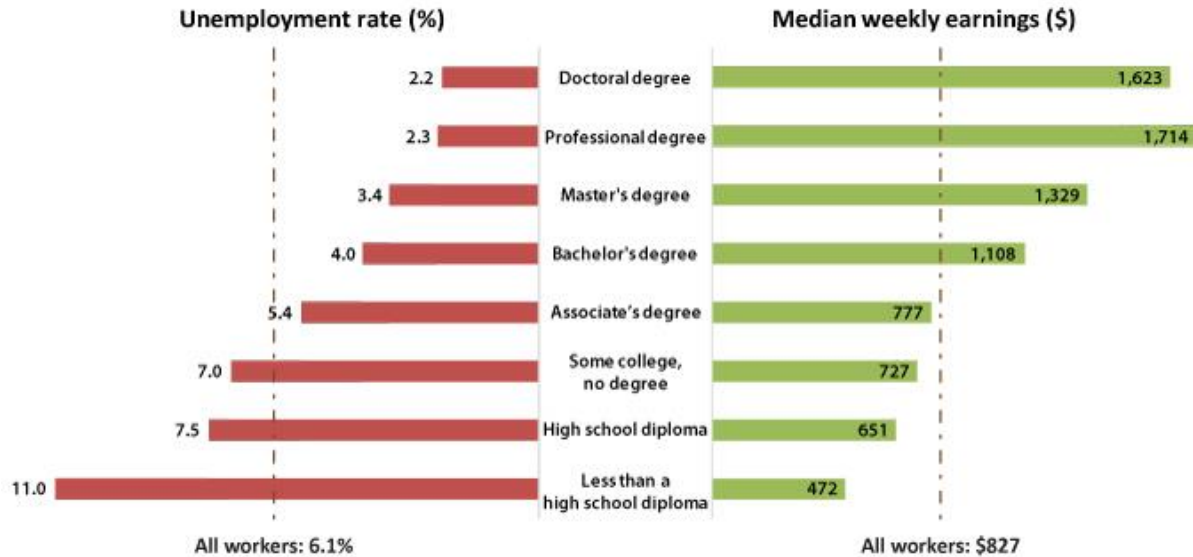


## Why College?

When students are asked why they choose to attend college they often respond with a variation of “To get a good job.” The chart below shows the financial benefits of obtaining a degree.



Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey 2013

It is easy to see that a college degree is a good long term investment. Our culture traditionally views a college education as an opportunity to obtain a higher standard of living and for many to improve social class. Many view a college degree as the first step to achieving the American Dream.

But college is about more than learning skills for a future career. The ancient Greeks and Romans viewed higher education as a means to prepare people to be good citizens and contributing members of society. People today still view college as a place to learn critical thinking skills and to learn to be an educated citizen. It is often thought that an educated population benefits all of society.

Finally, people also view college as a time to meet new people and explore different ideas than those they grew up with. Universities can be a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions, ideas, and activities. Being a part of such a community often gives people a chance to explore all of these in a safe and structured environment.

While getting a good job, becoming a critical thinker, and exploring new ideas are important outcomes of obtaining a degree, it is important to be specific when setting long term goals. By listing all the possible advantages of obtaining a specific goal, you can begin to visualize its completion. Having many specific and smaller written outcomes can help you see the everyday benefits of attending college as opposed to one long term abstract goal.

*In pairs, small groups, or as a class discuss why these ideas about attending college might be important to you.*

Below is a list of possible reasons why a person might attend college. Consult the list below and then make your own list of reasons why you are attending college. Rank your top five advantages in order of importance. You should consider revisiting this list on a regular basis—reminding yourself of the reasons why you have chosen to attend college will help you stay connected to your goals.

**Examples**



**Your Reasons**



Advantages of Attending College	Five most important advantages of attending college
I'll make my family proud	1)
I'll be part of an educated citizenry	2)
I'll become an analytical thinker	3)
I'll be able to become (insert chosen career)	4)
I'll be making an investment in my future income	5)
I'll have a career with advancement opportunities	
I'll be able to buy the house/car of my dreams	<b>Additional advantages</b>
I'll have a better standard of living	1)
I'll make connections that will help me in my future career	2)
I'll have an opportunity to join a fraternity/sorority/clubs	3)
I'll socialize with people who have similar interests/values as I do	4)
I'll make lifelong friends	5)
I'll have the opportunity to meet people with different backgrounds and cultures	
I'll have more time in school before I begin working everyday	
I'll get to learn about subjects that interest me	
I'll have the opportunity to learn about many new and different subjects.	

*In pairs, small groups, or as a class discuss why these advantages of attending college are important to you. Why are some advantages important to you that may not be important to your classmates?*

## Goals

Every great plan may have begun with a vague idea, but eventually it had to develop into an obtainable goal. Like a building, a goal must have a blueprint in order to be obtainable.

Now that you have listed and discussed some of the advantages of attending college, the next step is to format those reasons into achievable goals. In order to get the most of your college experience, it is not simply enough to say, "I am excited to have the opportunity to meet new people." You must make an actual plan to make sure you get the most of your college experience. Like building a house, all the details should be planned out in a blue-print before any actual construction takes place. The goals you set should be SMART goals. That is, they should be:

<b>S</b>	Specific
<b>M</b>	Measurable
<b>A</b>	Attainable
<b>R</b>	Relevant
<b>T</b>	Time Bound

Spend some time thinking about the advantages you listed for attending college. How can you formulate the advantages from a vague idea into a SMART goal?

For example, if one of the advantages you listed was "I'll be able to meet new people" your goal may be to join a club. In order for this to become a SMART goal you might format it like this:

<b>Advantage: Meet New People</b>	
<b>Specific</b>	I'll join the math club
<b>Measurable</b>	I will make sure to attend at least half of the scheduled meetings
<b>Attainable</b>	They meet on Tuesday nights. I don't have class on Tuesday, so that's not a problem. I'll have to ask to have that night off work.
<b>Relevant</b>	Since I am a math major, this goal will help me with my studies, help me meet like-minded people, and hopefully introduce me to people who I can network with for jobs as come close to graduating.
<b>Time-bound</b>	I will look up information about the club and its meetings before schools starts because I know as soon as classes begin I will probably be focused on my new classes. I will note when the first two meetings are in my planner and make sure I am available to attend at least one of them.

Spend some time thinking about two goals you would like to obtain by the **end of your first semester**.  
List is below in the SMART format:

<b>Specific</b>	
<b>Measurable</b>	
<b>Attainable</b>	
<b>Relevant</b>	
<b>Time-bound</b>	

<b>Specific</b>	
<b>Measurable</b>	
<b>Attainable</b>	
<b>Relevant</b>	
<b>Time-bound</b>	

Now list two more goals you would like to achieve in the **next one to two years**:

<b>Specific</b>	
<b>Measurable</b>	
<b>Attainable</b>	
<b>Relevant</b>	
<b>Time-bound</b>	

<b>Specific</b>	
<b>Measurable</b>	
<b>Attainable</b>	
<b>Relevant</b>	
<b>Time-bound</b>	

Finally, list one goal you would like to achieve in the **next five years**:

<b>Specific</b>	
<b>Measurable</b>	
<b>Attainable</b>	
<b>Relevant</b>	
<b>Time-bound</b>	

*In pairs, small groups, or as a class discuss your goals. How do your goals differ from your classmates? How are they similar?*