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College Myths Busted

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College Myths Busted

*We often hear many false rumors
about the possibility of going to
college. Here are a few myths
busted wide open.*

Myth #1

Only rich people can afford college.

Nearly 20% of students aged 18-24 come from families that make less than \$25,000 per year. The federal government, states, and banks all offer different kinds of financial aid to help students afford college. Some forms of assistance come as money you do not have to pay back, like grants and scholarships. Some come in the form of loans, many of which you do not have to begin paying back until you graduate or are away from school for a few months.

Myth #2

Only the best students can get scholarships!

Some people believe that you have to be an academic “superstar” to receive scholarships. In fact, although you should always try to get good grades, you don’t have to be a straight-A student, an athlete, or get high SAT scores to receive financial aid. Many scholarships depend on the quality of the essay you are often asked to write, the community service work that you’ve done in your school or community, and the ability that you have to write about that work and what it means to you. If you don’t feel you’ve done anything that’s worthy of recognition, you still have time to go out there and volunteer! Don’t be afraid to seek out the financial aid counselors at your school - they’re there to help you at all stages of your college experience, from being a prospective student to your senior year in college. Do your best work and get excellent letters of recommendation. Know and meet all the financial aid deadlines and seek out scholarships online and in your community.

Myth #3

You need to know exactly what you want to do when you grow up before you begin college.

Approximately 70% of college students change their minds about what they want to study before

graduating. Hopefully, you can keep an open mind as you head off to college and research different career ideas so that at the end of your first or second year, you can begin to narrow down the possibilities about what career to pursue. Then you can begin choosing your classes based on what you have explored during your first few quarters. Most students find it to be a journey of discovery.

Myth #4

If you don’t go to college now, you will never go later.

While it is true that some students who don’t go to college right after high school have difficulty attending later on, students who return after a pause in their education often bring great experience and skills to their college work because of what they did with their time off from school. However, in general it’s wise for most students to apply to colleges of interest during their senior year. Remember, you can always decide not to attend, but once you miss college admissions deadlines, the possibility of being selected after applying late is much lower. Applying late in the year also means less chance of being awarded a sufficient financial aid package.

Myth #5

You should go to the most famous college that accepts you.

Actually, you should go to the college that fits you best! If it happens to be a famous college (like Harvard or Yale), that’s fine. However, fit has to do with you feel when you’re on the college campus. It has to do with finding a college where your learning style matches the philosophy of the college and how the professors teach. It’s important to ask yourself questions such as:

- Do I like big schools or small schools?
- What is the class size that would fit me best?
- Do I want to go to school in a rural or urban area?

Where you decide to go should be based on an overall sense of fit, not just a particular brand name. If the college isn’t a good match for your individual needs, you may be unhappy regardless of how well-known the college is.

Myth #6

You shouldn’t go to community college unless you want a vocational-technical career.

Actually, you can start out at a community college and end up in any career if, like many community college students, you transfer to a four-year college after graduation. Most community colleges have curriculum and degrees specifically created to meet the requirements necessary to transfer to a four-year institution. For many students, this is an affordable path toward the goal of eventually earning a four-year degree. If you decide to go this route, make sure you work early on with counselors at your community college to confirm that you are on the right track to transfer all your credits.

Myth #7

You can’t attend college if you’re undocumented.

Actually, in many states there are ways to attend college even if you are not a citizen of the United States and do not have documents. You can always call our office for more information. Also, check out the websites provided here and on the next page for more information and resources:

www.maldef.org
www.getreadyforcollege.org