

## College Guild

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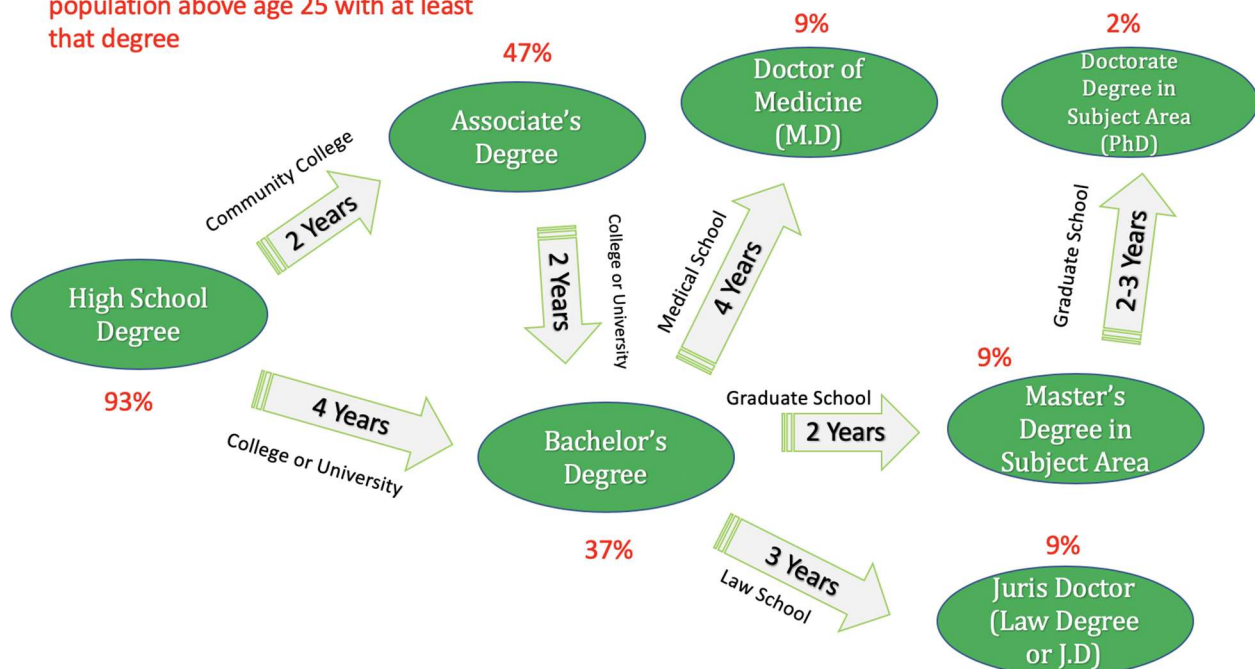
# U.S. Education ~Higher Education~

## Unit 3 of 6

For many American students, education does not end with a high school diploma. The United States' system of higher education is complex and confusing, but contains an abundance of opportunities for continuing education beyond high school. Higher education offers students the chance to keep learning and further prepare themselves for professional lives, armed with a degree from a higher education institution.

To give you a general idea of higher education in the U.S., the chart below shows the different degree options available. Unfortunately, none of this is free, and education can be a very expensive endeavor. To alleviate some of this burden, many scholarship and financial aid options are available to help students who don't have the financial resources necessary. Most financial aid comes from a mix of private companies, the government, and the higher education institutions themselves, and can be found relatively easily with a little research.

Percentages are the portion of the US population above age 25 with at least that degree



## College

After graduating high school, students wishing to continue their education typically start with a two- or four-year college. Two-year programs typically award an associate degree, while four-year colleges offer bachelor's degrees. Whatever the duration, college is intended to give students a more specialized education that will make them more attractive candidates in the job market and open doors to higher-paying jobs and other opportunities. Deciding to go to college is one thing, while deciding *which* college to go to is another thing entirely. Around the country, there are colleges of all types and sizes—with this variety, there is truly something for everyone, provided they know how to find it.

- 1. George wants to go to college but his parents didn't go to college and don't think it's worth it. What should George tell his parents to convince them that college is a good idea?**

In college, students are able to choose a focused area or subject to study within the arts and sciences, such as history, English, biology, or engineering. They will graduate with a degree in the subject on which they chose to focus their studies. College courses are much more work than high school, and the subject matter is more complex and studied through a much more detailed lens. Although students only take four or five classes, with only one or two each day, the class periods are longer and filled with lectures, discussions, and a lot of work to complete outside of class.

- 2. Which area of study would you choose to focus on if you were in college right now? Why would you choose this subject, and how would you use this knowledge after graduation?**
- 3. In high school, students are typically in school for seven hours with an hour or two of homework per day. In college, students are in class for three or four hours with four to eight hours of independent work per day. Would you prefer classes to be scheduled as they are in college, or as they are in high school? Which way do you think would help you learn more? Explain your answers.**

Though students begin to take on many more adult responsibilities while attending college, regularly cooking their own meals isn't always one of them. Many college students rely on dining halls and meal plans offered by their school, for an additional cost on top of tuition. These offerings often include a variety of food for students with different preferences and dietary restrictions.

- 4. Draw and label your ideal dining hall meal.**
- 5. Write a poem or short story about a dining hall worker observing students during dinner.**

Perhaps the most well-known part of college is life outside the classroom. Lots of young people looking to unwind from the stress of class and lifestyle adjustments contribute to the constant events happening on college campuses *not* tied to class work. Colleges often boast countless clubs and activities such as outing groups, political or activism clubs, volunteer organizations, intramural sports teams, newspapers, literary or art magazines, radio stations, and comedy groups for students to join in their free time. Colleges also often have varsity sports teams that students can either play or root for, although the involvement and support of

these teams vary. Large Division I schools, like Michigan State University, have much greater interest in and funding for athletics than small Division III schools like Bowdoin College. In addition to sports and clubs, some students also find jobs on campus, which can help deal with the financial burden that college poses.

- 6. List three activities that you would like to participate in while in college. How would they support your education?**
- 7. Would you rather be an athlete on a sports team or a spectator? Describe the sport you'd choose and why.**

The last piece of college life outside of classes, and the one most addressed in media portrayals of college, is the social scene. Some social scenes are dominated by Greek life, meaning fraternities and sororities, while others are dominated by sports teams or extracurricular groups. Excessive partying is often associated with excessive drinking, which can cause problems with numerous consequences such as falling behind on academics, suspension, or even expulsion. College students must be able to find a balance between having fun, being safe, and keeping up with course work.

- 8. Imagine you have a friend at college who is drinking and partying more than studying. Pretend you are writing a letter to that friend offering help and advice.**
- 9. How might a social group at college be able to help you with your studies, rather than distract you?**

### **Community vs. Traditional College**

There are many different types of colleges and universities for students to choose from. The biggest difference in these types is between community and traditional college. Both community and traditional colleges share the same mission, but have a few key differences.

#### **Community college**

Community colleges are typically public colleges with government funding that offer courses to students who live in the surrounding community. They offer courses in all standard subject areas, as well as some technical areas such as engineering or carpentry. These schools offer associate degrees in the same areas as traditional colleges offer bachelor's degrees, such as arts or sciences. These degrees typically take two years to complete, with each year costing around \$4,000—much cheaper than traditional college, which can cost around \$60,000 or more. Students can also defray the cost of college by living at home while attending a community college, forgoing the cost of living in a dorm.

After completing this two year degree, some students transfer to a traditional college in order to take two more years of classes, finishing with a bachelor's degree that can open up more career opportunities. Other students may move on to enter the workforce with an associate degree or a trade certification. Overall, community college offers a slightly different college experience for a much cheaper price and often a more convenient location.

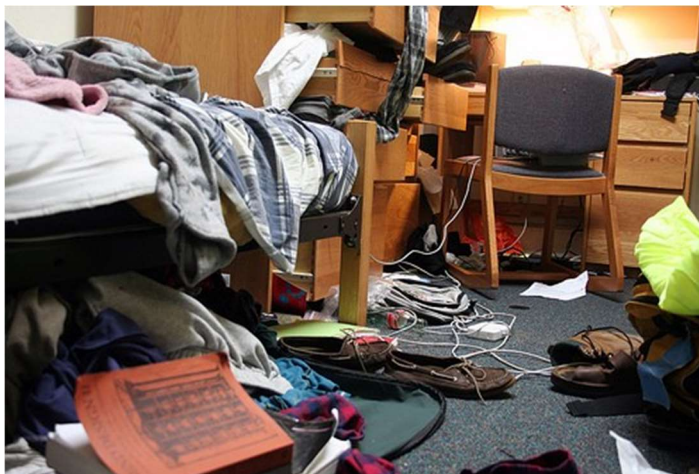
### Traditional college

Aside from the expense, the biggest two differences between community and traditional college are the degrees offered (bachelor's of arts or science) and life outside the classroom. Many traditional college students go to college away from home, some even travelling across the country. Living without family can be a huge adjustment for many students, as they must learn to take care of themselves and to become independent adults. Simple tasks such as doing laundry, cleaning their living space, and grocery shopping now become the students' responsibility.

10. **What is one task you would struggle with at college? How would you learn to do this task well?**
11. **Pretend you are a high school graduate with a close-knit family who is deciding between attending their dream college across the country or living close to their family and friends. How would you make this decision? What do you think you'd choose?**

On top of living away from family, students must often adjust to living with roommates. Most colleges offer a mix of residential options including apartments, houses, and dorms. Living in a dorm often means sharing a bedroom and common space with roommates, as well as using communal bathrooms and kitchens. Sharing a room with a roommate can be fun and a great way to make and foster relationships, but can lead to countless conflicts or disagreements. And while apartments and houses offer students private bathrooms and kitchens and more space away from roommates, these living situations often come with more responsibilities to take on (and possibly argue over), such as cleaning and cooking.

12. **Have you ever had a roommate who drove you crazy? What did they do that bothered you, and how did you handle it?**
13. **Imagine you have a roommate who never cleans up your room and has turned it into a smelly mess. Write a ten-line dialogue between you and your roommate resolving this conflict.**
14. **What are three traits of your ideal roommate? Why do you value those traits?**



The table on the following page outlines the many different types of college that exist in the U.S., ranging from colleges to universities and from public to private. You may notice in viewing this table that a college only offers four-year degrees, while universities also offer master's degrees and doctorates (Ph.D.s). For this reason, universities are often thought of as research institutions, as their doctoral students conduct

research on behalf of the university. These students also serve as instructors, teaching classes to the students enrolled in the four-year bachelor's program.

**The table below shows the variety of different college options.**

Type of school	Average student population	Degrees offered	Duration	Cost per year	Sports
Public university (Ex: Michigan State University)	25,000–60,000	Bachelor's, master's, Ph.D.	4–9 years (ranging from bachelor's to Ph.D.)	In-state students: \$12,000 Out-of-state students: \$33,000  (Funding partially comes from government)	Division I
Private university (Ex: Harvard University)	15,000–30,000	Bachelor's, master's, Ph.D.	4–9 years (ranging from bachelor's to Ph.D.)	\$50,000—\$70,000  (Funding comes from donations and tuition)	Division I
Private college (Ex: Bowdoin College)	<10,000	Bachelor's	4 years	\$50,000—\$70,000  (Funding comes from donations and tuition)	Division III
Community college  Ex: College of Dupage	Varies greatly (3,000–70,000)	Associate	2 years	\$4,000  (Most funding comes from government)	NJCAA

**15. What are two benefits of going to a...**

- a. small college?
- b. large university?

**16. Which of these options would be the best college for you? Explain your choice.**

### **Vocational School**

Not all students want or need to attend a traditional or community college. For these students, vocational schools are often the best option to pursue. Community colleges sometimes have vocational school programs, but there are also vocational schools that cater to specific trade vocations. These schools come in both public and private forms, with different prices and funding for each, just as with traditional colleges.

There are a variety of financial aid options available to make vocational school a viable option for people from a wide range of different financial standings. Vocational schools offer specific job training for careers such as plumbing or carpentry. Depending on the area of study, programs can take differing lengths of time to complete, though most end in under two years, and end in a myriad of different ways. Some can end with an associate degree, others simply finish with a certification in a career path, and some even conclude with both an associate and a certification. Vocational schools are often much cheaper than other post-secondary education options, costing between \$10,000 and \$35,000. This broad range is due to the plethora of different schools and program options, but all are cheaper than a traditional four-year degree and allow for immediate entry into the workforce.

Vocational schools are divided into two main areas: trade school and technical school.



**Trade schools** have one- or two-year programs for hands-on students who wish to learn a trade in order to become things like mechanics, carpenters, electricians, and more. In these schools, students work toward necessary certifications and complete training and apprenticeships before beginning their career.

**Technical colleges** offer education and training for careers that are less hands on but still require specific training. Programs are offered in areas such as hospitality, finance, visual arts, and many more. These programs also take around 2 years, and often end with an associate degree and a certification.



**NORTHEASTERN**  
— TECHNICAL COLLEGE —

**17. Which area would you most like to study in trade or technical college? Why?**

**18. Which trade do you think is most practical to learn in today's world? Why?**

### **Education Beyond College**

For many, a bachelor's degree is merely used as a jumping-off point to attend more school. The options beyond college are as specific as they are expensive and time consuming. Usually, a further degree requires 2–6 more years in school in an area specific to a student's desired career path. However, these degrees can be used in many different areas and combined to give someone a unique educational background to use in their careers. Further schooling can also provide students with valuable connections and networking opportunities in their chosen field that wouldn't have been available to them outside of the school. For students interested in becoming higher-education professors themselves, gaining a doctoral degree beyond their four-year program may be an essential step toward teaching at a four-year college. Still others just love learning, and will stay in various higher-education programs as long as they have the financial resources to do so.

**19. If you had unlimited resources, how long would you stay in school? What would you spend your time studying?**



## Law School

Typically a three-year program for those wanting to work in the legal sector, law schools can cost around \$30,000–50,000 per year and require that applicants have completed the LSAT exams. Law school students spend a lot of time reading and writing in order to develop strong critical thinking, logic, and communication skills. Students finish law school with a juris doctorate (J.D.), which is a doctorate degree in law. After completing law school, students take the bar exam in the state in which they wish to practice, in order to become lawyers.

## Medical School

Working as a doctor is a highly desirable career, and one that children often list as their dream job, but many don't understand the amount of time and tuition (around \$30,000–60,000 per year) that is required. For starters, medical school applicants must pass the MCAT exams to enter medical school. Once there, they have to choose a specialty, and the cost and length of their program is highly dependent on this choice. Those wanting to become dentists, eye doctors, or other similar professions, will be in school around 2–4 years and graduate with a specific degree, such as a doctor of optometry. Others hoping to become something complex and highly specialized—like an orthopedic or neurological surgeon, or anesthesiologist—medical school can take anywhere from 8–14 years. General practice doctors and pediatricians fall somewhere in between. The difference comes from the length of residency—most medical schools last four years, while the residency students must perform afterward varies greatly in length depending on the specialty they're interested in pursuing.

- 20. While completing anywhere from 4–14 years of extensive training, doctors pile up a mountain of student debt. Because they're in school, they often don't enter the workforce as a paid employee until their mid-30s. Does this seem worth it? Explain your answer.**
- 21. Pretend you're enrolled in medical school and need to choose your specialty. What would you choose, and why?**

## Graduate School

For students with an interest in one specific area outside of law, medicine, or the trades, graduate school is a place where that interest can be pursued with the goal of receiving a master's or doctorate degree. These programs usually cost around \$30,000–40,000 per year and combine a mix of classes and research. A master's degree takes around two years, mostly focusing on classes in one specific subject. A Ph.D., or doctorate degree, can take 4+ extra years after a student earns their bachelor's degree. Ph.D. candidates (students working toward their doctorates) often teach classes at their university while working toward their degree. Their work culminates with them publishing an academic report on one specific subject that they have conducted in-depth research on. This report is called a dissertation, and is notoriously difficult. When choosing a dissertation subject, Ph.D. candidates often look for gaps in the existing body of research in their field, and strive to offer a unique perspective on the subject at hand.

Having an advanced degree in a specific area limits career options—in some field, having a Ph.D. qualifies you only to teach at a university or college on that subject—but it can also grant someone access to high-paying career paths that require advanced degrees.

**22. If you had to select one area of research to study for 4+ years to earn a Ph.D., what area would you choose? What would be the topic of your dissertation?**

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*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*