repayment plans. Congress gave borrowers enrolled in the Saving on a Valuable Education plan three years to exit, but a proposed settlement could speed up

the timeline. The Education Department struck a deal in December with seven states to resolve a lawsuit challenging the legality of the Biden-era repayment plan. The agency stressed that enrollees would have a limited time to find another option to repay their debt, but it has not provided an explicit timeline.

"Given what we've seen with folks not being able to enroll in plans and being stuck in a backlog ... I'm really concerned there's going to be even more chaos and confusion," said Michele Zampini, associate vice president of federal policy and advocacy at the Institute for College Access & Success.

Other student advocates worry about whether the Education Department will revamp the repayment system to reflect all of the changes in time for the graduating class of 2026.

People entering repayment for the first time will need an updated loan simulator, for instance, to select the best repayment plan, said Melanie Storey, president and chief executive of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Although newly minted graduates have a six-month grace period before repayment kicks in, she said colleges need to start communicating to students about their options long before then.

"We need information and we need clarity," Storey said. "My members are the people on the ground who have to answer questions for students, and I'm concerned that given the schedule, we won't have answers until well into the spring."

Pell Grant eligibility

There are some significant changes ahead for the Pell Grant, the largest federal grant program for low- and middle-income college students. Chief among them is the expansion of the program to include students enrolling in career training programs from eight to 15 weeks in duration. Those programs, which are mainly offered at community and technical colleges, must provide at least 600 hours of instruction.

In December, the Education Department reached a consensus with negotiators on the framework of the policy, dubbed Workforce Pell. The proposal must still be published and finalized, but higher-education experts expect few, if any, changes. It calls for governors to work with state advisory boards to determine program eligibility, with a focus on courses in high-demand fields such as nursing aides or emergency medical technicians.

Other new policies could change the number of students eligible for Pell Grants. This summer, the Education Department will exclude assets from family farms, small businesses and family-owned commercial fisheries from the calculation of the Student Aid Index, or SAI — a figure used to determine a student's ability to pay for college and the amount of aid they receive.

And some people may no longer be able to get a Pell Grant. The Education Department will begin including foreign income in its calculations, which could reduce a student's Pell eligibility. Furthermore, anyone who receives enough scholarship dollars to cover their full cost of attendance will no longer be eligible to receive a Pell.

Students will also be ineligible if their families have lots of assets but appear to have little income in the SAI calculation. A student previously could qualify for Pell if their family had a lot of assets but their parents generated business losses that lowered their adjusted gross income. Starting July 1, an SAI that is equal to or exceeds twice the amount of the maximum Pell award will be disqualifying.



The Rise of New Collar Workers and the Role of Community Colleges In The Modern Workforce

The nature of work in the United States is changing rapidly. Advances in technology, automation, and digital infrastructure have reshaped what employers need from workers. While four-year college degrees have long been viewed as the primary pathway to success, many industries are now prioritizing skills, certifications, and hands-on experience. This shift has led to the rise of “new collar workers”—employees who fill well-paying, in-demand roles through technical education rather than traditional bachelor’s degrees. Community colleges are central to preparing these workers and expanding access to opportunity in the modern economy.

The term “new collar worker” refers to individuals trained for technical and technology-driven roles that do not require a four-year degree but still offer strong wages and career stability. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, about 65% of jobs in the U.S. economy require some form of postsecondary education, but not necessarily a bachelor’s degree. Community colleges, certificate programs, and associate degrees meet this demand by providing targeted education aligned with workforce needs.

New collar jobs exist across many fast-growing industries. In information technology, roles such as IT support specialists, network administrators, cybersecurity technicians, and cloud support analysts are increasingly in demand. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that employment in computer and information technology occupations is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations, with median annual wages well above the national average. Many entry- and mid-level IT roles can be accessed through industry certifications and community college programs, allowing workers to enter the field quickly and advance through continued training.

Advanced manufacturing is another major sector for new collar workers. Jobs such as CNC machine operators, industrial maintenance technicians, robotics technicians, and quality assurance inspectors require specialized technical skills rather than four-year degrees. Manufacturing has become more automated and data-driven, increasing demand for workers who can operate, maintain, and troubleshoot complex equipment. Community colleges often partner directly with manufacturers to provide hands-on training using industry-standard machinery, ensuring graduates are job-ready.

Healthcare offers some of the clearest examples of new collar careers. While physicians and registered nurses require extensive education, many essential healthcare roles do not. Medical assistants, licensed practical nurses (LPNs), radiologic technologists, respiratory therapists, and health information technicians are all trained through community college programs. The BLS projects strong growth in healthcare occupations due to an aging population, with many of these roles offering stable employment and wages that support a middle-class lifestyle.

Logistics and supply chain management have also become critical fields, particularly in the wake of global dis-

ruptions and the growth of e-commerce. New collar jobs in this area include logistics coordinators, supply chain technicians, warehouse operations supervisors, and transportation analysts. These roles rely on data systems, inventory management software, and coordination skills. Community colleges often offer programs in logistics, operations management, and business technology to meet this demand.

Renewable energy and sustainability-related careers represent one of the fastest-growing areas for new collar workers. According to the BLS, wind turbine technician and solar photovoltaic installer are among the fastest-growing occupations in the country. These jobs emphasize technical training, safety procedures, and mechanical skills, making them well suited for community college programs and short-term certifications.

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to support the growth of new collar workers because of their close ties to local labor markets. Many institutions work directly with employers to design curricula that reflect current industry needs. Apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning opportunities allow students to gain real-world experi-

ence while completing their education. This alignment helps ensure that graduates possess relevant, in-demand skills.

Affordability is one of the most significant advantages of community college education. According to the College Board, average tuition and fees at community colleges are significantly lower than at four-year institutions, reducing the burden of student debt. This is especially important given that student loan debt in the U.S. has surpassed \$1.7 trillion. Community colleges allow students to gain marketable skills without taking on overwhelming financial risk.

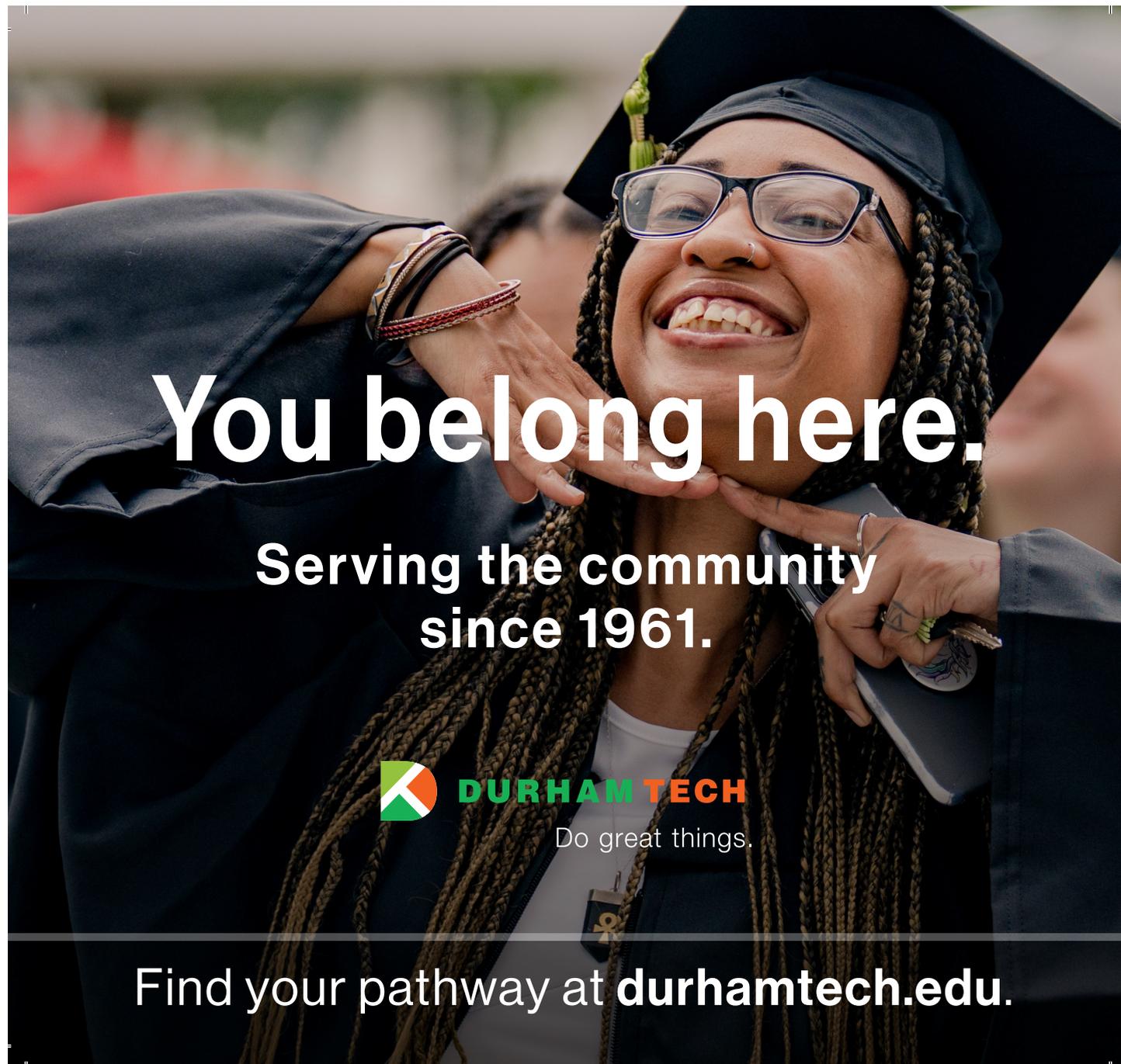
Flexibility is another key benefit. Community colleges serve a diverse population that includes recent high school graduates, working adults, parents, veterans, and career changers. Many institutions offer evening, weekend, online, and hybrid courses, making education accessible to students with other responsibilities. Short-term certificates and stackable credentials allow students to upskill or reskill as industries evolve, a necessity in a rapidly changing job market.

In addition to technical training, community colleges emphasize transferable skills such as communication, team-

work, critical thinking, and adaptability. Employers consistently report that these soft skills are just as important as technical expertise. New collar workers often collaborate across teams and must continuously learn new technologies, making these skills essential for long-term career success.

The benefits of community colleges extend beyond individual students. By producing skilled workers, they strengthen local economies and help businesses remain competitive. Research shows that regions with strong community college systems are better equipped to respond to workforce shortages and economic change. This creates a positive cycle in which education, employment, and economic growth reinforce one another.

As the workforce continues to evolve, new collar workers demonstrate that success does not depend on a single educational pathway. Community colleges stand at the heart of this transformation, offering affordable, flexible, and skills-focused education. By preparing students for in-demand careers, they help build a future where opportunity is based on ability, training, and potential—not just a four-year degree.



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Occupation	Entry-Level Education Requirement	On-The-Job Training	Work Experience in a related occupation	2019 Employment	Projected Number of New Jobs (Employment Change 2019-2029)	Projected Growth Rate	2019 Median Annual Wage
1 Commercial Pilots	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None [But Training/Certification Required]	127,100	6,100	↑ 5%	\$121,430
2 Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	>5Y More Than 5 Years	139,400	4,900	↑ 4%	\$94,560
3 First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	126,100	6,600	↑ 5%	\$91,090
4 Power Plant Operators, Distributors, and Dispatchers	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	51,700	-8,100	↓ 16%	\$85,950
5 Elevator and Escalator Installers and Repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship	None	28,900	1,900	↑ 7%	\$84,990
6 First-Line Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	Postsecondary nondegree award	Moderate-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	71,500	4,400	↑ 6%	\$77,800
7 Postmasters and Mail Superintendents	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	13,400	-2,900	↓ 22%	\$76,900
8 Transportation Inspectors	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	30,200	700	↑ 2%	\$75,820
9 Makeup Artists, Theatrical and Performance	Postsecondary nondegree award	None	None	4,700	500	↑ 11%	\$75,730
10 First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	409,800	-34,100	↓ 8%	\$74,760
11 Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	41,300	-200	0%	\$74,180
12 Signal and Track Switch Repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	6,600	0	↓ 1%	\$73,890
13 Lighting Technicians and Media and Communication Equipment Workers, All Other	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training	None	26,600	1,300	↑ 5%	\$73,460
14 Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	>5Y More Than 5 Years	952,300	-61,600	↓ 6%	\$71,160
15 Gas Plant Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	14,700	-800	↓ 6%	\$70,710
16 Occupational Health and Safety Specialists and Technicians	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	122,600	4,800	↑ 4%	\$70,480
17 Subway and Streetcar Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	10,700	600	↑ 5%	\$67,880
18 First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	499,100	13,300	↑ 3%	\$67,460

19 Insurance Appraisers, Auto Damage	Postsecondary nondegree award	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	348,800	-22,000	↓ 6%	\$66,540
20 First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	>5Y More Than 5 Years	685,000	33,000	↑ 5%	\$66,210
21 Gas Compressor and Gas Pumping Station Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	3,700	-100	↓ 2%	\$66,160
22 Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	238,600	0	0%	\$65,700
23 Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	348,800	-22,000	↓ 6%	\$65,540
24 Police and Detectives	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None [But Training/Certification Required]	813,500	40,600	↑ 5%	\$65,170
25 Locomotive Engineers, Railroad Conductors, and Yardmasters	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	77,700	-2,600	↓ 3%	\$65,020
26 Patternmakers (Wood)	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	700	0	↓ 5%	\$64,880
27 Aircraft and Avionics Equipment Mechanics and Technicians	Postsecondary nondegree award	None	None	160,000	7,300	↑ 5%	\$64,310
28 First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	48,700	-3,800	↓ 8%	\$63,730
29 Boilermakers	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship	None	15,900	100	↑ 1%	\$63,100
30 Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	1,720,700	26,200	↑ 2%	\$63,000
31 Chemical Plant and System Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	29,200	-900	↓ 3%	\$62,550
32 Stationary Engineers and Boiler Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	34,400	800	↑ 2%	\$62,150
33 Farm Labor Contractors	No formal educational credential	Short-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	800	100	↑ 10%	\$61,910
34 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	648,900	-2,000	0%	\$61,310
35 Construction and Building Inspectors	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	>5Y More Than 5 Years	120,800	3,900	↑ 3%	\$60,710
36 Fire Inspectors and Investigators	Postsecondary nondegree award	Moderate-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	16,400	1,400	↑ 8%	\$60,230
37 Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term on-the-job training	None	15,700	1,400	↑ 9%	\$60,130
38 Model Makers (Wood)	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	1,400	0	0%	\$59,260
39 Roof Bolters (Mining)	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	3,300	-500	↓ 16%	\$59,090
40 Electrical and Electronics Installers and Repairers	Postsecondary nondegree award	Long-term on-the-job training	<5Y Less Than 5 Years	121,700	-1,000	↓ 1%	\$59,080
41 Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	None	367,900	800	0%	\$58,760
42 Precision Instrument and Equipment Repairers, All Other	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training	None	12,200	400	↑ 3%	\$58,720
43 Plant and System Operators, All Other	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	13,200	0	0%	\$58,390
44 Control and Valve Installers and Repairers (Except Mechanical Door)	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	53,100	100	0%	\$58,100
45 Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	Postsecondary nondegree award	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None	215,700	-5,600	↓ 3%	\$57,910
46 Water Transportation Workers	No formal educational credential	Moderate-term on-the-job training	None [But Training/Certification Required]	81,900	200	0%	\$57,330

47	Flight Attendants	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		121,900	21,100	↑ 17%	\$56,640
48	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None		1,552,400	-46,700	↓ 3%	\$56,620
49	Electricians	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship		739,200	62,200	↑ 8%	\$56,180
50	Sales Representatives of Services (Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel)	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		1,070,500	64,200	↑ 6%	\$56,130
51	Rail-Track Laying and Maintenance Equipment Operators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		13,900	500	↑ 3%	\$56,100
52	Food Service Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	None		352,600	2,200	↑ 1%	\$55,320
53	Continuous Mining Machine Operators	No formal educational credential	Moderate-term on-the-job training		15,000	300	↑ 2%	\$55,280
54	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship		490,200	20,900	↑ 4%	\$55,160
55	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material-Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	High school diploma or equivalent	None		456,700	23,500	↑ 5%	\$55,060
56	Wellhead Pumpers	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		14,100	600	↑ 4%	\$55,040
57	Rotary Drill Operators, Oil and Gas	No formal educational credential	Moderate-term on-the-job training		20,900	5,600	↑ 27%	\$54,980
58	Computer Support Specialists	Some college, no degree	None		882,300	67,300	↑ 8%	\$54,760
59	Lodging Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	None		57,200	-6,700	↓ 12%	\$54,430
60	Refractory Materials Repairs, Except Brickmasons	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		800	-200	↓ 19%	\$53,990
61	Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	High school diploma or equivalent	None		9,600	500	↑ 5%	\$53,850
62	Ironworkers	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship		95,900	4,500	↑ 5%	\$53,650
63	Hearing Aid Specialists	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		8,100	900	↑ 10%	\$53,420
64	Advertising Sales Agents	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		139,200	-9,000	↓ 2%	\$53,310
65	Wind Turbine Technicians	Postsecondary nondegree award	Long-term on-the-job training		7,000	4,300	↑ 61%	\$52,910
66	Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Machinery Maintenance Workers, and Millwrights	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training		521,300	70,100	↑ 13%	\$52,860
67	Airfield Operations Specialists	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training		10,900	700	↑ 6%	\$52,650
68	Postal Service Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training		503,100	-72,000	↓ 14%	\$52,060
69	Rail Transportation Workers, All Other	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		2,500	-100	↓ 5%	\$51,600
70	Heavy Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Service Technicians	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training		218,100	900	0%	\$51,590
71	Chefs and Head Cooks	High school diploma or equivalent	None		148,700	9,500	↑ 6%	\$51,530
72	Athletes and Sports Competitors	No formal educational credential	Long-term on-the-job training		13,600	1,400	↑ 10%	\$51,370
73	Insurance Sales Agents	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		501,300	27,500	↑ 5%	\$50,940
74	Riggers	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		23,500	1,100	↑ 5%	\$50,860

75	Firefighters	Postsecondary nondegree award	Long-term on-the-job training		335,500	20,300	↑ 6%	\$50,850
76	Real Estate Brokers and Sales Agents	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		477,200	11,300	↑ 2%	\$50,730
77	Private Detectives and Investigators	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training		36,200	3,000	↑ 8%	\$50,510
78	Miscellaneous First-Line Supervisors, Protective Service Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None		85,700	1,300	↑ 2%	\$50,490
79	Sheet Metal Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship		137,700	1,800	↑ 1%	\$50,400
80	Bridge and Lock Tenders	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training		3,300	0	↑ 1%	\$50,110

College Is Not For Everyone, And It's Time High Schools Reflect That

By Sarah Morris

weareteachers

American education is always shifting, and it's no surprise there is a growing skepticism toward the value of a college degree. With college fees reaching unprecedented highs, the question of whether higher education ensures a financially secure future is more relevant than ever. College is not for everyone, and this conversation is fueled by the results of a new analysis:

One-quarter (25%) of higher-education attendees earn less than high school graduates a decade after enrollment.

These results from an exhaustive analysis is a stark reminder of the financial gamble that higher education has become for many. Despite the well-documented wage premium that college graduates typically enjoy over their lifetime, these results highlight that the return on investment in education is far from guaranteed. They find that 8% of their included institutions see students' median income below \$22,000 a year, a figure alarmingly close to 150% of the federal poverty line. This problem is worsened considering the average college debt exceeds \$37,000 per borrower.

According to a poll, 56% of Americans are starting to question the value of a four-year college degree. This skepticism is compounded by the finding that a considerable number of students, particularly those from for-profit institutions and trade schools, may end up in a worse financial position than if they had stopped their education after high school.

How should high schools respond?

As we navigate this reality, it becomes imperative for high schools to adapt, offering guidance that encompasses the full spectrum of post-secondary options. High schools play a crucial role in guiding students toward their future paths. They should recognize that college is not the one-size-fits-all solution it once was. To address this, schools should:

1. Start treating vocational training as an equally valid choice instead of a contingency plan.

Highlight the value of vocational training, apprenticeships, and community colleges as valid and valuable post-secondary options alongside four-year degrees.

Introduce students to career and technical education (CTE) programs that align with in-demand job markets.

2. Start with students' goals and interests and work backward.

Implement programs or courses that help students identify their interests, strengths, and career aspirations.

Encourage students to consider their personal and financial goals when making education and career choices.

3. Provide real-world learning opportunities when it comes to careers.

Facilitate internships, job shadowing, and mentorship programs with local businesses and community organizations.

Offer experiential learning projects that connect academic concepts to real-world applications.

4. Expand access to career counseling.

Invest in comprehensive career counseling services that help students navigate their post-high school options.

5. Offer gap-year information for interested students.

Educate students about the benefits of and opportunities for gap years, including programs that offer financial aid.

6. Be aware of and counteract social pressures.

Develop programs that address the societal and peer pressures surrounding the pursuit of a college degree.

Showcase success stories of individuals who have followed non-traditional paths to success.

7. Adjust the way we advise students academically.

Ensure that academic advising includes discussions about the financial implications of college, potential debt, and the realistic outcomes of different fields of study.

Provide resources and tools for comparing the long-term value of various post-secondary options.

8. Foster a culture of informed decision-making.

Create an environment where all post-secondary paths are valued equally. Encourage students to make decisions based on their personal situation, interests, and the current economic landscape.

Yale Offers Free Tuition To Incomes >\$200k

Forbes—Yale University announced today that it was expanding its financial aid program and would, beginning next year, offer free tuition to entering undergraduates from families with annual incomes below \$200,000 and cover all costs of attendance for those from families with incomes below \$100,000.

Yale has offered need-based financial grants known as “zero parent share” awards since 2010. Those awards provide scholarships to eligible students that cover the full cost of all billed educational expenses, including tuition, housing, and Yale’s meal plan. They also pay for estimated travel costs, hospitalization insurance coverage, and a \$2,000 start-up grant.

In 2020, Yale raised the income threshold for these scholarships from \$65,000 to \$75,000, making eligible over 15 million American families with school-aged children. Now, Yale is raising the eligibility

level again.

According to the university, under the new \$100,000 threshold, almost half of all American households with children ages 6-17 would be qualified for its full-ride financial aid package. In addition, with the expansion, more than 80% of American households will be eligible for a Yale scholarship that covers at least the cost of tuition.

I am thrilled that Yale is making this important investment in affordability,” said Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid Jeremiah Quinlan, in the university’s news release. “With this announcement, we reiterate and reinforce Yale’s commitment to ensuring that cost will never be a barrier between promising students and a Yale College education.”

More than 1,000 Yale College students currently receive a zero parent share award, said Kari DiFonzo, director of un-

dergraduate financial aid, and 56% of all undergraduate students qualify for some amount of need-based aid from the university. The average grant for all students receiving aid in the current academic year is greater than the annual cost of tuition.

In the increasingly competitive college admissions environment, several colleges and universities have announced free-tuition program for income-eligible undergraduates within the past year. Last year, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Utah, Smith College, Bryn Mawr College and the Stevens Institute of Technology each launched or expanded free tuition programs. In September, Wake Forest University, Emory University and The Ohio State University announced new free tuition programs for eligible undergraduates.

Once confined mostly to Ivy League institutions and other elite private universities like Northwestern, Stanford,

Duke and MIT that charge high sticker prices but have large endowments, free tuition offers are becoming more common as institutions respond to criticisms that college is too expensive, and the public’s confidence in the value of a college education continues to decline. In addition, because of the correlation between income and race, elite colleges may be boosting their financial aid offers in response to the Supreme Court decision in Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard University and Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. University of North Carolina that prohibited the race-conscious college admissions some of them had practiced.

Expect this particular arms race to continue as colleges and universities try to burnish their image, maintain equal access to higher education, and compete for a dwindling number of high school seniors over the 10 to 15 years.

18 Reasons Why College Is A Good Choice

Why is college important? Attending college provides both practical and personal benefits that benefit you and others. College education offers more than just better job prospects. It helps you find direction and opens doors you never thought possible. Although the cost of college and differing opinions about its worth can make deciding to attend difficult, it still remains the best way to secure well-paying jobs.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a bachelor’s degree can increase your weekly earnings by about 68% compared to those with only a high school diploma.

That’s just one of many reasons why college is important. Keep reading for more reasons why you should consider higher education your next step.

1. College expands knowledge in your chosen field

Keeping up with the latest trends and expanding your in-depth knowledge in college can enhance your marketability. A college degree can help you stay updated and informed about the newest industry developments. College professors are usually well-versed in the latest industry trends and have established networks.

2. College can increase access to job opportunities

It is still a common practice for many employers to require a college degree as a minimum qualification for entry-level jobs. In fact, statistics show that in 2022, nine out of ten employers had such a requirement for entry-level jobs. Those with bachelor’s degrees tend to have better employment opportunities and higher-paying jobs, making them more financially secure overall.

3. College degrees narrow the earning gaps for graduates

Attending college is an investment in one’s future. Statistics consistently show that college graduates earn significantly higher salaries than those with only a high school diploma. In 2021, full-time workers aged 22 to 27 with a bachelor’s degree earned a median annual wage of \$52,000, compared to \$30,000 for those with only a high school diploma. This trend highlights the importance of investing in a college education as a transformative step toward building a more prosperous and fulfilling future.

4. College helps you hone critical thinking skills

College education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills and an analytical mindset. It also teaches adaptability, a crucial skill in an ever-changing job market, as students learn to navigate new challenges and technologies. Engaging in diverse coursework and real-world projects equips students with the capacity to approach complex problems with a discerning and analytical mindset. These skills are essential in both personal and professional situations, and graduates who possess them are better equipped to navigate the workplace.

5. College can increase your earning potential

College can offer better job prospects and a higher salary. You can add \$1.2 million to your total lifetime earnings as a college graduate versus a high school graduate. While tuition fees can be high, the increase in earning potential justifies the cost. A degree doesn’t always guarantee a high salary, as earnings vary depending on your major and career, but it is often worth the cost.

6. College can bring networking opportunities

Networking is essential for job opportunities, personal growth and career advancement. College provides opportunities to build a professional network critical for career success. Building connections with faculty, classmates and student organizations can help you get a head start on your career.

7. College can help achieve greater job satisfaction

Recent research shows that a majority of college graduates, about 86%, consider their job a career or a stepping stone to their career. However, only 57% of high school graduates feel the same. Those with a bachelor’s degree also enjoy more job perks contributing to their career satisfaction—52% of full-time workers were offered retirement benefits by their employers compared to 43% of individuals without a degree.

8. College can help expand your independence

College is a pivotal point in life that helps in personal growth, independence and self-discovery. You are solely responsible for managing your time, homework

and course load, ultimately determining your success. The academic and personal independence you gain in college can help prepare you for post-college life and its realities.

9. College teaches you the value of cultural immersion and global issues

College provides a chance to learn about new cultures and perspectives. Interacting with diverse students and engaging in multicultural coursework broadens horizons, cultivating cultural competence and empathy. Graduates with a college education are equipped to navigate global markets and contribute to inclusive work environments.

10. College allows you to pursue your different interests

College is not just about getting a degree or a good job. It’s also a place to explore new interests and broaden your horizons. You can take classes outside your major, learn from experienced professors and collaborate with talented classmates. College offers countless opportunities to try new things and discover your passions. So, don’t be afraid to step outside your comfort zone, this is the time to learn and try new things.

11. College teaches you life skills

College teaches life skills like budgeting, time management and decision-making. It expands financial literacy and teaches money management skills. Students develop resilience, time management and organizational skills by handling living expenses, part-time work, coursework and social commitments. These skills lay the foundation for financial literacy and their future.

12. College degrees can provide better financial stability

College graduates have filled 95% of the 11.6 million jobs created since 2010. A college degree is crucial for financial stability. The specialized knowledge and skills acquired in college make graduates more competitive in the job market, ensuring longer financial stability.

13. College gives you access to more learning resources

College offers valuable resources like the library and career center. Libraries provide access to information, while career centers offer guidance in resumes, interviews and job search strategies. These resources enhance academic excellence and bridge the

gap between education and professional success, equipping you with the tools necessary for a seamless transition from college to the real world.

14. College teaches you the importance of effective communication

College is where students develop essential communication skills for the real world. Through coursework, presentations and projects, they learn to articulate their ideas clearly, listen actively and collaborate efficiently. These skills help them succeed in personal and professional settings.

15. College helps you achieve job security

College graduates are more likely to secure employment. The unemployment rate for those aged 25 and above with at least a bachelor’s degree was half of those with just a high school diploma. High school graduates have double the unemployment rate of college graduates.

16. College teaches you the importance of community

College teaches teamwork and mutual support, essential skills for the workforce. Graduates contribute positively to workplace culture, build networks and solve problems together. They’re also more involved in their communities. College students learn collaboration through group projects, extracurricular activities and shared experiences. This extends to the workforce and life after graduation, where teamwork is essential for project success.

17. College gives you greater access to health insurance in the workplace

Healthcare is expensive in the US, and health insurance is often too. College graduates are more likely to have employer-sponsored health insurance, with 64% having access, compared to 52% of high school graduates. Of those who didn’t graduate high school, only 33% have access to medical coverage through their job. You’ll see great savings from having access to health insurance through your employer.

18. College gives you the chance to have fun—seriously!

Let’s be real—adulthood comes up fast and furious with ongoing challenges. But your time in college, besides learning all you can, is a time to pursue niche interests, get to know yourself, earn new skills through extracurriculars and make lifelong friends. It’s an opportunity that rarely comes in later life. So, yes—prepare to have some fun.

Agriculture Careers – Thinking Outside The Silo

Agriculture is so much more than farming, tractors, and boots on the ground. Did you know that most jobs in agriculture don't actually involve farming? From rural and regional on and off-farm opportunities to the big smoke, agriculture careers are incredibly varied and diverse!

When you consider careers in agriculture, you probably think of those based on the land first. Like farm manager, soil scientist, horticulturist, etc. We're going to take a look at that remaining 82 per cent of jobs. Careers that offer a whole lot of opportunity, whatever your interests and skill set.

Technology is being used to research how to make farming more efficient and sustainable.

Technology is also changing across the whole agricultural supply chain. So if your interests combine food production and the tech side of things, you'll be able to find your niche.

Here are a few ideas.

Data scientist: You could analyse big datasets, looking at anything from weather satellites and drones, to GPS on cow collars to extract meaningful insights, develop predictive models and optimise farming practices. Data scientists can also use their skills across other parts of the industry. For example, examining transport logistics to ensure products are in the right place at the right time and in the best condition.

Robotics engineer: Design and build automated and robotic systems to make farm operations run more smoothly. That could be anything from self-driving tractors, to seeding machines, weeding robots and crop monitoring systems using sensors

and algorithms to ensure the best growing conditions.

Supply chain technologist: You could leverage technologies like blockchain, IoT sensors and data analytics to enhance traceability, transparency and efficiency throughout the food supply chain – from paddock to plate.

Post-production in agriculture involves jobs that generally occur after the harvesting of crops or the rearing of animals.

Sales and marketing officer: Once food is produced and products from it are manufactured, sales and marketing professionals work to get them in front of consumers. You could devise anything from national ad campaigns to local promotions, combining agricultural knowledge with creative flair.

Consultant: You could use your expertise to advise others on how to improve their products. Whether it's consulting on crops – looking at ways to boost yield and quality – or advising on market dynamics to ensure a company is targeting their product in the right way. Working as a consultant offers variety and the opportunity to collaborate with different organisations.

Waste and recycling manager: Like most industries, agriculture produces waste. And with sustainability top of mind, dealing with that waste effectively is an increasingly important role in the agricultural ecosystem. From reusing crop offcuts to augment soils, to recycling packaging as part of manufacturing processes, these 'green' careers are at the heart of agriculture's shift towards sustainable practices.

Quality control officer: When it comes

to the food we eat, there are regulations around its quality. As there should be. Quality control officers ensure that products meet legal standards. Whether it's monitoring the welfare of livestock on the farm or testing food products before they are released onto the market, it's about keeping consumers safe.

Commercial agriculture jobs

These types of roles add value to agricultural operations. In effect, they are the satellite businesses that interact with and operate around farm operations.

Engineer: Bringing technical and planning know-how to the table, engineers in agriculture can work on anything from designing farm machinery or constructing irrigation and drainage systems to improving the packing and technology in processing plants.

Livestock nutritionist: Livestock nutritionists design diets that meet the specific dietary requirements of different types of animals. They take into account factors such as age, weight, breed, physiological status and environmental conditions. Plus, they analyse the nutritional content of feed ingredients to ensure the animals get the best combination of nutrients for their health and ensure the products that come from them are good for consumption.

Land and insurance agent: Farmers need land. Insurance too. That means they need people to help find, finance, and protect that investment in Terra Firma. Land agents value and analyse available property and advise people on its worth and utility. They also handle the legal side of land transactions. Insurance agents then provide policies that meet the landowner's

needs. This may include crop insurance, livestock and property insurance, or specialised policies tailored to unique agricultural activities, such as installing renewable energy production facilities.

Non-commercial jobs

Non-commercial jobs in agriculture are those that are not primarily focused on activities that generate profit (although they can help with that, too).

Policy analyst: These professionals examine existing agricultural policies at local, national, and global levels. This involves studying the implications of these policies on various stakeholders, including farmers, consumers, and the environment. They may also collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, or think tanks to develop new and updated policies and regulations related to various areas, including agricultural technology, sustainability, and food security.

Research scientist: Work at the cutting edge of the industry. As a research scientist, you'll find new ways of doing things, improving everything from yield and pest management to sustainability. You get to perform experiments, analyse data and draw conclusions that can change the way agriculture works.

Extension officer: This role is all about bridging the gap between agricultural research and farmers. They disseminate agricultural information, provide technical advice and facilitate the adoption of improved agricultural practices among farmers. That could be working on soil carbon capture projects, advising on crop selection and planting schedules, or mobilising community participation in ag activities.



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6 REASONS HBCUs ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

1

OUTSIZED IMPACT, LOW-COST—
“BEST BUY” IN EDUCATION

2

MEETING THE NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME,
FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

3

LOWER COSTS
NARROW THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

4

CAMPUS CLIMATE FOSTERS SUCCESS

5

ADDRESS THE NATION'S
UNDER- AND UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

6

HBCUs OFFER A TRUE
VALUE/VALUES PROPOSITION

Reasons to Choose an HBCU

A Top-Notch Education

- In 2013, HBCUs generated 25 percent of all bachelor's degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields earned by African Americans and awarded 14 percent of all African American engineering degrees.

A Supportive Atmosphere and Community

- With HBCUs' special focus, your college experience will be one surrounded by many people with similar backgrounds and cultural experiences. You'll experience a unique community of support and understanding among faculty and your fellow students.

Diversity

- A focus on African American students doesn't mean a restricted cultural experience. HBCUs and HSIs (Hispanic-serving institutions) educate students of all races, ethnicities and cultures from around the world.

Affordability

- In 2013-2014, the average total cost of attendance at all HBCUs was 26 percent lower than the average total cost at all four-year non-profit colleges.

Alumni Support and Networking

- Most HBCUs and HSIs have strong and active alumni associations that provide you ongoing support and valuable networking opportunities to help you develop your future career.

The Importance of HBCUs And How They Culturally Prepare Students For Success

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a vital role in American higher education for more than a century. Established primarily in the years following the Civil War, HBCUs were created to provide educational opportunities to Black Americans who were largely excluded from traditionally white institutions due to segregation and discrimination. While their historical mission is widely recognized, their modern significance is equally powerful. Today, HBCUs not only provide academic training but also culturally prepare students for success by fostering identity, leadership, resilience, and community in ways that few other institutions can.

HBCUs were founded at a time when access to higher education for Black Americans was extremely limited. Institutions such as Howard University, Spelman College, Morehouse College, and North Carolina A&T State University became centers of learning, activism, and cultural development. Despite chronic underfunding and systemic barriers, these institutions produced generations of educators, scientists, lawyers, artists, and political leaders. Their legacy demonstrates that access to education, combined with culturally affirming environments, can transform individuals and communities.

One of the most important contributions of HBCUs is their ability to create supportive and inclusive learning environments. Many students arrive at college facing challenges such as racial bias, imposter syndrome, or a lack of representation in

academic spaces. At HBCUs, students are more likely to see themselves reflected in faculty, administrators, and peers. This representation fosters a sense of belonging and confidence that directly impacts academic performance and persistence. Research has shown that students who feel a strong sense of belonging are more likely to remain enrolled and graduate, highlighting the importance of culturally supportive campuses.

HBCUs also play a critical role in cultivating cultural identity and pride. Through curriculum, campus traditions, and student organizations, these institutions emphasize African American history, contributions, and intellectual traditions. Courses in Black history, literature, political thought, and social justice are often central to the academic experience. This cultural grounding helps students develop a strong sense of self and an understanding of their place within a broader historical and social context. Rather than treating culture as a side note, HBCUs integrate it into the educational experience.

Another key way HBCUs prepare students for success is through leadership development. Historically, HBCUs have been incubators for social change, producing leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Kamala Harris, and countless others in business, education, and public service. Student leadership opportunities are deeply embedded in campus life, from student government and Greek organizations to marching bands, debate teams, and service initiatives. These

experiences help students develop communication skills, confidence, and a commitment to service that extends beyond graduation.

Faculty mentorship is another defining feature of HBCUs. Smaller class sizes and a mission-driven focus allow faculty members to take a more personal approach to teaching and advising. Professors at HBCUs often see their role as extending beyond instruction to mentorship and advocacy. This support is especially impactful for first-generation college students, who may need additional guidance navigating academic and professional systems. Mentorship helps students build networks, clarify goals, and prepare for graduate school or careers.

HBCUs are also remarkably effective at producing Black professionals in critical fields. Although they represent only about 3 percent of U.S. colleges and universities, HBCUs produce a disproportionately high number of Black graduates in STEM, education, and public service fields. They are responsible for a significant share of Black doctors, engineers, judges, and teachers. This impact underscores the effectiveness of HBCUs in nurturing talent and preparing students for leadership in high-impact careers.

Cultural preparation at HBCUs extends to helping students navigate predominantly white professional spaces after graduation. Through career services, alumni networks, and institutional values, students learn how to succeed while maintaining their identity. HBCUs teach students to

balance professionalism with authenticity, resilience with self-advocacy, and ambition with community responsibility. This preparation is especially important in a workforce where racial inequities and cultural misunderstandings still exist.

The sense of community at HBCUs is often described as familial. Traditions such as homecoming, convocations, and shared rituals create lasting bonds among students and alumni. These connections form powerful networks that support career advancement and lifelong mentorship. Alumni of HBCUs frequently cite these relationships as a key factor in their professional success and personal growth.

Despite their significant contributions, HBCUs continue to face challenges, including funding disparities and infrastructure needs. However, their resilience and continued relevance highlight their importance in the higher education landscape. Investing in HBCUs is not only a matter of equity but also a recognition of their proven ability to educate, empower, and uplift.

In a society that is increasingly diverse yet still grappling with inequality, HBCUs offer a model of education that is both academically rigorous and culturally affirming. They prepare students not only to succeed in their careers but to lead with confidence, purpose, and cultural awareness. The importance of HBCUs lies not just in what they teach, but in how they teach—by affirming identity, fostering community, and empowering students to shape the future.





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At North Carolina Central University, artificial intelligence isn't tomorrow's promise. It's today's reality.

From classrooms to research labs, NCCU is redefining what it means to lead in the age of innovation.

As home to the first artificial intelligence institute at an HBCU, the Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Research (IAIER) positions NCCU students at the forefront of discovery and opportunity. Through partnerships with industry leaders such as IBM and OpenAI, students gain hands-on experience, mentorship and pathways into high-impact careers.

Every first-year student begins their Eagle journey with an introduction to AI, earning digital credentials that strengthen their skills and expand their future. Across every discipline, our scholars are advancing research that uses AI to improve lives, uplift communities and drive social change.

At NCCU, innovation has a purpose and that purpose takes flight.



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