



Are You Going To College? Know Why.

Contributors: Herb Greenwall, New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions and Dr. Betty Kelley

When we graduate from high school, there is still much more to learn. When we go to college, join the military, attend a technical or trade school, or take classes to get a certificate in a skill we are interested in, we continue the learning needed for our career and life.

Most students enter college immediately after they graduate from high school - either because they know what kind of work they want to do or the education that is required for that occupation or because they do not have a clear career goal and want to explore majors while taking their required courses. For some students, going to a twoyear or four-year college helps them discover the interests they have not yet found.

Know Your Options

An associate's or bachelor's degree from a college can offer broader skill development and may be applied in a wider variety of work situations. While earnings may not be a motivation of yours, many studies show that advanced degrees generally offer greater lifetime earnings.

Perhaps you will decide to get training in a technical skill or trade such as welding or computer technologies. Perhaps you will decide to build those skills through military training or technical school.

Depending on what types of careers you seek, these types of education may lead you more directly into the world of work, and may provide faster employment. However, be aware specific skills require updating as technology evolves and applications change. Being prepared will expand your future job choices.

Do Your Career Research

Think about the kind of work you are best suited for and the jobs or careers that can give you the most joy and satisfaction in your life. If you have not yet completed any interest inventories, aptitude tests, or skills assessments, we recommend that you ask your high school guidance counselor for help in doing so. Many schools have purchased programs like Choices or

Discover that feature assessments, inventories, and links to colleges that have courses of study or programs that support your career choice. The State of New Mexico has a similar free online career exploration program available at www.nmcrn.state.nm.us/career/dol_youth.html. The time you spend on career exploration may open doors for you in occupations you have not considered, leading to an exciting and rewarding career.

Understand Job and Career Requirements

Once you know your personal strengths, interests, and/ or potential abilities, you can begin to uncover different occupational requirements for the career choices that seem to fit you. This step involves identifying the education and training required for those jobs and careers. Through this process you can discover what educational opportunities you will aim for- a community college, a college or university, a technical school, a military branch, or perhaps directly into a job in the workforce with on the job training.

No matter what choice you make, know that you will need to continue learning for the rest of your life. In today's workplace, change is continuous. Technology causes equipment to be replaced, people leave, new management comes in with new requirements, and workers whose skills and education are obsolete are quickly replaced. Thus, even with a clear, solid career plan, you will be expected to continue learning and keeping your education and skills updated.

Why go to college?

Here are a few reasons from career counseling experts:

To obtain the educational background required to enter a career field you have already chosen.

To explore and uncover hidden interests, or become more clear about what areas of interests may be "right" for you to begin your career.

To gain market-ready skill sets that make you immediately employable.

To enable you to achieve and maintain the lifestyle you want to live.

To continue learning for the joy of learning and self-growth.

To give yourself time to mature before making a career decision.