

TWO YEAR COLLEGE VS. FOUR YEAR COLLEGE

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

About

Although four-year schools get all the media hype, many high school graduates head right to a two-year institution. Looking at the facts, it's no surprise why. Cheaper, quicker, and highly vocational, two-year schools offer students the chance to start their careers sooner and with less (or no) debt. You can also use a two-year school as a launching point to start earning your bachelor's degree.

Who Goes There

Students looking to go directly into a trade or technical vocation, those with blemished high school transcripts looking to work their way into a four-year school, and students who simply want to save money on their general education courses before transferring to a more expensive four-year institution.

What You'll Take

Depending on your degree program, two-year students typically either focus on taking general pre-requisite courses that can transfer to a four-year institution or courses in their specific trade. Since community colleges are closely linked to area industries, students will find a wide array of courses that cater directly to the local job market.

Other Learning Opportunities

In addition to in-class learning, two-year college students frequently take on apprenticeships and internships within their local community. Beyond getting an insider's look at their future job, interns and apprentices also gain valuable industry connections they can use to land a job upon graduation.

The Cost Factor

Here is where two-year institutions shine. Since most two-year colleges are designed for commuters, students are responsible for finding their own housing and get to avoid the high costs of room and board. Two-year students get a huge break on tuition as well.

According to the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees at a two-year school is only \$3,131, just over one-third of the cost for a year at a four-year public institution.

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

About

Get ready to make an investment. Students who put the time and money into a four-year education will reap the benefits throughout their lives. Though four-year schools require at least twice the amount of time as two-year schools AND three times the tuition, they offer students on- and off-campus learning opportunities you simply can't find anywhere else.

Who Goes There

Those who want a well-rounded education and a flexible degree. While four-year students are required to take a much broader range of courses than two-year vocational students, four-year students graduate with degrees that can be used for a wide spectrum of jobs in the real world.

What You'll Take

Everything—math, biology, English, history, even music therapy. Although four-year students typically spend the first two years taking generalized courses then the last two years taking courses in their major, students are free to take electives in any field of study.

Other Learning Opportunities

This is where four-year institutions shine. In addition to in-class learning, four-year institutions offer an enormous spectrum of on- and off-campus learning opportunities. On campus you can attend performances, cultural events, and guest lecture series, as well as participate in student-run clubs and honor societies. Students also go off campus for service-learning projects, study abroad trips, internships, cooperative education programs, and field trips.

The Cost Factor

Get ready to cough it up. The College Board reports that the average cost of one year of in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year school is \$8,655. Tack on another \$9,205 in room and board costs and you're looking at an average yearly bill of \$17,860. For private school students, the situation is even worse. The average private school student pays \$29,056 in tuition and fees per year and \$10,462 in room and board for a grand total of \$39,518. While four-year college students are forced to fork over the dough now, they'll reap the financial benefits later with higher salaries in the future.