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Why College? Making the Decision

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Why College?: Making the Decision

By

José R. García

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract

A four year college degree may be one of the largest investments a person can make in their lifetime in terms of the time, effort, and money. Making this personal investment may be life-changing, which is why it is so important that one take the decision making process to attend college seriously. This study sought to investigate how and why students decide to pursue an undergraduate college degree. Undergraduate students were surveyed with a series of questions in hopes of acquiring a better understanding of what factors they take into account in their decision making process. The hypothesis was that students do not engage in a comprehensive college decision making process as they should. Results indicated that most students believe to have dedicated an appropriate amount of time and effort investigating their options and making the decision to pursue a college degree. Implications of this study suggest that most students are satisfied with their decision to attend college; however, a low percentage of the undergraduate students surveyed considered alternatives to attending college right after graduating high school. Further and refined research studies are proposed.

Keywords: *why college, deciding on college, post high school options.*

To College or Not to College: That is the question

How might a young adult prepare for a career after completing their formal education in high school? Well, the all-too-common answer to this question tends to be to continue with even more education. Students are told to go to college, find something they are passionate about, get a degree, and use said degree to land a well-paying job. Students grow to believe that a college degree is a sure thing and the key to success. This may have been near accurate advice in the past, but it is not exactly the status quo today. It seems as if to follow this process is so institutionalized that it has become a part of “the American way” of doing things or “the American dream” that society continues to promote the idea that a four year college degree is the answer to financial stability and the ideal career.

An unfortunate mistake is made when believing that the purpose or direct outcome of achieving a college degree is a well-paying, stable job. Although it may help to have a college degree on a résumé for job applications, it is not a guarantee. The primary goal and purpose of most liberal arts schools is not to produce competent employees, it is to develop scholars. Here lies a fundamental issue with the message young adults are receiving today, which causes them to think of higher education as career development rather than the opportunity to expand on personal knowledge and critical thinking skills. There is a misalignment between what the college is offering students and what students expect they are receiving through their college education.

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The Perks and Hurts of College

For decades people have debated what end goal and purpose higher education should and does serve. Due to increasingly high tuition rates and student debt this topic is being discussed more than ever. Not only that but the value of a college degree has been questioned to the point where extensive studies have been conducted in attempts to place a monetary ROI (return on investment) on an array of degrees. In 2012, The Washington Post published an article titled *The Value of a College Degree vs. the Debt It Takes to Earn It* in response to recent educational trends. The article reads:

Tuition costs rise twice as fast as typical inflation, making college less affordable for average Americans with every passing year. Faced with such high costs and near-universal financial hardship, students can find it difficult to determine whether college is actually worth the price tag.

(Strauss)

Besides having a financial impact on students' lives, some arguments support that higher education offers non-financial benefits that contribute to graduates' success. However, it is difficult to assess the intrinsic value a college education due to variable and sometimes unquantifiable factors. *The Value of a College Degree* published by American Radio Works in 2013 comments that "having a degree is not just about economic advantages"; graduates tend to be more "satisfied with their jobs," raise smarter children, and lead healthier lives (Hanford). Despite the existence of studies that support Hanford's article, current and projected tuition costs, unemployment rates, and student loan debt continue to propagate the debates on what the outcome of a college

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education should be. Do “universities and colleges exist to teach people general knowledge, or to train them for specific jobs?” (Marcus).

The Times, They Are a-Changin’

Times have changed, and so has the job market. *The Value of a College Degree* notes that “in 1937, just 15 percent of high school students went on to higher education” but “college enrollment surged” after World War II (largely due to the GI Bill). In 1970, degrees were not required for most jobs, so most people were not attending college. The article continues:

In 1970, only 26 percent of middle-class workers had any kind of education beyond high school. Today, nearly 60 percent of all jobs in the U.S. economy require higher education. The wage gap between people who have a bachelor’s degree and people with only a high school diploma has nearly doubled since the early 1980s. (Hanford)

The increasing wage gap and the demand for highly educated workers increased the desirability of having a college degree. These conditions generated higher college enrollment rates. In 1970, only .02 percent “of taxi drivers had college degrees” (Carlson), and in 1973, college graduates made up only 16 percent of the U.S. workforce while high school graduates made up 40 percent (TIME). Now about 40 percent of the population has some kind of college degree (Hanford), and about 15 percent of “taxi drivers have college degrees” even though their employment does not require their level of education (Carlson). Due to the lack of degree adaptability for some graduates, the

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amount overqualified workers increased in several fields of work. All things considered, at least the overqualified workers were employed. By 1994 only 4.4 percent of BA's were outright unemployed, unfortunately that number grew to 11.3 percent of unemployed graduates (Weissman). It is projected that by 2020, "65 percent of all jobs will require postsecondary education" (TIME). This statistic encourages students to attend college, but which degrees will get those jobs?

Today an issue caused by the existence of overqualified workers is that many college grads are filling jobs that would typically be occupied by high school students and high school grads. "Overqualified" means that employees have a level of education and experience that exceeds what is necessary for their occupation. It is estimated that 284,000 Americans with a BA or higher are now working in jobs that pay minimum wage or less, this is double the amount than pre-recession. Only about 52 percent of all college graduates "are in occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or more (Weissman). In terms of job security benefits, a college degree is simply not worth what it used to be. This is largely due to an overqualified and competitive workforce. However, statistics demonstrate that one is still better off having some college education than not, even if that means taking entry level jobs.

It is important to note how many workers are overqualified for their employment because of the potentially wasted time and money invested towards an unnecessary education. One might even be worse off having to bear the cost of a college degree when it does not contribute to a higher pay or type of employment. In 2012, Time Magazine published an article titled *Degrees of Difficulty* which illustrated the rising cost of tuition

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and the increase in student debt throughout the nation. The average cost of tuition at private schools was \$21,240 in 2009 (Ansel, Broh), and \$28,500 in 2011, while the average tuition at a four year public school was \$8,244 in 2011 (TIME). In order to make ends meet students often have to rely on loans in order to pay for college. The percentage of graduates with student loan debt went up from 46 percent in 1993 to 66 percent in 2011. The average debt accumulated by graduates was \$14,500 in 1993, \$25,250 in 2010 (Sanburn), and \$26,600, while the default interest rate in 1999 was 5.6 percent and 9.1 percent in 2010 (TIME). The combination of higher student debt with higher unemployment rates is to blame for a tough market for college grads. In 2010, Time Magazine conducted a web-based survey of 1,000 adults and 540 senior administrators from colleges and universities titled the *Higher-Education Poll*. The survey results revealed that about 74 percent of college leaders thought the average amount of debt incurred for a college degree was reasonable while 55 percent of the public thought the debt load was too high (Sanburn). This reflects a difference in college valuation by college leaders and the general public. According to The Washington Post, “most experts agree that one’s total education debt should be less than one’s expected income the year after graduation” (Strauss). This much debt is becoming harder to achieve. “There’s been an inordinate amount of cost increase for both public and private education that makes students have to think about the return on investment, especially since so much of that investment is borrowed money” said an Ivy Tech engineer to Time Magazine (Marcus). This may explain why some of the intrinsic values associated with a college education are so often overlooked, and instead financial factors play a bigger role in value consideration by the general public. When asked if college was worth the price, Time’s

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Higher-Education Poll reflected that an “80 percent of U.S. adults” believe “that at many colleges, the education students receive is not worth what they pay for it” and a surprising 41 percent of college leaders agreed with the public (Sanburn). Perhaps it is time to reevaluate what attending college does for students and how the cost can be best justified and be invested most efficiently and appropriately.

In 1969 John D. Millet wrote an article called *Value Patterns and Power Conflict in American Higher Education* with points still relevant in today’s education system.

Millet wrote:

Let me state emphatically and unequivocally that the basic mission of a university in our society is professional education, the educational preparation of youth of appropriate talent to staff the professions of our society... The essential element in professional education is obviously the identification of the professions in society which require professional education for their practice. Another important element of course, is the determination of the content of what shall be deemed appropriate education for a profession; that is, what combination of specialized learning, humane learning, experience, and demonstrated skill shall be considered necessary for qualification to engage in professional practice.

(Minter, Snyder, 4)

This puts into question the ultimate goal for college education in developing leaders and professionals. Furthermore, Millet challenges college educators who believe education is merely for intellectual development without application in specialized professions.

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These persons appear to believe that the purpose of education is to cultivate the academic talents of an intellectual elite, to develop educational ability as a personal adornment and not as a social utility...

These persons tend to think of higher education as enabling a few persons of outstanding intellectual ability to converse with one another; this appears to be sufficient social justification for its endeavors. (Minter, Snyder, 7)

Millet points out the misalignment in institutional goals from faculty and what most students seek out of a college education which they often see as preparation for a professional career after graduation.

College Is Still Worth It

Despite current tuition costs, student debt, loan interest rates, and high unemployment which take away from the appeal of a college education in comparison to the past, statistics show that a college degree continues to be a worthy investment. A commonly known statistic is that “those with bachelor’s degrees earn an average of \$1 million more over their lifetimes than those with only high school diplomas” (Strauss). Someone with a bachelor’s degree can expect to earn about \$2.27 million in a lifetime, whereas someone with some college might earn \$1.55 million, and a high school graduate can expect to earn about \$1.3 million. In other words, the average financial worth of a college degree turns out to be about \$970,000 (Strauss). While these may be enticing numbers one must not forget that these figures are only an average and that, although some graduates going into high-paying jobs will have more financial gain from

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their degrees, some graduates might find a degree to make little to no difference to them. In fact, there is a growing number of “college graduates who cannot find work.” The unemployed graduates with thousands of dollars in student loans may find it difficult to find any value in their college degrees (Strauss). This goes to show that attending college is by no means a promise for a better future; rather it is a career option with associated risks one should strongly consider.

Obviously there are going to be some degrees that are more in demand than others and thus have the potential of providing a better pay, and lower unemployment rates amongst other perks. According to Fidelity reports, this is one of the main reasons why some parents push their kids to pursue degrees in computer science, nursing, engineering, biology, and accounting (Sheehy). By equipping themselves with “hot skills” like the “ability to analyze and make sense of data, work through economic models, or understand what drives people to buy” and studying “workforce demand, employment potential, starting salaries, and income growth” college students may “ensure they get the best return on their investment. Students must also consider a degree’s lifetime earning potential because there are some, like nursing, that may have a high starting salary but not grow very much throughout the career, as opposed to a degree in physics, economics, or statistics which have a high potential for income growth. STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, and math, majors are known to have the highest return on investment and better employment rates, but they are not for anyone and everyone. For students who are not very analytically focused there are careers in sociology, political science, and anthropology that are also quite promising. Lastly, one of the best combinations a student can have is both strong communication and technical skills

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because they are in high demand (Sheehy).

Could the “College of Life” Be More Suiting?

Although it has already been established that, on average, it is still better to attend college than not, there are some people that continue to believe that college is not for everyone. One theory is that some of the most gifted and talented students that opt to attend college could fair better not attending college. This is due to the nature of certain students whom are already highly self-motivated and driven to be successful in combination with the opportunity costs associated with attending college. An article from The Choice section of The New York Times called *Why Go to College at All?* challenges a list of five justifying reasons of why people go to college after high school. The following are the main points made by the article:

Reason 1: Learning in a rigorous, supported educational environment.

What you learn in college is generally the same skill set that you learn in a traditional school environment; you learn how to follow directions, meet deadlines and memorize facts. When you go out into the world, there’s no structure like in college. Standardized testing is efficient but not effective. With some guidance, self-directed education forges on the principles of project-based learning.

Reason 2: Socializing and developing a network of friends and contacts.

The social world of college is a self-selecting, “largely homogenous bubble.” Campus demographics might be diverse but people are there for

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the same reason. People are increasingly using social media sources like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to make connections and nurture a professional network.

Reason 3: Status. All it takes to gain the benefits of a school's name brand is attending a semester or two; you do not have to finish there.

Reason 4: Self-directory. "College is a sandbox that gives you a false sense of reality. It's much more beneficial to learn what it means to direct your own life."

Reason 5: Attaining a marketable degree and developing earning potential. "It's not that college creates success, it's that smart and motivated people in our society tend to go to college." It is better to observe, shadow, and perhaps intern with professionals although some coursework or degree may be required for the profession or license. (Epstein Ojalvo).

One question posed by J. Marcus, author of the article *Who Needs Philosophy? Colleges Defend the Humanities Despite High Costs, Dim Job Prospects*, is: "What use will this education be to me in a rapidly changing world?" A record 88 percent of 2013's "freshmen at four-year colleges and universities say "getting a better job" is the top reason they enrolled in college." That was 17 percent higher than before the recession and more than "to learn about things that interest me." More than 60 percent of students said the goal of attending college was "to make more money," up 16 percent from 1976 (Marcus).

Why Students Go To College

Others believe that college is not just about the education or the diploma but “for better career opportunities and networking; the people you meet (in college) are going to be the people who are influential after you graduate.” Some students’ reason for attending college is a social stigma that makes them feel like a failure if they do not. One such student told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* “For me it was an option, but in my mind it was not an option, I feel that if I stayed home, I would be a statistic. I would be in the streets, in a graveyard, or in a jail. I didn’t to end up like everyone else” (Carlson).

Among the many issues that surround higher education is a disagreement between what college leaders and the general population consider to be the purpose and goal of higher education. *Time’s Higher-Education Poll* made this clear with the results it obtained after asking the general public and college leaders “What is the most important reason people should go to college?” The majority, 40 percent, of general public answered “To gain skills and knowledge for a career,” 17 percent answered “To gain a well-rounded general education,” 14 percent answered “To increase one’s earning power,” and 12 percent answered “To learn to think critically.” The college leaders on the other hand had 36 percent answer “To learn to think critically,” 21 percent answered “To gain skills and knowledge for a career,” 19 percent answered “To become an informed citizen in a global society,” and 14 percent answered “To gain a well-rounded general education” (Sanburn). Clearly, the goals from college leaders and the general public for students to attend college are incongruent. Most people go to college thinking they will gain the skills and knowledge they will need for a career while most of the faculty intends

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to teach their students to “think critically”. College leaders argue that what employers really seek from graduates is not specific job-related know-how, but such characteristics as critical thinking, capacity for innovation, and an ability to write and speak well. “For many people the liberal arts seem hoity-toity, but these are skills employers want.” “Being able to read things critically and then being able to articulate how you can change things going forward and assess things, the ability to work in teams – those skills are important everywhere.” 90 percent of corporate executives say they want employees with verbal and written communication skills, 75 percent want graduates who understand ethical decision-making, and 70 percent say they need creative and innovative workers (Marcus). An issue with this is that most students may not be aware of these expectations which can impact the logic and conscientiousness of how they make their educational choices. What some employers are doing with the education of their own employees does not coincide with college leaders’ arguments about what employers want. Amazon.com, for instance, last year launched a tuition-assistance program for full-time employees, but it will pay only for “courses that lead to technical and vocational certifications or associate’s degrees in eligible in-demand fields.” Amazon’s program did not reflect that employers valued liberal arts education any more, if as much, than any other type of education, especially technical and vocational education.

In respect to why students go to college, William E. Knox, Paul Lindsay, and Mary N. Kolb wrote the following in their book titled *Does College Make a Difference? Long Term Changes in Activities and Attitudes*:

College is supposed to do many things. Students typically seek through

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education jobs that are stable, well-paying and satisfying. Parents of all social classes want their children to have higher education credentials for their economic and career advantages. For many working-class families, this may mean a one- or two-year certificate at a local community college, or a four-year degree at a nearby state university. The more affluent class simply expects college attendance from earliest childhood, and a child who drops out, even temporarily, causes the parents grief. (Knox, Lindsay, Kolb, 2)

This book notes the pressure society puts on students to continue their education because without it they are deemed inferior to those with a college education.

Making the Decision

Making a decision on whether or not to attend college can be a very complex and overwhelming process. Even more, if one opts to pursue a college degree, how does one decide which college is the most appropriate? “The choices families make can significantly change the price they will pay for college as well as the value of their purchase. Yet, families often make these decisions with incomplete or late information, which can result in serious consequences” (Ansel, Broh). Families will want to know how much they will have to pay, which should take into consideration the student’s eligibility, the college’s financial aid resources, and the “priorities and methodology the college uses to determine the mix of grants, loans, and work opportunity” it will offer. Along with a closely approximated price tag, families need reliable information about institutional characteristics that carry value. This may include the average class size at the

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college, the college's average SAT scores, and the graduation rate. Although all of this information is freely accessible to families, they continue to "work with incomplete pricing and value information as they make one of the most important investments in their lives" (Ansel, Broh). Not only that, but accessing and collecting this amount of information from several institutions can be a difficult and time consuming task for students during their last year of high school.

Selecting a college to attend is an important and complex decision in itself, but equally as important is the choice between college and alternatives. As Carlson from the Chronicle of Higher Education writes: "kids in high school ought to be given realistic appraisals of what their chances of success in college will be" (Carlson). This is important because college is not necessarily the right choice, or the only choice, for everyone. It is clear that, on average, a college degree is still worth its cost despite existing financial obstacles. What is not clear just yet is what steps high school seniors take when deciding to attend college, and if so, which college. Why did most college students choose to attend college? How did they make that decision? What factors did they consider and which factors made the biggest difference? Did they consider any alternative to attending college? If so, how did they decide between those options? A further study may increase our understanding of the college decision making process of a high school senior and reveal more of what the average student is looking for in a college education. What do students value most in their educational investment?

A WOU Case Study

Today, students have a lot at stake when embarking on their journey towards a college degree. Many graduates bear a heavy amount of student loan debt, some students find it extremely difficult to achieve a level of employment consistent with their level of education, and others might not be able to complete their degree. It is due to the high amount of risks that students are taking when pursuing a college degree that the decision making process must be taken very seriously.

The present study seeks to investigate whether or not students today are thoroughly considering their post-high school options and giving their decision to pursue a college degree the important attention it deserves. Previous research implies that attending college can be a risky decision but ultimately a positive one if done right.

My hypothesis is that students today are not taking into account all factors and alternative options that exist when making the decision on whether or not to pursue a college degree. Furthermore this may be cause to dissatisfaction with the outcome of their education.

Method

A 20 question survey approved by Institutional Review Committee was used to collect information for this study from a total of 126 Western Oregon University undergraduate students. The survey question topics included occupational option exploration, decision-making process, decision reasoning, and outcome based on decision made. The Google-operated survey was sent to all Western Oregon University undergraduate students through an all-student e-mail and given two weeks to close. A copy of the survey questions used are available in appendix A.

100 (79%) of the survey participants were female and 26 (21%) were male. 12 (10%) of the participants were first year college students, 35 (28%) participants were second year students, 25 (20%) participants were third year students, 32 (25%) participants were fourth year students, and 22 (17%) participants were fifth year or more students.

Once the survey was closed and no longer accepting submissions, the collected data was compiled into an excel spreadsheet and then reformatted for user-friendly interpretation. The re-formatted survey results are available in Appendix B.

Results

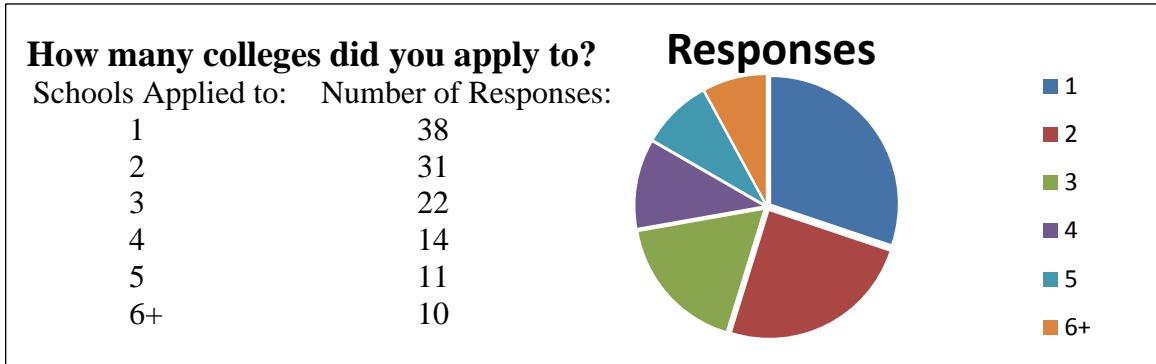
Exploration and Consideration of Alternative Options

One-hundred-twenty-six Western Oregon University undergraduate students completed the *Why College?: Making the Decision* survey. When questioned whether they attended college the school year immediately following their last year of high school, 118 (94%) of the students who took the survey responded that they did, while only the remaining eight students responded that they did not. In a follow-up question regarding attending college immediately after high school six out of the eight students who waited to attend college provided some feedback on how long and why they did not go to college immediately. A particular student noted that they did not begin their college career until they were 28 years old. One student answered that they took one complete “gap year.” Another student studied abroad for a year as an alternative to enrolling into a college in the U.S. right out of high school. One student did not want to go to college at the time so opted to start backpacking the nation for a year before joining the military and then began college towards the end of their contract with the military. Another student “did not know what to do or where (they) wanted to go, so (they) got a job,” and the remaining student waited a year and a half before enrolling into college.

Ninety-two (73%) of the 126 students surveyed answered that it was never a question of whether or not they would attend college, but where they would go to college. Only about six percent of students responded that they spent six months or more deciding whether to attend college immediately after high school or not, and about 20 percent spent less than six months considering that decision. Assuming of course that since all

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survey participants were enrolled in college at the time of their survey completion, the participants were asked how many colleges they applied to. The following diagram illustrates the results.



As demonstrated above, a great majority of students limited their college options to three or less, and 38 of them only applied to WOU. This prompts the question of whether the students were well aware of what the schools they were applying for had to offer and the existing implications (tuition, programs available, etc.) subject through enrollment. 36 percent of the surveyed students claimed to have researched the colleges they applied to extensively, 44 percent of students said they researched some of the schools they applied to more than others, and 16 percent of students answered that they did not do much research on the schools they applied to, while the remaining four percent did no research at all.

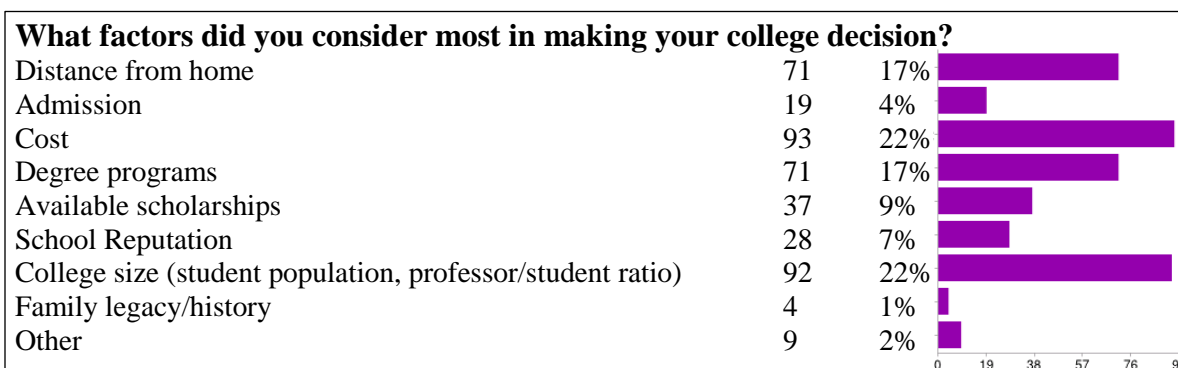
The students that claimed to have considered alternatives to attending college immediately after high school answered most commonly to have considered employment or a job search after high school. 23 percent of them answered they considered a non-specified “other,” while about twelve percent said they considered internships, technical school, service programs, and eleven percent of the 84 students who considered alternatives answered they thought about independent personal development options.

Making a Decision

In the survey students had the ability to demonstrate what methods they used to aid their decision making process by selecting one or more options provided, including a non-determined “other” option. Out of the 126 students who took the survey, most of them (94) claimed to have toured or visited the campus for the colleges they applied to. 80 of the students declared they did some research using pamphlets, online sources, or the school website. While 40 students met with advisors to discuss their options and 77 of them discussed and explored their options with family and friends. Only 15 students said they used other methods as well.

Considering that some high schools require students to meet with a counselor or advisor to discuss college options, students were asked if they did this and if so, how often. 44 participants said they met with someone once a term, while 34 participants said that they never met with anyone to discuss their college options. 15 replied that they met with an advisor or counselor once a month or more, 26 said they met with someone once a school year, and 4 answered “other”.

Out of curiosity, students were questioned what factors they took into consideration most when making their college decision. The following diagram illustrates the survey’s results to this question.



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As the illustration demonstrates, the top four factors taken into account when choosing a college to attend are cost, college size, distance from home, and degree programs.

The opinion of family and friends can be very influential in our decisions and for that reason survey participants were asked if their college decision was made completely independently or if there was a strong influence from others, or both. Based on the survey results, 40 participants claimed to have made their college decision independently. 59 participants said they made their decision with some influence from others but ultimately took ownership of what they decided. Finally 25 participants said their decision was strongly influenced by others, and 2 participants did not answer the question.

The following are examples of responses from students who claimed to have made their decision independently.

“It was never a question of if I would go to college, but where. I was never pressured into college by my friends and family, but I never considered any other alternatives. I’d always wanted to be a teacher, so it made perfect sense to continue my education.”

“Mainly by me. I traveled the nation after high school to learn more about myself, and then joined the military. After getting out, it became apparent quickly that without a degree, I would be chasing the nearly impossible target of middle class bliss, instead likely falling into the struggling private sector.”

The following are examples of responses from students who claimed they made their own decision but were also influenced by others.

“By both me and my family. There are two places you can go after high school, according to my family, military or college. If decided to neither then you can get your stuff and move out of the house. So I decided that college would be the better of the two options, and I wanted to make my family proud because they are the sun and stars of my life.”

“It was both. I wanted to go to college but I also felt a lot of pressure to attend college

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from my family. Primarily it was expected that I go. I also feel like to function in the real world I have to have a college degree to get anywhere. It seems kind of stupid that it's more a requirement now than a privilege."

Finally, the following are some examples of the responses from students who claimed to have been strongly influenced by others.

"My decision to attend college was made by myself, but was influenced by many factors out of my control. First of all, all my friends were doing it. As an admitted conformist, I wanted to attend college because I wanted to be where my friends were. I have always wanted to fit in, and thus I wanted to fit into the college scene, too. Furthermore, my high school promoted one fate after graduation: going to college. They gave us no other options. It was either go to college, or have no life. My high school teachers and counselors did not expose our other options, which includes but is not limited to trade school, culinary school, specialized schools, or no further education. My parents did not push me in one direction or another, but I had made my mind up to go to a four-year university because my friends were doing it and because my high school told me it was the best option. "

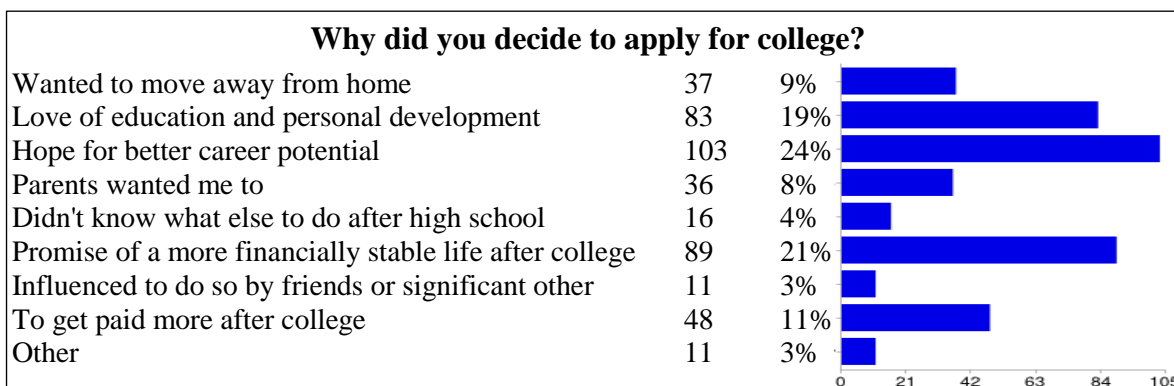
"It was just expected by my parents and teachers that college came after high school. I never thought anything else was an option. Whenever someone from my school mentioned taking a year off, teachers and parents scoffed and stated that after you take a year off you never go back and that it's just asking for failure."

"It was drilled into me in high school that college was the only way to get anywhere in life. I struggled to come up with the money to attend my first year immediately after high school and had to drop out after my first year because I could not afford to continue school."

Why Make a Decision on College?

An important aspect of the decision making process for students is of course the reason why students would consider attending college in the first place. The following question permitted students to select all the options that applied to the reasons for which they decided to attend college.

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**In Retrospect: Hindsight is 20/20**

In a retrospective manner students were asked to think back to before they attended college and determine whether they had a realistic idea of how much paying for their degree would cost. Of the 126 participants, 58 answered that they did in fact have a pretty realistic estimation of what their degree would cost them, while 67 of them answered that they did not have a realistic idea prior to attending college. The following are some examples of their responses.

“No. I knew people said it would cost a lot, but now I actually understand just how much. In high school I never had real experience managing money and understanding how much everything would be. Now I see it is a lot and it's stressful.”

“No, I believed that scholarships were more readily available for all. I have been able to cut costs through scholarships and work and feel fortunate that I owe the average. That being said, I still believe that a college degree costs more than most people anticipate.”

“Yes, because I did my research. The cost of college was one of the biggest influences on where I would be attending school, and I feel that I have made the right choice financially. I have had several opportunities for scholarships, and have not had much need for student loans, making it easier for me to start my life after I graduate.”

“Yes; which is part of the reason I hesitated. I am so thankful for the financial aid and grants that have been made available to me. It is such a blessing. Attending WOU was not as expensive as I assumed, and I am pleasantly surprised by this.”

Why College?: Making the Decision

It is also important to note whether making the decision to attend college is delivering what was expected and worth the trouble the students went through to pursue their degree. It is difficult to tell using this study because it surveys students that are still completing their degree. However, the participants were still asked if their college experience was delivering what they expected. A majority of the students surveyed, 91 of the them, answered that they were content with their college experience so far, while the remaining 35 students answered that their experience was not delivering what they expected. The following are example quotes from the students' answers.

“Yes, it's opened a lot of doors for me, helped me grow as a person and professional, and challenged me to go for opportunities I may not have before. I was kind of just expecting to take classes and hang out with friends, but instead I was opened up to job/volunteer opportunities, clubs, and activities I would have never expected. I got the impression that there would be tons of papers and that I would be at the library all the time, but hasn't turned out to be that intense.”

“I've gained much more practical, job-related experience than I expected. I expected that I would be memorizing things and going to classes I wasn't interested in, and come away with a lot of tangible facts (like high school). But instead, I've taken a lot more theory classes in subjects I'm actually interested in, and then I've been able to apply those theories to jobs outside of class.”

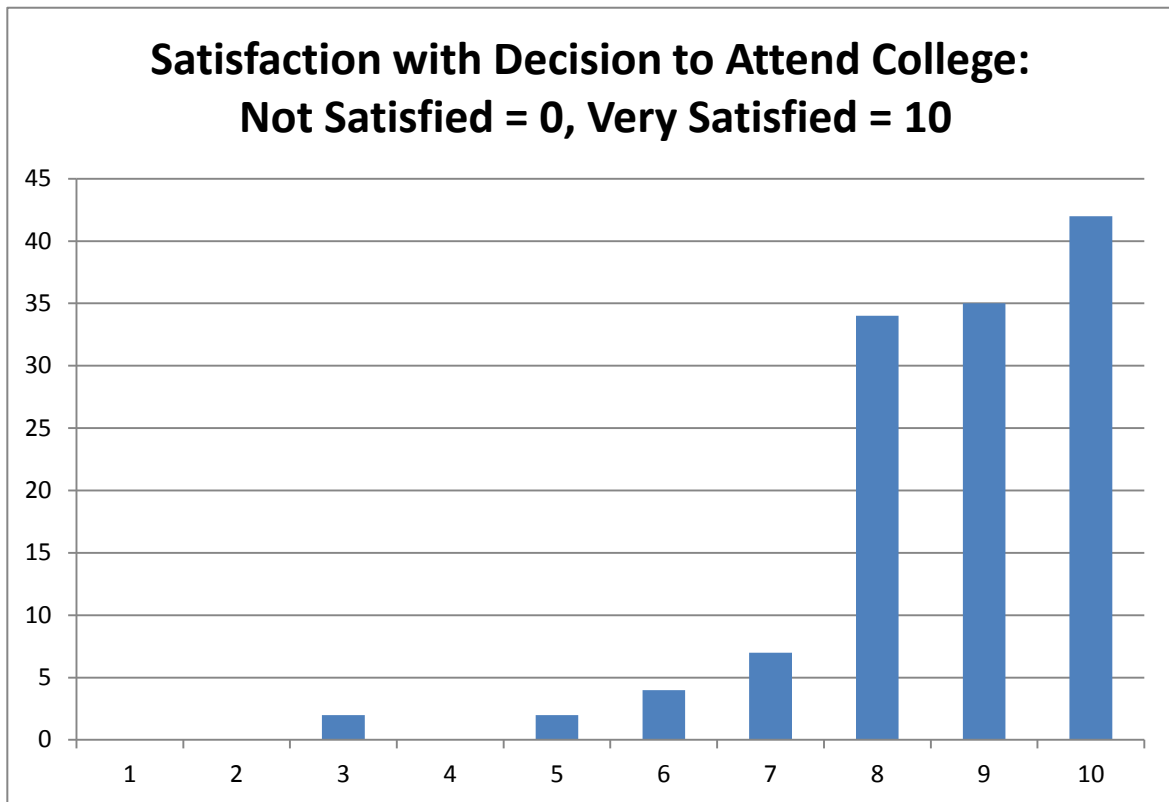
“Not at all. The cost is too high, I have loans, and I changed my major twice. Also, the more I attend college, the more I realize that I will probably need to get a masters in order to have a good chance at employment. This will be more time, money and constraint on my life. I have been searching for freedom at college, and have only found captivity due to loans and career expectations.”

“Well, not quite. In the 6 years of being a student, I still don't know what I learned; academically ... Personal growth has been outstanding though. Receiving a degree in personal growth sounds like a better option, really.”

When asked how satisfied they were with their decision to attend college on a scale from one to ten, ten being very satisfied, most students responded eight or higher.

Why College?: Making the Decision

The following chart illustrates the survey results based on participants' answers to this question.



There was a pretty even split between responses to the question of whether students would have done anything differently in their decision-making process if they were back in high school again. 64 (51%) participants answered that they would not have changed anything to their decision-making process, while 62 (49%) participants answered that they would have changed some things. The following are some examples of their responses.

“I would not have gone to college right away. I wish I had taken a year to work a regular job, and then traveled the following year. This would have set me up for going to college at age twenty, which in my opinion would be a more mature age for college. By that time I would have experienced the "real world" and would have had more of a chance to figure out what I want to do with my life. As it is, it took me over two years to choose a major, plus a lot more debt, in order to stay in college.”

Why College?: Making the Decision

“If I could go back and change things, I would have chosen to look into and take a gap year before starting school. Particularly for my mental health, that break would have been immensely beneficial.”

“Nothing, I researched my schools and made the best decision for where I was at in life. I went to a small private Christian school my freshman year on a sports scholarship and it was the best transition I could have ever had.”

Finally, one of the last questions the participants were asked was if they thought they put in enough time, effort, and interest into their post-high school options as they should have. Surprisingly, 62 participants answered that they did in fact consider their options thoroughly. 52 participants answered that they did not think they put in enough effort, time, or interest into considering their options, and 10 participants did not answer the survey question. The following are some examples of what the students answered to this question.

“No, I should have had a gap year, I had great academic maturity at 17 years, but not enough emotional maturity.”

“Yes, I think I did. I worked hard to search my options and made sure that I made the decision that overall made me the happiest, I didn't base my decision on other people's opinions.”

“No. I just always thought I would go to college. It wasn't a question. I never considered other options, other than a few thoughts about not going to college and traveling instead.”

Limitations and Suggestions

The present study was limited to current undergraduate students and did not take into account the experience of current high school students who are experiencing their own decision-making process currently. This study also did not include any input from college graduates with post-college experience. The reason why this kind of input may have been valuable is due to the different points of perspective and how that might impact survey participants' opinions.

As a suggestion for further investigation I would suggest isolating demographics such as first-generation college students, and non-traditional students to analyze how the results for those groups might differ. As stated before, it would also be great to get feedback from different perspectives such as that of college graduates and high school students.

Conclusion

As college tuition costs and student loan debt rise while unemployment and underemployment rates are high students must take great consideration of the costs and benefits of attending college. College may not be for everyone, therefore alternative options must be explored and considered without any shame associated by considering anything other than college.

This study has demonstrated that only about fifty percent of the college students surveyed considered to have gone through a thorough and sufficient decision-making process. Surprisingly however, a great majority of the students happen to be content with their decision to attend college and consider it to have been the appropriate decision for themselves.

Why College?: Making the Decision

Students recognize that the job market is increasingly competitive and if college is an option for them, then they must take advantage of the opportunity because it seems to continue being a worthwhile decision in the long run.

For several students, college was a requirement in order to have a realistic opportunity of achieving the career of their choice and it makes perfect sense for them to pursue a college degree in that case. For this reason, this study may be in a way somewhat biased because only current college students who participated in this study voluntarily were surveyed.

Appendix A

Survey Questions

Why College?

I am conducting this survey/study as part of my investigation for my thesis about the decision students make to attend college. I am focusing on how students make the decision, and why. Please complete this survey only if you feel comfortable in doing so, and if you agree to permit my use of this information in my thesis. Any and all information I collect from this survey will remain anonymous and will not be stored with any attachment to your identity. I appreciate your cooperation.

Gender:

- Male
 Female

Current year in college:

- Year 1
 Year 2
 Year 3
 Year 4
 Year 5+

How satisfied are you with your decision to attend college? (in general, not specifically WOU)

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| Not Satisfied | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Extremely Satisfied |

Did you attend college the school year immediately following your last year in high school?

- Yes
 No

Was the decision to attend college made solely by YOU? Or was your decision strongly influenced by others? (i.e. parents, family, friends, teachers, etc.) Or both?

Please explain.

Why College?: Making the Decision

How much time do you estimate you spent thinking about and deciding whether to go to college or not?

(Note: NOT how much time you spent deciding WHICH college to attend.)

- It was never a question
- Approx. one month or less
- Approx. one-three months
- Approx. three-six months
- Approx. six months-one year
- Over a year
- Other:

How much time do you estimate you spent deciding which college/s to apply to?

- WOU was my only option
- Approx. one month or less
- Approx. one - three months
- Approx. three - six months
- Approx. six months - one year
- Approx. 1 - 2 years
- Over 2 years
- Other:

How many colleges did you apply to?

Why did you decide to apply for college?

Please check the top three that apply.

- Wanted to move away from home
- Love of education and personal development
- Hope for better career potential
- Parents wanted me to
- Didn't know what else to do after high school
- Promise of a more financially stable life after college
- Influenced to do so by friends or significant other
- To get paid more after college
- Other:

Why College?: Making the Decision

Describe the decision making process you used to reach a conclusion on your decision to go to college.

Please check all that apply.

- Research (pamphlets, online sources, school website, etc.)
- Campus visits/tours
- Met with advisers
- Discussed and explored options with friends/family
- Other:

Did you consider any alternatives to attending college? If so, what?

Please check all that apply.

- Employment/Job Search
- Internships
- Technical School
- Service Programs
- Independent personal development
- Other:

Did you meet with a counselor or adviser to discuss your college options?

- Yes, regularly (once a month or more)
- A little bit (once a term)
- Once a school year
- No, I never did
- Other:

After graduating high school, did you refrain from attending college the following Fall term? If so, how long?

For example: Did you wait a year after graduating high school before attending college?

How many colleges did you apply for and why?

Why College?: Making the Decision

Did you research the schools you applied for?
(i.e. read brochures, explored their website, sought out more information, etc.)

- Yes, extensively
- Some more than others
- Not much
- No
- Other:

What factors did you consider most in making your college decision?
Please check the top 3 options that most apply.

- Distance from home
- Admission
- Cost
- Degree programs
- Available scholarships
- School Reputation
- College size (student body population/professor to student ratio)
- Family legacy/history
- Other:

Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently in your decision making process if you were back in high school again? If so, what? Please explain.

Is your college experience delivering what you expected? Why or why not? Please explain.

Do you think you put in enough effort, time, and interest into your post-high school options? (While you were still enrolled in high school.) This includes potential job/career opportunities, internships, technical schools, and colleges.

Before attending college, did you have a realistic idea of how much your degree would cost you?

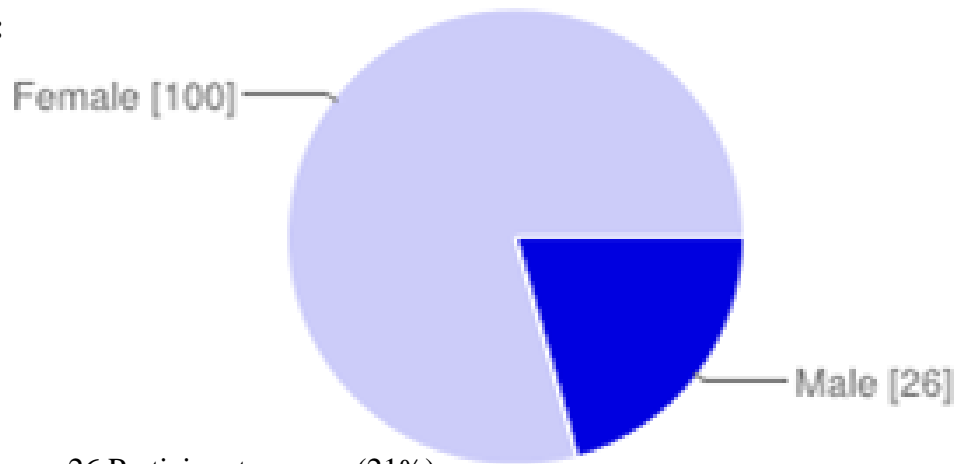
If so, did you have a plan on you would pay for your degree? Please explain.

Appendix B

Survey Results

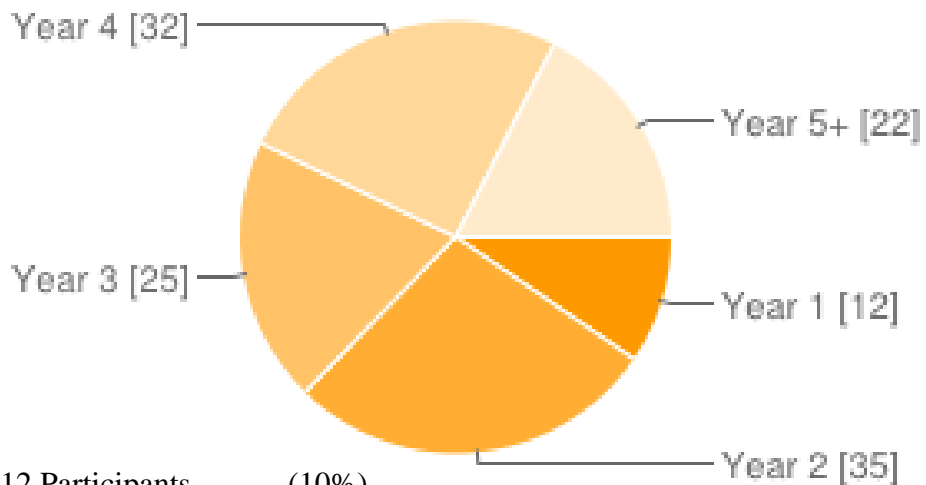
126 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

Gender:



Male:	26 Participants	(21%)
Female:	100 Participants	(79%)

Current year in college:



Year 1:	12 Participants	(10%)
Year 2:	35 Participants	(28%)
Year 3:	25 Participants	(20%)
Year 4:	32 Participants	(25%)
Year 5+:	22 Participants	(17%)

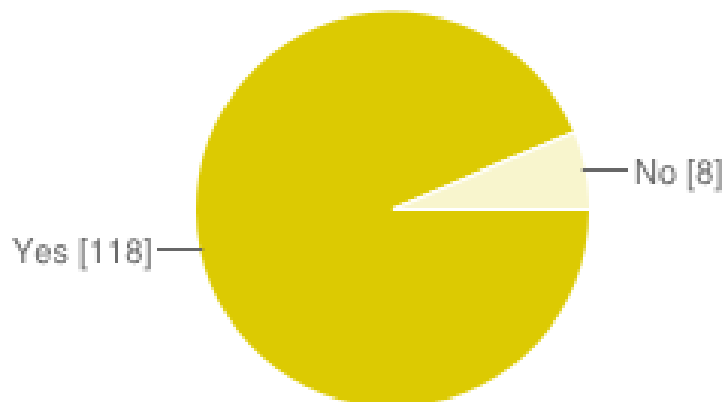
Why College?: Making the Decision

How satisfied are you with your decision to attend college? (in general, not specifically WOU)



Did you attend college the school year immediately following your last year in high school?

YES: 118 Respondents (94%)
NO: 8 Respondents (6%)



Why College?: Making the Decision

Was the decision to attend college made solely by YOU? Or was your decision strongly influenced by others? (i.e. parents, family, friends, teachers, etc.) Or both?

40 participants claimed their decision to be made completely independently.
59 participants claimed their decision to be based on own will and influence from others.

25 participants claimed their decision to be strongly influenced by others.

2 participants did not respond to the question.

Student	Response
1	I knew I wanted to go to school, but my parents really influenced me and helped me through the process.
2	The final decision to attend college was solely mine, but I was definitely influenced by my mentors growing up. I knew most careers I wanted required a four year degree.
3	I felt like I didn't have any other option; therefore, my parents had a strong influence in my college path. My parents wanted me to have a better life, so they knew I needed to go to college.
4	I never really thought about going to college even though both of my parents themselves chose to further their educations after high school. There was never any pressure in my home to go to college. The pressure to apply for colleges came from my peers, teachers and advisors. Mostly I believe applying for college was a social decision. Many of my friends were applying and there was a feeling that I may get left behind or that they would see me as less motivated. I wanted to fit in with my friends so I collected applications and submitted them even though I had no passion or motivation to go to college. I just didn't want to be the only person in my circle of friends who didn't have an acceptance letter to show off.
5	I wanted to go, but my parents were a big factor as well.
6	It was influenced by the teaching program and my brother attended this university as well and gave it good reviews.
7	My parents pushed pretty heavy for me to attend college
8	Other people (teachers/parents) had always talked to me about college and always assumed I would go.
9	The decision was made by me, but if I had not made that decision I have little doubt that my family would have pressured me to pursue higher education.
10	It was always part of the plan that I would attend college. I knew from a young age that I wanted to become a teacher. To achieve this goal I knew I needed to attain an education.
11	I always knew that I was going to go to college but there was always a lot of encouragement from my parents and teachers.
12	Yeah, most by me.
13	Both; I knew I wanted to go to college after high school for myself, but I knew that it was available to me through my parents' encouragements.
14	I wanted to go to college, but I also wanted to work. My parents convinced me to go to school first, and to get a job whenever i think i can handle the stress of both.
15	My mom wanted me to go to a community college near our house, but I knew I belonged at a University. I pushed and pushed and made it here, almost completely on my own with a butt load of loans.
16	By myself, my parents did not care what my plans were after I graduated high school.
17	It was a mixture of both me and my parents.
18	I had a lot of support in order to get me to a place where I could attend college: Mom, friends, teachers, counselors, Upward Bound... But I also really wanted College to be part of my future

Why College?: Making the Decision

19	By myself. Family influence, but a four-year school was my decision, my family wanted to send me to Community College.
20	both.
21	The decision was my own, but it was greatly influenced my parents, siblings, teachers, counselors, classmates, etc...
22	My Dad is a High School Teacher so from an early age he really preached the ideals of the importance of and education. That was the big influence in my life about college. But I did decide that I wanted to go.
23	<p>It's a mixture of both. I grew up with college as an absolute expectation. Because I was always in honors classes and in fast-track options for classes (since literally like first grade), college was constantly being talked about and I really didn't think there was another option for me. I wanted to continue my learning, experience a university and that community, and make myself more desirable for future jobs.</p> <p>However, that influence of parents and teachers was definitely there and very strong, but it meshed with my own desire of wanting to go.</p>
24	I went to a college prep school, where they had a 99% assurance rate that their students went to college. It was expected, and ultimately, I followed through on that.
25	Both- myself, parents, teachers
26	My decision to attend college was influenced by family and teachers, but knowing continuing my education was my choice, I made the final decision to attend fully on my own.
27	I mostly made the decision myself, but there was still a little pressure from my parents, who always assumed I would go to college.
28	Family influenced my decision, but the ultimate decision was made by me.
29	My decision to attend college was in part my decision, and in part influenced by my parents. The attitude taken growing up was that I would be going to college; there weren't really any other options.
30	It was just expected by my parents and teachers that college came after high school. I never thought anything else was an option. Whenever someone from my school mentioned taking a year off, teachers and parents scoffed and stated that after you take a year off you never go back and that it's just asking for failure.
31	It was never an option for me, from a young age, my parents always told us that we would go to college. So, I have never had to make a decision regarding whether or not I wanted to go to college.
32	It was never a question of if I would go to college, but where. I was never pressured into college by my friends and family, but I never considered any other alternatives. I'd always wanted to be a teacher, so it made perfect sense to continue my education.
33	I feel that it was both. Growing up I was always told I would be going to college and get a degree. When the time came to apply I didn't think there was another option and I didn't want another option, I wanted to go to university.
34	Influenced by family, friends, and community, but I always planned on going.
35	My decision to attend college was made by myself, but was influenced by many factors out of my control. First of all, all my friends were doing it. As an admitted conformist, I wanted to attend college because I wanted to be where my friends were. I have always wanted to fit in, and thus I wanted to fit into the college scene, too. Furthermore, my high school promoted one fate after graduation: going to college. They gave us no other options. It was either go to college, or have no life. My high school teachers and counselors did not expose our other options, which includes but is not limited to trade school, culinary school, specialized schools, or no further education. My parents did not push me in one direction or another, but I had made my mind up to go to a four-year university because my friends were doing it and because my high school told me it was the best option.

Why College?: Making the Decision

36	The decision was mine, however all my life my mother always told me I'd go to college.
37	It was mainly me making the decision to go to college. I knew I needed to go if I want a good job, and a better life.
38	There was definitely outside influence, primarily from family. I never considered taking a "gap year" before starting college; going straight from high school to college was always the plan, even if it wasn't specifically discussed. It was just expected, and I expected it for myself.
39	In the general sense to attend college, the decision was solely my own. However, the decision to attend WOU was influenced by friends attending the school as well, along with scholarships and opportunities like the Honors program.
40	It was made by me, but this was largely due to influence from family and our society as a whole.
41	Money. I am only 5K in debt this year. My brother has also attended here. The CJ program was another reason.
42	It was always the expectation that I would attend college, but I never felt any desire to do otherwise. Being a student is a big part of who I am.
43	I always knew I wanted to go to college, regardless of program of study, locations, etc. Yes, friends, family, and teachers did encourage me to continue my education, but I am going for me.
44	It was my decision to attend college. Both my parents earned degrees at a University, and I have seen the benefit of it in their lives. While we have talked through the pros and cons of school together, they have not influenced me to go to college.
45	I was strongly influenced by my family and the pressures of society.
46	By both me and my family. There are two places you can go after high school, according to my family, military or college. If decided to neither then you can get your stuff and move out of the house. So I decided that college would be the better of the two options, and I wanted to make my family proud because they are the sun and stars of my life
47	A bit of both. I've been encouraged to go to college and have been thinking about going to college since fourth grade. As I grew up it became something I wanted to do regardless of what my parents encouraged.
48	My parents always said to go to college, but in the end I decided where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do.
49	I think it was mostly made by me; I just always thought I'd go to college, really no doubt in my mind. I also think that I could not have done it or believed in myself without the support of my family.
50	Strongly influenced by parents and teachers but it was always known I was going to go to college. I made the decision too
51	My parents definitely wanted me to go to college, but it was still very much my decision. I knew that, while they would be disappointed if I didn't go to college, it was still my choice.
52	My decision to actually attend college was largely self-driven though supported by others; my actual college choice was a combination of me and others.
53	My ultimate decision to attend college was made by me, but my family always encouraged me to go. It was sort of like I didn't have a choice, because my parents had talked about college since I was a little girl, but I could have chosen not to attend if my dreams were elsewhere.
54	Both--myself, family and friends
55	The decision to attend college was my decision although my parents did support me.
56	Both my mom and I wanted me to pursue an college education as not very many people went to college in my family. She said they would find a way to give me that opportunity. I also want to become a doctor, so college and medical school are essential.
57	I would say both. Going anywhere other than college has never been an option for me. I planned my life and chose a career that required me to come. I was strongly encouraged by my parents also.

Why College?: Making the Decision

58	It was kind of a mix of both. Ever since I can remember I wanted to go to college, but there are times where it feels that the desire to attend college was ingrained in me at a young age by a number of societal factors. Everyone is told that if they want a job when they grow up, they need to go to college, and I did not want to be a couch potato eating nachos on my parents couch when I'm a 35 year old bachelor. However, the field of study, as well as the college that I chose, were solely my choice, granting me independence over what I chose for my predetermined post-high school experience.
59	It was made solely by me.
60	My decision was influenced by family and friends who supported my going to college, and by the negative responses I have seen toward people who don't go to college.
61	I definitely made the decision to go to college. Obviously, my family and school teachers were very supportive of the idea, but I inevitably made the decision to go to college. I was very excited to go to college my freshman year.
62	Family and friends expected me to go, but I also wanted to go to college.
63	It was both. I wanted to go to college but I also felt a lot of pressure to attend college from my family. Primarily it was expected that I go. I also feel like to function in the real world I have to have a college degree to get anywhere. It seems kind of stupid that it's more a requirement now than a privilege.
64	Yes, it was made solely by me.
65	
66	I was always determined to go to college, but my family also really influenced me to make that decision too.
67	
68	I wanted to go to college and my family supported and encouraged me to do so.
69	Strongly influenced by society and my family. It was the "right" thing to do after high school.
70	From the time I was 9 I wanted a college degree. I took college classes the year right after high school attempting to get pre-req out of the way wanting to get into an Associate Degree RN program. Money and family issues ended my education at the end of that year. I married that summer and it would be twenty years before I went back to school.
71	I am a female going into a male heavy career (Law Enforcement) so I thought I need a step up in the job market. I also have been told all through HS that I need to go to college or nothing good will happen in my life. Also if i go to college I will more than likely be offered more money and have a better chance at a job than someone who did not go to college.
72	I was strongly influenced by my high school teachers and parents. They made it seem like everyone went to college after high school if they wanted to be successful.
73	Probably a little of both but I knew I would go to college all throughout middle/high school.
74	The decision to attend college was completely my own choice. I had the support of my family on this decision but they didn't help me decided whether I wanted to go or not. They wanted the choice to be exclusively mine, and for me it was never a bad choice.
75	My family supported my choice to attend WOU as it was the only school I applied to and knew I wanted to attend right away.
76	I grew up with the expectation that I would attend college, from me and from my family.
77	My family tried to say college was their plan for me but it was ultimately mine since I pay for everything.
78	It was made by my desire to work with fossils and there are very few jobs in the Fossil field without having a degree in geology and or pailobiology.
79	Many decisions I make in life stem from others, so I would say my parents really inspired me to attend college
80	It was drilled into me in high school that college was the only way to get anywhere in life. I struggled to come up with the money to attend my first year immediately after high school and had to drop out after my first year because I could not afford to continue school.

Why College?: Making the Decision

81	I was pushed into attending school. My high school counselor did some of my scholarships all I said was yes.
82	Myself, I knew I had to get a college degree and I did not want to be the one that did not graduate from college and only at a high school.
83	My parents and family always expected me to go to college, even though I'm the first out of my family. I wanted to go to college mostly to move out of my house.
84	Me.
85	I knew if i wanted support of my family I needed to attend community college, but I was solely my decision to attend a university.
86	I was influenced to attend college by my parents, but it was also a decision I made in order to obtain a well-paying career after graduation.
87	My parents were an influence, but I made the decision
88	This decision to attend college was made up by both myself and my parents. Education is important and being smart does not hurt.
89	My parents are both college educated, one with a master's degree. I grew up in an environment where academics were important. I had dreams of a career in museum studies and I knew I couldn't get there without a degree.
90	I would say both. I decided to go to college/ a university in order to better my education and get a degree so that I can have a career and make decent money. However, my desire to do so was strongly influenced by my parents and all the sacrifices they made in order for me to have a good life. Both of them do not have college degrees and only one has gone to high school. Education is very important to them and they want me to have the opportunity to better myself through a higher education instead of being stuck at the bottom, relying on blue collar jobs for the rest of my life. So while I did choose to go to college of my own free will, my parents did have a big part in giving me that desire to continue to learn.
91	It has always been expected that I would go to college. It wasn't really something I had to think about; I have been planning on doing so since I can remember.
92	The decision was made by me to attend college because no one else in my family has gone to college i decided that i wanted to be the first. I wanted to do something with my life and at that point i wasn't sure what but i didn't matter i needed to give myself the opportunity.
93	I knew that I wanted to attend college from a very young age, because I knew I wanted to be a teacher, which you need a degree for. My parents and teachers obviously supported me in my wish to attend college, but I don't think that my parents would have been disappointed if I had decided college wasn't for me.
94	The decision to attend college was made by both my parents and I. My parents and I wanted me to attend college so that I will get a high-paying job in the future. Attending college will also increase my chances of becoming an FBI Agent in the future.
95	It was solely made by me, myself. My mother did not attend college and she was very skeptical that it would cost too much and I would not have a good job after my education. Since I was in elementary school I always had the mindset that I would go to college, because it seemed like people that did, ended up being successful adults.
96	My decision was strongly influenced by my parents and other elder friends. Their argument was that if I took a break it wasn't likely I would go back. I strongly resisted going to college and was uninterested in exploring different universities. After my first year I took a year off as I had wanted to do after high school but ended up coming back to finish my next three years getting a higher education and a degree.
97	I think it was my decision but since I was a little girl my family emphasized how important college was/is.
98	It was a decision I was always expected to make, but my parents, peers, teachers, employers, and even myself. I never really considered not going. However, while my parents both hold Masters in Education they have on more than one occasion stated that if I felt college, or grad school, wasn't the best choice for the life I wanted that was fine too. I would be supported by them in a similar manner if needed.
99	Yes, the decision to attend college was solely by me, a little influenced by others such as

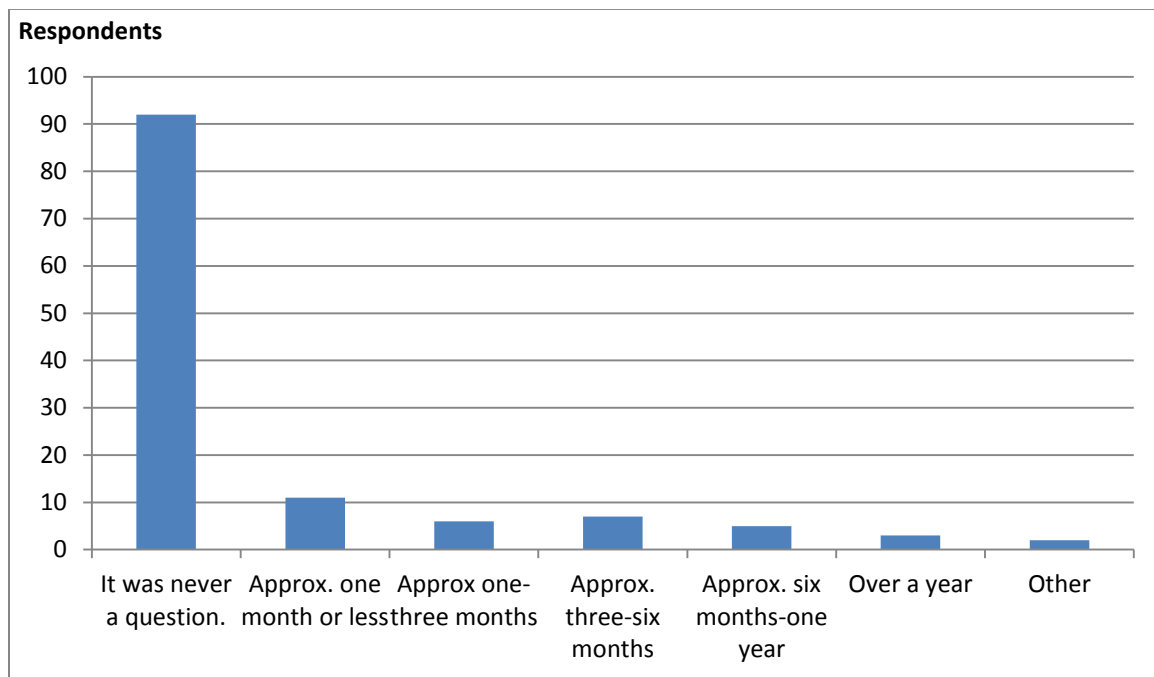
Why College?: Making the Decision

	friends and most importantly H.S. teachers.
100	Both: I've always wanted to better my education and go to college. My high school government teacher inspired me to branch out and go to a four year university. My mom encouraged me a lot as well. She has been my main supporter of college.
101	by me because of parents and teachers influence
102	My mom told me that I had to go to college. However, my parents do not help me financially at all. I never thought about not going to college. All my friends were going and I was a good student in high school. Going to college was not something I ever really decided, I just always knew I was going to go. I wanted to go.
103	I decided to attend college after graduating from high school. My family encouraged me to go; however, they wanted me to remain in the area.
104	Self, parents, friends, and teachers. My decision was made early on in life. It was always instilled early on that I was college bound. I was surrounded by the college influence so it never entered my mind not to go.
105	I am a non-traditional student at age 53. I decided to return to school initially to earn my high school diploma at Chemeketa Community College. With encouragement from my husband and my children, I decided to go all the way and here I am at WOU!
106	Not only did I strongly desire to attend college, I received incredibly support from my parents on a daily basis. In school and within my community I felt like we were expected to go to college and really challenged to work on becoming positive citizens in our country.
107	My decision to go to college was made by me but was influenced by my family to receive a higher education than they did.
108	It was basically my decision, but family and friends did help influence me.
109	Mainly myself, I knew I wanted to attend schooling after high school even though I didn't know what for at the time.
110	It didn't seem like an actual decision. It was just what I always was going to do after high school. My siblings didn't go to college so I guess the decision was more mine than my parents.
111	Strongly influenced by others. Going to college was just expected of me by my parents/family. Both my parents went to college and had set up college funds for my sister and me, so any other options other than college after high school were never talked about.
112	The decision was made by me, with the strong support of my family and friends :)
113	Yes I made the decision for myself, but my decision was influenced by a high school adviser.
114	It was by me. Others did advise me to but I decided to go because I wanted to.
115	It was something I wanted to do for myself but was also encouraged to do by my family.
116	It was my choice but i had strong support from my significant other
117	Attending college has always been a part of my plans for my life, ever since I was little, so my parents were definitely a very strong influence. However, I think that I would have wanted to go to college regardless of whether my parents were trying to get me to go. But it definitely is an expectation in my family that you go to college.
118	I always expected I would go to college and my parent expected me to either go to college or get a job after High School. Teachers and high school counselors expected me to go to college.
119	Both. I always dreamed of being a doctor, and to do that, I have to go to college. My parents have always said "when you go, not if" and expected me to go to college. Additionally, I grew up in a community that had high expectations for all of the children and expected that they would one day go to college.
120	The decision was never a question for me. It was further influenced by those around me. I was born to uneducated parents and watched them go through college with I was in middle and high school. I had great friends who also desired to continue their education. Supportive and challenging teachers, advisors, etc. likewise encouraged me.

Why College?: Making the Decision

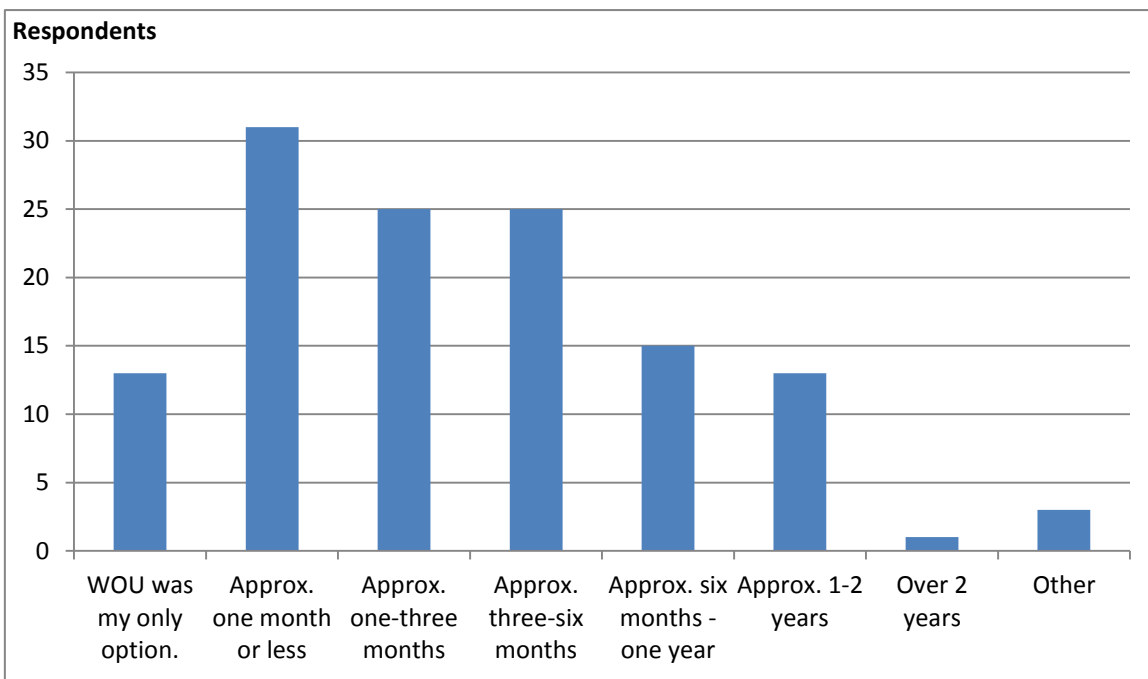
121	It feels like it was made by me, but I also was told from a very young age that I HAD to go to college so it was probably overall strongly influenced, especially by parents and other family members.
122	Both
123	My parents always told me that I was going to attend college so it was never in doubt that once I graduated that I would start college.
124	Mainly by me. I traveled the nation after high school to learn more about myself, and then joined the military. After getting out, it became apparent quickly that without a degree, I would be chasing the nearly impossible target of middle class bliss, instead likely falling into the struggling private sector.
125	The idea came from a friend, but to pursue her idea, it was my choice to go through the entire thing ...
126	It was a decision made by me. I always knew I wanted to go to college.

How much time do you estimate you spent thinking about and deciding whether to go to college or not?



It was never a question. :	92	73%
Approx. one month or less:	11	9%
Approx. one-three months:	6	5%
Approx. three-six months:	7	6%
Approx. six months-one year:	5	4%
Over a year:	3	2%
Other:	2	2%

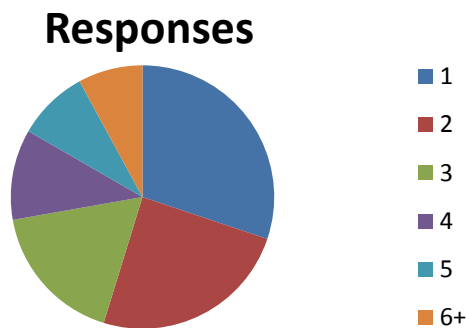
How much time do you estimate you spent deciding which college/s to apply to?



WOU was my only option.	13	10%
Approx. one month or less	31	25%
Approx. one - three months	25	20%
Approx. three - six months	25	20%
Approx. six months - one year	15	12%
Approx. 1 - 2 years	13	10%
Over 2 years	1	1%
Other	3	2%

How many colleges did you apply to?

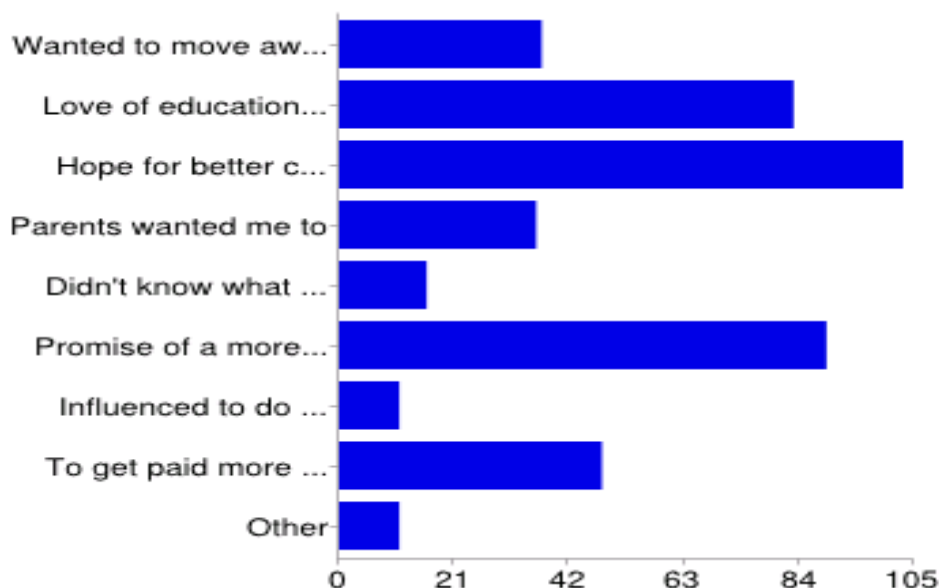
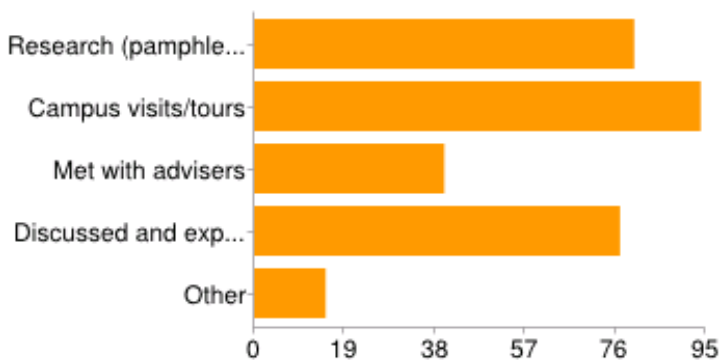
Schools Applied to:	Number of Responses:
1	38
2	31
3	22
4	14
5	11
6+	10



Why College?: Making the Decision

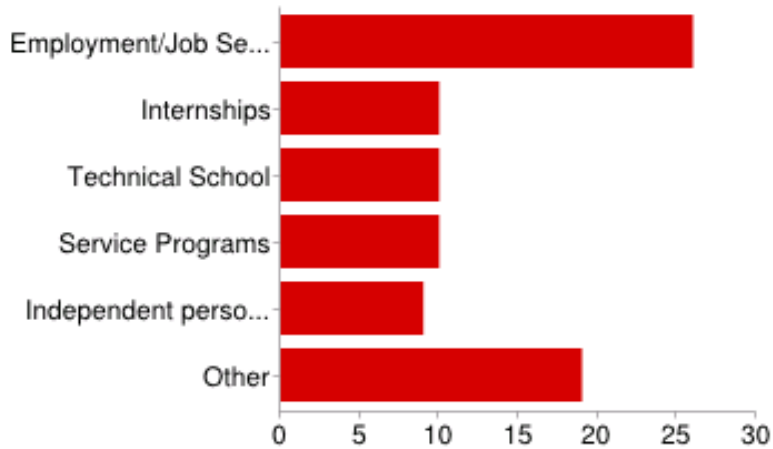
Why did you decide to apply for college?

Wanted to move away from home	37	9%
Love of education and personal development	83	19%
Hope for better career potential	103	24%
Parents wanted me to	36	8%
Didn't know what else to do after high school	16	4%
Promise of a more financially stable life after college	89	21%
Influenced to do so by friends or significant other	11	3%
To get paid more after college	48	11%
Other	11	3%

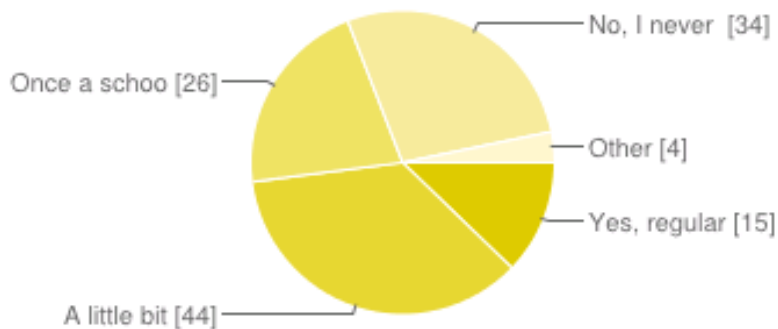
**Describe the decision making process you used to reach a conclusion on your decision to go to college.**

Research (pamphlets, online sources, school website, etc.)	80	26%
Campus visits/tours	94	31%
Met with advisers	40	13%
Discussed and explored options with friends/family	77	25%
Other	15	5%

Why College?: Making the Decision

Did you consider any alternatives to attending college? If so, what?

Employment/Job Search	26	31%
Internships	10	12%
Technical School	10	12%
Service Programs	10	12%
Independent personal development	9	11%
Other	19	23%

Did you meet with a counselor or adviser to discuss your college options?

Yes, regularly (once a month or more).	15	12%
A little bit (once a term).	44	36%
Once a school year.	26	21%
No, I never did.	34	28%
Other	4	3%

Why College?: Making the Decision

After graduating high school, did you refrain from attending college the following Fall term? If so, how long?

Only six respondents out of 126 took an alternative to continuing to college the Fall after graduating high school. That is approximately five percent of the students that responded to this survey. Note: 10 participants did not answer the question and are marked with an answer as N/A.

Student	Response	Student	Response
1	I started right after the summer of high school.	64	No
2	No	65	No
3	No	66	No, I went straight to college.
4	no	67	no
5	N/A	68	No
6	No I went right away.	69	No.
7	N/A	70	I attended one year then raised a family working as a secretary bookkeeper. Went back to school for my Associates Degree in late 90's. Now back for a Bachelor's degree.
8	No	71	Nope, jumped right no in.
9	No	72	No
10	No, I began attending the fall term after graduating high school.	73	No.
11	No	74	No, I had the summer off like everyone else then went to school in the fall of 2010
12	No.	75	Went to college right after high school.
13	no	76	Yes, I did not know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go. So I got a job.
14	No I jumped right from school to school. I did this so I would actually go to college rather than just go to work and get stuck there.	77	No I attended immediately after
15	No	78	no
16	N/A	79	No
17	No i attending the following fall upon graduation.	80	I went straight into college
18	no	81	no
19	No.	82	No. I went straight to college after I graduated high school. I went that fall term.
20	Yes for a whole gap year.	83	No
21	No	84	No.
22	no	85	no
23	No, I immediately went to college.	86	No.
24	No.	87	No, I attended right away
25	no	88	no

Why College?: Making the Decision

26	No	89	No, I went straight into college.
27	No, I went to college the fall term after graduating from high school.	90	I did not wait. I started the next fall.
28	Nope.	91	N/A
29	No	92	No
30	No	93	I went straight to college after graduation.
31	Nope	94	No, I just went straight to college.
32	No.	95	Nope, I attended college right after, so yes I started that fall.
33	I did not wait, I went right to university.	96	No I attended my first year after high school in a university and then took a year off before going back.
34	No	97	No
35	No. I attended college the fall after my high school graduation.	98	No.
36	No I came straight to college.	99	Yes, I waited a year in a half to attend college.
37	no I went straight from high school to college	100	No
38	No; I graduated from high school in June 2010 and began school at Western in September 2010.	101	no
39	No wait, directly from Spring high school to fall college.	102	No
40	N/A	103	N/A
41	No	104	No
42	No I went straight to college.	105	I did not graduate until 2011 through Chemeketa's Adult High School Program.
43	No	106	n/a
44	No, I went straight into college the Fall term after my graduation.	107	I did not wait at all. After graduating, I was ready to continue my education that fall.
45	No	108	N/A
46	No	109	No
47	No	110	No.
48	No I didn't.	111	No
49	No	112	No
50	No	113	No, I went the Fall after graduating high school.
51	No	114	Nope
52	I began college the following fall term after high school graduation.	115	no.
53	Honestly, I was taking community college classes my senior year of high school, so no, I did not refrain from attending college Fall term.	116	No
54	No	117	Nope, I started right after high school
55	No.	118	No

Why College?: Making the Decision

56	I went to college right after high school.	119	No.
57	No	120	No. I completed college credit throughout high school, attended college the summer immediately following high school graduation, and completed my associate's degree within a year.
58	No I did not. It made the transition to college easier as I was still in an academic mind set and was able to retain several of the academic and personal lessons I was taught in high school.	121	I attended college right away.
59	No, I did not refrain from attending college the following fall term.	122	No
60	No.	123	N/A
61	No	124	I did. I didn't want to join college at the time, so I started backpacking the nation for a year before I joined the military. In my last few years, I started taking classes, and continued doing so after my contract was up.
62	no I didn't	125	Hahaaa! I was 28 when I started my college career ... Not out of high school at all!
63	Yes, I waited a year before coming to college. But during that year I was studying abroad.	126	I went to college right away.

How many colleges did you apply for and why?

NOTE: This question was disregarded during the analysis due to the difficulty of compiling any concrete evidence of any sort using the following data.

1 college: 46 responses, 2 colleges: 31 responses, 3 colleges: 17 responses, 4 colleges: 9 responses, >5 colleges: 20 responses, not answered: 3 participants

Student	Response
1	I applied to 3 colleges because I wasn't sure what area I wanted to live in. I also was interested in playing sport and the schools could have been options for that. Plus, they had the major I was interested in at the time.
2	I applied for three four year colleges. I was unsure of where I wanted to end up.
3	I applied to four colleges. Two of which were instate and two were located out of state. I wanted to explore my possibilities and see which school was financially best for me and my family.
4	2. I didn't want to pay to apply to schools that I wasn't passionate about. Also WOU was the only one I was slightly interested in. The other school was just a backup that I absolutely knew I would get into.
5	I believe it was four. I wanted to have options.
6	Only Western.

Why College?: Making the Decision

7	Just one application, but I did look really hard at Portland State, Oregon State, Corban and UCSB. I was approached by Jamestown and Brown University for athletics (wrestling)
8	Four, because I wanted to be able to look at the costs for each college and see which one would make the most financial sense.
9	I only applied for Western Oregon University because it was a small school with great non-academic programs as well as the academic program I was looking for. I looked into several other schools that had the program I wanted and some without the program. Western representatives were happy to talk with me, which some of the larger school representatives were not appearing to be and did not answer my questions. Since I was looking into schools my junior year of high school, they might not have thought I was seriously looking. I applied for Western in November of my senior year as the only school I wanted to attend at that point.
10	I applied to three colleges. I knew I wanted to become an Education major and stay close to home. This limited my options to three schools. I also wanted to see which colleges would offer the best scholarship/loan packages. In the end, WOU was significantly cheaper than George Fox and Concordia.
11	I only applied to WOU because I knew they had a great Education program and I loved the campus.
12	I applied to U of O, but was nervous and didn't know how to afford to pay the cost. So, I went to a community college.
13	I applied for 7 because I was looking at all of the top ranked American Sign Language schools in the country.
14	I applied to 2 of them. Pacific and Western Oregon. I wanted to move away from home and experience life on my own (or at least as much as possible).
15	I applied to only Western because they had a nursing program, a low(er) tuition that most universities in the area, and because it was just far enough away from home.
16	1, fell in love with this campus
17	6ish just to get a wide variety of different options to spend my next 4 years at.
18	1
19	Two. One turned out to be too expensive even with financial aid. WOU was affordable.
20	1. Just WOU because I knew what I was looking for.
21	Two, I applied to the first one to get practice on applications and then I applied to WOU two months later because I attended a Preview Day and wanted to be entered into the Preview Day Scholarship.
22	I applied to two, UO and WOU. Mainly because I knew I was going to stay in state, and it was the difference of a large school versus a small school.
23	I only applied for two, because I was confident that I would be accepted. I applied to WOU and Pacific University, and was accepted to both. I had originally thought I wanted to move out of state and go to college elsewhere

Why College?: Making the Decision

	in the US, but changed my mind and had a mini self-identity crisis and opted to stay in-state to save money, and because I no longer had any clue what I wanted to do with my life. I chose Pacific because of a significant other, but then drove through Monmouth on the way home, heard about WOU, visited, and decided it was a better (and cheaper) fit for me.
24	Seven. To see the best scholarship package
25	4: not exactly sure what I wanted to do.
26	1
27	I only applied to Western. I wanted to go to an in-state, smaller school with lower tuition, and very few schools fit all those criteria. I applied only to Western, and once I visited the campus I knew I wanted to go there.
28	I applied to four different colleges because I was wanting to find the best school with the best program for what I was looking into.
29	I applied for 3 colleges, and those colleges were schools that had the program I wanted.
30	I applied to five colleges based on their ed programs and price. I decided after visiting and getting a feeling from the campus.
31	Only one because when I came to a preview day at Western, I fell in love with it and was set on coming here and didn't want to pay application fees to other schools that I probably wouldn't be attending.
32	I applied for only one. I had always thought I would go to Washington State University (family tradition) until I decided it was too large of a school. I really liked the climate and culture of Oregon, so I did college visits to Eastern Oregon University, Western Oregon University, and Linfield. Based on the college visits, I narrowed my choices to Linfield as my first choice, and Western as my second choice (I did not like EOU at all). Due to financial issues, I chose to only apply to WOU.
33	All in all I applied to approximately 12 colleges. I applied two years in a row, once in high school and then I applied to transfer while in my first year, but ended up not transferring. I found universities that I liked and that resonated with me and ones that I knew I would get into for a back up.
34	5, some in state and some out of state. Got in everywhere I applied.
35	I applied for about five colleges. I have always been an overachiever, wasn't sure where I wanted to go, and wanted to keep my options open.
36	3 because I liked them.
37	I was going to apply to 2 but my family member told me the other one was too expensive. so I applied to western.
38	I only applied to Western, because I knew that was the school I wanted to go to. I didn't see the purpose in applying to multiple different schools and paying for several application fees when I knew where I wanted to study.
39	I applied to both WOU and OSU, both of which were my only real schools that I showed interest in, though others (around Oregon) sent applications and interest. Also, the close proximity to home was an influence, and fields of my

Why College?: Making the Decision

	study in their development were the main influences.
40	5; I wasn't able to make my decision until I received financial aid information from each of the schools.
41	Two. The first one was the one I wanted to go to but because of finances I came here.
42	Just WOU. It was where I wanted to go and I knew I wouldn't have a problem getting in.
43	1, just WOU, I immediately fell in love with this school on my first campus tour and I wasn't worried about being admitted, so I didn't really have a backup plan.
44	I applied to two colleges, primarily based on the specific education they offered. Finances were also a big deal for me, and my sister was also attending WOU, which made my decision to go here more natural.
45	I applied to only Western because I wanted to become a teacher.
46	I believe I applied for 4 different colleges. The reason is so I could find the best fit education, financial, and overall atmosphere wise. I wanted to be far enough away from home that I had to live on campus, but close enough that if I am in trouble my folks can come check on me.
47	Only one (WOU) because it was the only one that felt right. I toured about six or seven colleges.
48	I applied to two. WOU and University of Portland. I knew I wanted to go to WOU. I only applied to UP because they didn't charge me for applying.
49	I only applied for 2, I knew I wanted to go here but I was still questioning whether I should go to Willamette or not.
50	1 this was the only one in Oregon that had sign language
51	I applied to three. I wanted to be close to home and they were the three closest to where my family was. I was also pretty sure I would get in and my decision was only between those three.
52	I applied to 2 in state schools and 1 out of state school; after receiving a in-state school only scholarship I began school at Southern Oregon University and then applied and later transferred to Western Oregon. Applied to 3 initially in HS and then WOU as the 4th fall of my freshman year in college at SOU.
53	I only applied for WOU because it had the major of my choice and after one visit; I knew WOU was the place for me.
54	Only 1 (WOU) because it was in-state (cheaper), was close to home (1 hour), was well-known for the major I wanted to go into (Education) and I expected to get in (high acceptance rate)
55	I applied for one college because I received my acceptance letter for this school before the application deadlines expired for the other schools.
56	6 just because I was told to apply to multiple and I wanted to see what the best option would be for me.
57	I applied for 5 because my top choice of colleges was extremely difficult to get

Why College?: Making the Decision

	into and I wasn't sure where I wanted to go when I didn't get in so I applied to a variety of places.
58	I only applied to one college. Before I decided to apply to college, I looked into several different schools, but narrowed my choice down based on 1) affordability, 2) academic success/culture, 3) size, 4) location, and 5) accepting campus. In the end, WOU was the only school that fit all the criteria, and I did not want to waste an application fee on a school that I was not going to attend in the first place.
59	I applied for three because I wanted to have a couple of options to choose from and they were all decently close to home and had the programs I was interested in.
60	I applied to two, both of which were close to home, where I wanted to stay.
61	I applied to eight different colleges. I chose to apply to eight different colleges because I was interested in attending all of them. I applied to seven private universities and one public university (WOU). I applied to many private and religious universities because I really wanted to attend a Christian/Catholic school, and I was hoping that one of the schools would offer a decent financial aid package. I received scholarships from these universities, but when my parents and I looked at the finances for all four years, the public university (WOU) was the best option.
62	4. I did some research on schools and had a big list, but I didn't want to pay for all the fees for all the other schools, so I picked my top 4.
63	I picked three in state colleges/universities. I decided on those three because I wanted to get the tuition discount from having a parent work in the OUS.
64	I applied to five but only looked into two that were in New York then last minute in June I decided not to go and ended up at WOU
65	1
66	I applied to three schools because they all have education programs and because I wanted to look around for what was the best fit.
67	1
68	I think two, but I only cared about getting into Western. It had the program I wanted to get into and after visiting the campus several times, I fell in love with how beautiful the campus was and how helpful people were to one another.
69	I applied to University of Oregon and Lane community college. I applied to Lane because I was considering playing basketball there and University of Oregon was the school I always wanted to go to.
70	Have always just filled out the paperwork at the school that fit best and started taking classes. Did have to apply 3 years in a row for a technical program at a community college before I was accepted in that program. It was the only option in the state system.
71	Only one at the time because I applied early on. I did look into other schools though.

Why College?: Making the Decision

72	I only applied to WOU because I knew that I wanted to go here and because it was easier to get into than OSU or UofO
73	I applied for 3 colleges; I wanted to have more than one option.
74	I applied to ~5 colleges. I did this to keep my options open, and make a decision that was best for me.
75	Only Western due to my numerous visits and deciding I wanted to go to a small school.
76	1, PCC didn't require an application. I liked western and they accepted me the same day I applied.
77	Only one because I had to pay application costs. I visited 4 schools before I decided to come to WOU
78	I originally applied for 5 collages, non in the USA, however I graduated during the height of the Iraq war, and If i attended a international collage it would have been necessary to negate my government scholarships, because if the Government had a draft they did not want draftable males going to other countries. So I ended up at WOU by recruitment of a geology professor I knew from my work at the Oregon Museum Of Science and Industry.
79	I only applied for WOU because I knew the school very well and knew I would like it
80	I applied for two colleges. One because it had no application fee and Western because I liked the school and was interested in going. I didn't apply to many schools because of the large expense of just applying. I narrowed down my choices to the college I wanted to go to and a backup school that was close to home and had no application fee.
81	just 2 because I wasn't sure of what I wanted.
82	2 just in case if I did not get accepted to one I thought I would have a chance with the other.
83	3, I applied to the three near me
84	1, only Western Oregon University because it was close to home.
85	3. One was close to home, one was in the sun and one was a famous for football
86	12, I wanted to have multiple options.
87	2, I really didn't know a whole lot about higher education. I had visited Willamette University for a conference and wanted to go there, but decided to come to Western instead.
88	3
89	4. Two of them held the same religious viewpoints as I did, and I had wanted to go to either of the two for years. The other two (WOU and Pacific U.) were my backups.
90	I was already enrolled at Umpqua Community College through my high school (I took language classes from UCC my Junior and Senior years of high school). After that I applied at Western Oregon University because they were the top school in Oregon for the profession I wanted to pursue which was Education.

Why College?: Making the Decision

91	I applied for 2 colleges. I wanted to go to a relatively smaller college, but also one that was affordable.
92	I applied to two. Western and a privet school. I was sure that i wanted to go to a public school but i wanted to apply to a privet school just to give myself the oppportunity to change my mind if i wanted to.
93	I applied to two colleges. One was George Fox. This was the school I was absolutely sure I was going to attend. I had wanted to go there for a really long time. I liked that it was a faith based school and that it was a private school. I was so sure I wanted to go there that I almost didn't apply anywhere else. I only applied to WOU because my mom wanted me to. After I applied to George Fox and got accepted I was sure that was the end of it. However, to appease my mom I came to a campus visit at WOU and I instantly fell in love. I loved everything about WOU and I knew that it was where I was supposed to be.
94	I applied to two colleges because they were the two colleges that stood out to me the most, and they have my potential major.
95	I only applied for WOU, I know I did not want to apply for Chemeketa like all my friends, and I received the diversity scholarship, I also wasn't ready to move away from home so Western was my best decision, my hometown is Independence.
96	2 because of cost and proximity.
97	Two.
98	One. I looked into the options for schools with the programs I was considering at the time (rather limited) and cross-referenced those with cost, location, weather, community size and type, social activities and clubs, et c. I then toured several options to get a feel for the campus, and in the end felt most comfortable at WOU so I applied that same day.
99	2, I attended Chemeketa Community College CCC for two reasons such as, preparations and tuition.
100	I applied to two colleges that had the career path that I wanted and my main decision for which one to choose was how well I liked the staff and the atmosphere. I fell in love with WOU staff and the size of the school. I liked how small the class sizes were too!
101	7, to have options
102	Three, I applied at my local community college because it was required for my Senior Seminar class. I also applied at U of O and WOU I thought I was going to go to WOU but I applied at U of O to just have a backup.
103	Three. I applied to the universities that were near the Salem-Keizer area because my family wanted me to stay nearby in case I needed assistance with school, money, textbooks, etc.
104	Three - looking for the best fit and economic deal
105	After attending Chemeketa, I knew I wanted to go to WOU; which is the only

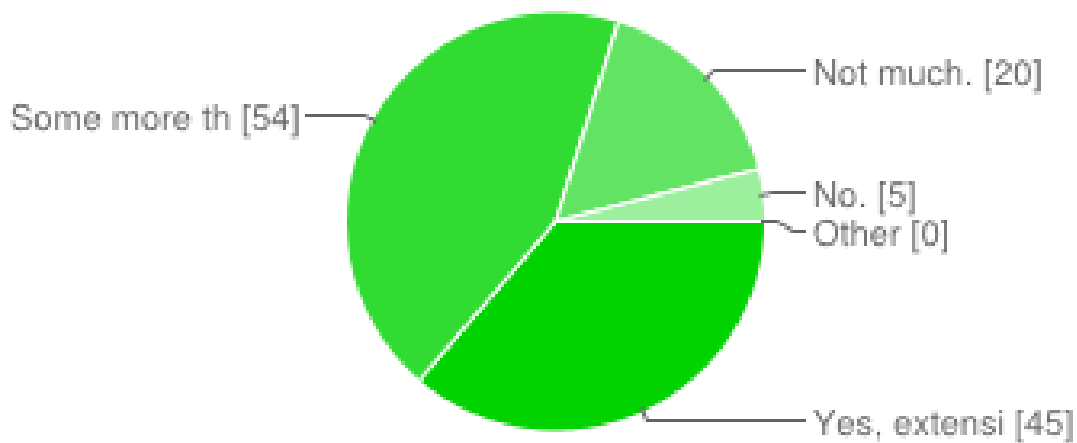
Why College?: Making the Decision

	school I applied for.
106	I applied to quite a few colleges within the Northwest. Having grown up in Alaska I knew I did not want to attend college within the state so I applied to many schools within the Northwest because I did not have one state in particular I really wanted to be in at that time.
107	I only applied to one (WOU) because of my GPA
108	5, I wanted to have options
109	Two, wasn't really interested in many and didn't have information on many schools (programs). Also wanted to stay close to home but still with some space.
110	Applied for the major colleges in Oregon. My parents wanted me to stay in Oregon for financial reasons so I only applied to the bigger universities here.
111	I couldn't decide/didn't know how to decide which school would be best, so I just applied to Chemeketa Community College because they were giving scholarships to HS students with a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA. I did it so I could save money. And then I transferred to WOU because it was close to home, and after two years at CCC I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do and I didn't want to waste money at a more expensive school. CCC and WOU were the only colleges I applied to.
112	I applied to 3: WOU, PSU, and OSU because they were the closest to home and in-state.
113	I applied to all the major state institutions in Oregon (because they were the most affordable), and I also applied to Lewis & Clark because of a specific program.
114	one, then transferred to WOU after I graduated with two associates. I choose the less expensive community college close by. so I wouldn't be in a big debt when I graduated and I was still figuring out what degree and job I wanted.
115	Two. I knew I wanted to be somewhat near home so I applied to schools that were close and had subjects I was interested in.
116	I applied two 4 because they were all good options for me and i have friends that would be there and it felt safe. They also had the programs I wanted to be a part of.
117	Only 1. I had looked at others that I probably could have easily gotten in to, but WOU made sense and was an easy and affordable option for me.
118	I applied to five colleges all in Oregon because I wanted to stay in the state. I visited some of the campuses earlier on in the application process and some later on. I wanted to make sure I had multiple options.
119	Four, because I wanted the option to choose from my top four colleges and because I wanted to have a back-up in case one of those didn't accept me.
120	I initially applied to one university and was accepted. I was already enrolled at another university, and ended up attending there. I had multiple other applications partially/completely filled out, but did not complete the submission. Eventually, I transferred to Oregon, and thus officially applied to

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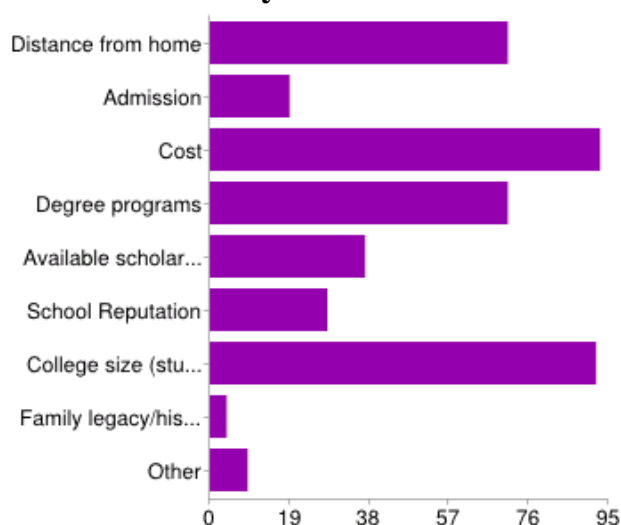
	a second university. Again, this involved several partial applications. Officially: applied to two universities, attended three universities and one college.
121	I applied for probably around 5-8, to have some options to choose from and to see where I got more scholarships, etc.
122	1
123	I applied to 3-4 colleges. The reason that I applied to those schools was because I wanted to see which school would be most financially responsible for me to attend.
124	Just this one. My number one pick of OSU didn't have my program, so I didn't bother applying. Went straight here.
125	Just LMC and WOU
126	Two at that time. I got into my first choice, but then had to apply for another due to not being able to afford my first choice.

Did you research the schools you applied for?



Yes, extensively.	45	36%
Some more than others.	54	44%
Not much.	20	16%
No.	5	4%
Other	0	0%

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What factors did you consider most in making your college decision?

Distance from home	71	17%
Admission	19	4%
Cost	93	22%
Degree programs	71	17%
Available scholarships	37	9%
School Reputation	28	7%
College size (student population, professor/student ratio)	92	22%
Family legacy/history	4	1%
Other	9	2%

Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently in your decision making process if you were back in high school again? If so, what?

Yes: 62 responses No: 64 responses

Student	Response
1	Yes, I would have asked more questions, been more involved with the process (it was mostly my parents), applied for scholarships, applied to possibly a few different schools, and worked harder on the application.
2	No, I don't believe so.
3	Nothing particularly.
4	Fortunately I have been lucky that WOU was such a good fit, despite my lack of research. So no, I wouldn't change anything for myself. But I would try to make the process different for others by letting them know there are more options after high school.
5	Yes, I would have done more research into another university that I wanted to go to.
6	No I would.
7	WOU every time!

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8	I'm really happy with how my decision making process went, and where I am now, so I don't think I would've done anything differently.
9	I would not. I love Western Oregon University. Although I changed academic programs my first year here, I found the close connections with faculty allowed me to acquire experience in a closely related field to what I want to do which I don't know that I would have been able to do elsewhere. I also have branched out from the direction I thought I would take in my extra-curricular and co-curricular activities which I don't know that I would have done as much somewhere else. Making relationships here has been a significant factor in my experience as well and I treasure the ones I have made here.
10	No, I have been very satisfied with my choice of attending WOU. I've made great friends, had fun leadership opportunities, met my future wife and enjoyed small class sizes. WOU has been the perfect fit for my career goals.
11	No
12	I don't think so.
13	I might have differed my acceptance and taken a year off, seeing as I'm young for my year, but other than that, no.
14	I would have researched where the best history programs for the next term were, and not what they offered for that term. I would also have taken more history classes my first few terms. Portland State would also have been my first choice.
15	No, I am EXTREMELY grateful for the experiences that Western has given me. I would make the same choice to come here again.
16	More financial aid help and assistance.
17	I would have applied for the colleges earlier. I waited a bit to a point where i was about to graduate and didn't know exactly where i would be the next fall.
18	No
19	No, except more scholarship searches.
20	I would have gone to college right after high school.
21	No, because I am thrilled with my decision, but I realize that I needed to go through the uncertain times to get to where I am at.
22	Would have applied for more scholarships.
23	Perhaps I may have. I would have tried to research schools a little more, and try to apply to some prestigious schools just to see if I would have been accepted. However, I'm fairly content with my experience at WOU, so doing it all over again might not change much.
24	I would most likely have thought about a gap year or something that would've spaced out high school and college.
25	Nope!
26	No
27	I changed my major and focus after the first year, so if in high school I had known I was interested in film, I might have looked for schools that offered film-related majors. Other than that, I'm pretty happy where I ended up.

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28	Nope.
29	No, I am happy with where I am currently at.
30	I don't think I would do anything different even if I wanted to because I'm still a very traditional person. I'd like to think I'd risk it and travel but most likely I'd still end up here at a welcoming campus.
31	I probably would have decided to tour more schools and start my college search a little earlier. Waiting until your senior year can be a little bit stressful.
32	No.
33	I wouldn't let others influence my decision so much and make sure that my family was completely okay with my decision before contracting anywhere.
34	No
35	I would not have gone to college right away. I wish I had taken a year to work a regular job, and then traveled the following year. This would have set me up for going to college at age twenty, which in my opinion would be a more mature age for college. By that time I would have experienced the "real world" and would have had more of a chance to figure out what I want to do with my life. As it is, it took me over two years to choose a major, plus a lot more debt, in order to stay in college.
36	Nope.
37	I think I would have broaden in my search for choosing a college and not settling on one be accuse it is cheaper.
38	If I could go back and change things, I would have chosen to look into and take a gap year before starting school. Particularly for my mental health, that break would have been immensely beneficial.
39	Perhaps, I would have applied to more schools/visited more and experienced the departments of my study and what they offered, to better my understanding of topics concerning to myself.
40	No, I was thorough in my search.
41	Apply for more scholarships!
42	I think I would have finished my pre-reqs at LCC because it would've been so much cheaper that way.
43	I would have spent more time evaluating my career goals and the programs available and how good the program is compared to other universities.
44	I can't say I would do much differently, though it is hard to say. I would have liked to have taken more classes in high school to prepare me, and I would have tried to get some of my degree requirements met at a community college. Besides that, no.
45	I would go to a two year school to get all of the general stuff out of the way. It would be much cheaper and easier to decide on a new major that way.
46	No
47	No
48	I wouldn't have done anything differently. I like where I am.
49	I wouldn't change a thing.

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50	The decision for me was easy because I wanted to go into sign language and the school variety for that is limited.
51	I think I would have done more tours. Just so I could get a better idea of what the campus was like and where things were.
52	I would absolutely research the colleges I was thinking of attending for the things that matter day to day such as the living situation, "feel"/culture of campus, activities and the like, not just the academics on paper. More in-depth visits too.
53	No, I wouldn't change a thing.
54	No
55	No.
56	I would have looked at community college EMT or Medical Assistant programs now that the circumstances changed in my household and I have to find a way to pay for it. That way I could be getting experience and working and then complete my undergraduate and medical schooling later on when I had more money.
57	No
58	Not really. I am satisfied with the school I chose, and while it may not be the most prestigious college or have the most successful football team, it is the place where I belong, and I can't imagine myself anywhere else.
59	no
60	I might have researched the actual courses offered and talked to students and professors to find out how serious the academic programs actually were.
61	I would have looked at more colleges and their scholarship programs. I would have considered more schools, even if they were not my first choice or in my top ten list. I realize now that some of the schools that I didn't look into as much have really good programs.
62	Yes, I would have applied to scholarships and applied to every school I had looked at.
63	I would have looked at more schools that had a meteorology program.
64	Yes, I would apply for more colleges and only look in Oregon.
65	No
66	I would have applied to schools earlier and looked into the scholarships they offer.
67	No
68	No.
69	Yes, I would look into schools more and honestly would have gone to a community college for the first two years. It would have saved me money and possibly helped my grades. I would have sat with an advisor to see my long term plan laid out for me.
70	Get much higher grades so I would be eligible for scholarship dollars so I could have finished school in my 20's.
71	Not really, I like the school I am in now. I think I would have looked more into

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	minors, but that is it.
72	I would have started to think about college sooner than I did. I also would have gone to visit other schools instead of only applying to WOU.
73	I would have gone to community college for two years instead of only one but I would still have liked to end up at WOU.
74	Nothing, I researched my schools and made the best decision for where I was at in life. I went to a small private Christian school my freshman year on a sports scholarship and it was the best transition I could have ever had.
75	No.
76	I would have liked to have someone help me think about career options and get ready for college while I was in high school. I may have been better prepared.
77	No
78	I would have researched more private scholarships that were eligible internationally.
79	I am fully satisfied in my decision to attend WOU
80	I would have waited to go to college. I couldn't afford to go when I went and because of that I had to drop out and take a break from school. I am back in college now but it doesn't feel like I know what I am doing anymore or how to get there. It's hard to get it together after such a long break (about 5 years).
81	No, I am extremely satisfied with my decision, if anything I would have applied more for scholarships.
82	Maybe. I would have picked a different career to choose from so that I knew what college I should most look forward to.
83	Yes, I would have research the school more, and applied for more scholarships.
84	No.
85	Applied more places
86	I would have moved away from home during my first year of college. I attended a university that was in my hometown. I was accepted to numerous school but wasn't ready to move out of my mother's house. By not moving away, I never dormed, and I feel like that is a great way to make friends and be active in my college experience.
87	I would have explored more schools. Probably wouldn't have ended up at Western.
88	No.
89	Yes, I would have pursued the college I really wanted to go to despite the poor financial aid I was given.
90	No, I would not change anything.
91	Nope!
92	I would have started looking into more schools earlier in my high school years. I also would have looked at schools out side the state. A lot of people told me not to because it was so expensive but i think i should have stilled look to see what could have been.

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93	I don't think so. I am really happy where I am.
94	Yes, I wish I would've applied to some colleges in California through the WUE program, because I didn't know what it was back then.
95	I think I made the right choice. Its a beautiful school with small classrooms but being an introvert this was a great atmosphere for me. I was a little too scared to travel to a distant school and sometime I wish I had done that, but I realized that all my friends that did this ended up not graduating, or returning here and ended up going to Western.
96	No I would not have done anything differently.
97	No.
98	Given that I changed my major to a more widely available one, I would have looked into other schools.
99	No because I really was not sure what I wanted to do, so I decided to work and save money to purchase my own vehicle and then needed to come up with a game plan. Besides, the only thing I would done differently was seeing a health counselor to find out if I had any troubles studying, which I really did because my sister observed my behavior and she realized some symptoms of ADHD, which really affected my process as a student at CCC.
100	No.
101	I would have chosen a different school because I am more aware of what I want out of college
102	I would have looked more into what I wanted to major in in college.
103	I would not attend college because at this current moment, good paying jobs are few and far between. Taking on student debt was a huge mistake in the economy and honestly I did not obtain a college degree to work in a bowling alley. I could have done that without a college degree or without graduating from high school.
104	No
105	I would decide to FINISH HIGH SCHOOL, instead of waiting until I was 50 to graduate. Then I would apply for college, as I realize even more as an adult the value of education.
106	I would have considered private schools more seriously now that I know what type of scholarships they include and how the likelihood of graduating in four years seems much higher. Considering my situation as a fifth year senior, maybe having to pay four years on private school would not have been as big of a difference as I had imagined.
107	Applied for more scholarships and potentially get better grades in school.
108	Nothing
109	Researched more into schools and the programs they provide, just to keep my options opened.
110	Not really. I would have applied to more prestigious schools but I really enjoyed WOU
111	Had I known what I know now in high school, I probably would've done things

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	<p>differently. I probably would've applied to more schools, not worried about a major so much, skip Chemeketa and go straight to a 4-year institution so I could live on campus rather than with my parents, I would've pushed myself harder.</p> <p>I wish I would've known more in high school, but I wouldn't want to change anything. I like where my path has taken me and I am grateful for the experiences I've had because of the decisions I made in high school.</p>
112	Nothing!
113	No, I stand by my decision to attend WOU. I think I would have looked more into other aspects of college life (i.e., social) because that was where I was most uninformed upon arriving.
114	Nope, just would have taken some different classes so I would have all my foundation classes done when I transferred to WOU. but I am still happy with my choice.
115	No.
116	I would have come to WOU first. I would have not followed friends and done what I felt was the best for my dreams. I also would have put more energy into academics and not so much in social.
117	I still would have gone to college, but I might have thought about looking at other schools in more detail.
118	I might have considered more closely staying in my hometown and getting an associates degree at the community college, then transferring to a bigger school to save money.
119	Yes, I would have visited more schools and I wouldn't have discounted some of the universities just because I thought that too many people from my home town were going there.
120	I would have applied to more schools and for more scholarships. I completed several applications, but never submitted them. I doubt I would have attended different schools than I did, but I always wonder if I would have had the opportunity.
121	I can't really think of anything I would have changed.
122	Nah
123	I would not be as concerned with the distance from my family. I would not limit my section of colleges based on that as much. I would go to the college based on what I thought and not what others influenced me to do. Example relationships, friends, family.
124	Wouldn't of been a dumb ass in sophomore year regarding rebelling against homework. Not that my GPA (2.7) has ever not granted me access to places, I wish it was higher as I was getting 3.3-3.4 in senior year, but sophomore year dragged me down.
125	Honestly, no ... Even though it sucked going through my 20/ and working in a warehouse, I'm glad I had that experience before college because it's given me a great perspective that has helped me throughout my college career

126	I would have applied at other schools and not have so narrowly defined my search. I found one school I liked and then just went for that one school. Then when I couldn't afford it, I went to a community college I was not excited about because I failed to see that there were other options.
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Is your college experience delivering what you expected? Why or why not?

Yes: 91 responses

No: 35 responses

Student	Response
1	Yes, it's opened a lot of doors for me, helped me grow as a person and professional, and challenged me to go for opportunities I may not have before. I was kind of just expecting to take classes and hang out with friends, but instead I was opened up to job/volunteer opportunities, clubs, and activities I would have never expected. I got the impression that there would be tons of papers and that I would be at the library all the time, but hasn't turned out to be that intense.
2	No, but I didn't know what to expect. Starting at a community college, and having full time work and then transferring to a four year school altered my expectations.
3	Yes, except I expected it to be much more difficult.
4	I had no expectations of college. I was pretty blind to how the system worked.
5	Yes, I'm learning social skills in abundance and am graduating on time.
6	Yes the education program is great and I able to be involved here.
7	Yes! SO much more in the campus life aspect, but not so much in academics
8	Yes, I'm learning and preparing for my future career, and meeting really great people.
9	The academic side of my experience changed with my major my first year. I added a second major which was exciting but not initially expected. My second major is a subject which I never thought I would want to take more classes in for the rest of my education (I took the basic requirements through college now in high school). Instead of study abroad, I decided to get involved with student leadership. I was not very involved in high school, so it was a big change for me and I have appreciated the experience. In all, I could not have planned for the path I took in college because I was actively trying to push myself to try new things hoping to find something to enjoy and enhance my experience here.
10	Yes, I did not have many expectations going into college. I had just heard from friends and family what it was like. I reserved judgment until I attended myself. I have enjoyed making memories outside of the classroom with friends. I have met some lifelong friends and learned a lot about the world and myself.
11	For the most part it is but I am an Education major which has a ton of class requirements. I will probably be here for 5 years just to finish the program. I thought I would have time to take classes I found interesting instead of only

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	having time for the required classes.
12	It is more than what I expected, but loving the experience.
13	I would say that, for the most part, my college experience has been what I expected it to be. It has been hard work, I've made friends that I hope I'll have forever, I've decided and am working towards my future career, and I'm growing as an independent by being a state away from home.
14	Social: It is everything I have dreamed of I have made friends for life, and learned to deal with f***ing idiots who don't know how to speak or write English even though they were raised with it.
15	It isn't exactly what I expected, but I expected it to help me grow as a person and it definitely has.
16	No, I learned so many more things that college is; versus the stereotype of typical partying and intensive studying.
17	Yes it is, it has provided me with a great education and the ability to grow up and mature away from home.
18	No
19	Yes, I got more involved than I ever imagined.
20	yes.
21	It is delivering way more than I ever expected because I have had a good education, made a ton of friends, and had a lot of fun.
22	Yes. I came to WOU for an education, but also to get involved and take on new leadership and work experience. I do not think I would have had the opportunity to be the ASWOU President or in such high leadership positions that I have taken on, if it was not for my choice to go to a smaller school.
23	Somewhat. I have had phenomenal leadership experiences that I am so grateful for, and the sense of community is exactly what I wanted. In my classes, I've often felt like they were very easy. Really, any frustration I feel with college is mostly due to my focus area (Spanish). I'm pleased with most everything else.
24	Absolutely! I love the choices that I've made and the school here.
25	No
26	No
27	I've gained much more practical, job-related experience than I expected. I expected that I would be memorizing things and going to classes I wasn't interested in, and come away with a lot of tangible facts (like high school). But instead, I've taken a lot more theory classes in subjects I'm actually interested in, and then I've been able to apply those theories to jobs outside of class.
28	Yes! More! I've found such wonderful opportunities while attending college!
29	Yes, it is giving me a sense of what it is like to be independent.
30	Yes I had been around western enough through sports and my older brother to know what to expect. I always knew what program I wanted to be in and where I wanted my life to go so being married in school and graduating with a job is exactly what I wanted

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31	Yes, it has been all I have hoped and more. I expected the workload and educational aspect, but it was the social aspect that I never expected. I never thought I would have met so many great people and made such good friends, considering I am a very introverted person by nature.
32	For the most part, yes. I was hoping to have more rigorous classes but otherwise I was happy with my choice of WOU and my experiences here.
33	It is not what I expected, mainly because I did not expect to end up here, but it is still amazing.
34	Yes. Leadership opportunities.
35	Not at all. The cost is too high, I have loans, and I changed my major twice. Also, the more I attend college, the more I realize that I will probably need to get a masters in order to have a good chance at employment. This will be more time, money and constraint on my life. I have been searching for freedom at college, and have only found captivity due to loans and career expectations.
36	No, I wasn't completely sure what to expect when I got here, I've had the good and the bad but I love it in the end.
37	yes and no. It is my 4th year here and I am just figuring out that the major I switch to so I could graduate in 2015 is where I am supposed to be. I wish I would have been more active in getting to know others here at WOU but I am shy and I busied myself in homework every single day that is all I did.
38	It is. I've been able to meet new people; learn new things; gain skills that will help me in the future, both personally and for a career; attend various events; and figure out what I want to do with my life.
39	To be frank, it is what I expected, though for the non major classes, it is very hard to find relevance/interest and it feels more of a waste of my time and effort, as well as that of the instructor where they could be doing more productive things. On the other hand, certain major classes were more than relevant and challenging, though overall I feel as though I wasn't challenged enough, or truly pushed myself past the realm of the material in class.
40	Yes, for the most part. I think this is because I did a lot of research before attending.
41	Yes. Because I did not have set expectations for college. I did not know what to expect.
42	Not really. I thought I'd have a more active social life.
43	It is not what I expected. I didn't think I would change my major and career goals at least 8 times. I came into Western my freshman year with a plan, or so I thought, but everything is a learning experience, so it is okay that it isn't what I thought it would be.
44	Yes. I am learning much more than I thought I would, and the community here, especially with the small size of the school, is great.
45	I didn't really know what to expect so I can't really say.
46	Actually, they have exceeded my expectations. I, like most kids from my town, only had the 80's movie representation of college. But college has taught me so

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	many things that it is getting hard to remember all of the information.
47	I'm not meeting as many people as I thought I would, but that also has to do with the fact that I'm not that good at making friends and the groups I'm in currently don't really allow time for me to join other groups.
48	It's not because Monmouth is boring over the weekends and it's hard to find people to hang out with because people always go home.
49	Yes, it is. I feel that I am learning a lot and am even now (only in my second year) more prepared for what I want to do with the rest of my life.
50	Yes. I love meeting new people and having fun.
51	Yes. I came to college expecting to work hard and that is what I am doing. I am also learning to manage my time.
52	My experience at WOU absolutely is. The liberal arts curriculum clicks with the way I think and has helped me think about the world and myself in ways I had never imagined.
53	My college experience delivered more than what I expected of it. I received an amazing education, grew as a person, found friends for life, and found dreams I never realized I had.
54	yes, although sometimes I wonder if it is worth the cost
55	Not really, the only thing I was looking forward to was ASL classes and I tested into the wrong ASL class.
56	Yes. I am in an extremely social and academically challenging environment just as I thought it would be.
57	Yes and no because it exceeded my expectations. I thought college would be great, but it was better than that. I was able to learn a lot about myself this year and it has been a wonderful experience.
58	It has exceeded my expectations. Before I began college, I thought college would be more like one of those ridiculous tween shows where there is drama every which way you turn and the issues are resolved within a 30 minute time slot. Now that I am actually a part of the community, I see that these representations we give to children come nowhere close to the true experience that is college. Since enrolling at Western, I have become more academically motivated, more involved in my school and local community, and, most importantly, have learned to accept myself and those around me without judgment.
59	It definitely is
60	No, it is not; I didn't have really high expectations, but I hoped there would be more emphasis on learning for its own sake. I am disappointed by students' attitudes and the ways some professors cater to them. I also resent it when professors teach their opinions as fact.
61	I believe that college is more of a time for one-self to personally develop rather than gain an extensive amount of intellectual knowledge. I thought my college experience was going to be a lot different. Many times, I have found myself having to go back to the basics because of university requirements. When I

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	have to go back to the basics, I find my motivation for school plummeting. I also find my motivation plummeting because some of the information that I am learning in class I happened to not agree with because of my own beliefs.
62	No, it's just much different than I expected it to be.
63	No. I want to have the stereotypical college experience with memorable events and zany stories. I don't believe I've had that experience and it makes me rather sad. I feel like I'm wasting my time at school.
64	Yes, but only because I really search hard for opportunities. I do not think my university does that good of a job advertising them.
65	No
66	Yes, it truly is! I have grown so much from attending college and am looking forward to see what comes next.
67	No
68	Yes, I've had an amazing college experience these past two years and I can't wait for the next few years to come as well.
69	At first it did not, once I transferred to WOU and sat with an advisor who gave me a spreadsheet of my path to graduation.
70	Technical coursework is laid out for you and what you learn makes sense to you for the career you will be working in. Higher education makes no sense. What does dance, philosophy and college algebra have to do with my ability to teach in a technical school? Most of the courses I have taken have been nothing more than hoops to jump through to prove that I am educated. Oh, and my definition of an educated person is that they have proven that they can sit through and pay for the same boring classes everyone else has. It is club initiation that has nothing to do with if you are educated or not.
71	Yes and no, I knew that some classes would be hard, but then I thought there would not be as much help as there is (aka writing center and math help).
72	Yes, because I wanted to have a small school with teachers that knew me. I am a little disappointed in WOU's social and campus life.
73	For the most part.
74	Yes
75	Yes. I feel as if my education has been delivered well as well as I have had the opportunity to participate in numerous leadership experiences.
76	Yes. I am learning the skills that I will need for my job.
77	Yes I chose this school for the dry campus and small community
78	yes, I expected to learn a lot and pay a lot.
79	It is exceeding my expectations. Being in a leadership role has helped me grow personally and professionally. I have enjoyed my experience at WOU.
80	Yes and no. I love Western and the educational experience but financial aid issues and working school around my life is harder than expected.
81	It was very difficult almost for the entire 4 years I have been here. Towards the end when the actual knowledge kicked in, it made sense why I chose higher ed.
82	A little bit. since it is not a big university there are many little things to do here

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	but I guess it is not so bad.
83	Yes, mostly. I enjoy the campus life, but I do not feel very connected to the community.
84	Yes. I have gotten amazing opportunities such as traveling, becoming a stronger leader, and gotten to know faculty at a more personal level.
85	Yes, it's more than an education. I am leaning about myself and taking advantage of leadership opportunities!
86	Yes, I knew I would be mentally stimulated and have opportunities that I would have not had if I didn't attend college. However, the social aspect is not what I expected.
87	Yes, it is what I expected. I'm learning quite a bit. Looking forward to graduating soon and then working!
88	No
89	This is how I pictured college, and although it has not always been easy, it has been a good path.
90	School is school. You are there to learn and show that you have learned. Is it hard? yes. Is it stressful? yes but totally worth it. I have learned so much and that is exactly what I am in school for.
91	Yes. I love it here at Western!
92	College is everything i wanted and more. I can't see my life without coming to school. I also feel like i have grown and matured more than i ever thought possible. Coming to college was the best decision i ever made because it has given me more experience in different areas than i knew existed.
93	I think so. Like I said, I am really happy here at WOU and I can't imagine being anywhere else.
94	It is what I expected because I know that it will be a lot more challenging than High School, and it would take a lot more studying to succeed in college.
95	I expected a little more but it's my own fault for not being more involved in school activities, till the very end. I did not experience the stereotype of college but I'm glade, this made the entire experience more pleasant.
96	Yes. Though I do not want to be in school I am still learning and not wasting time or money. College has given me many useful experiences and lessons that I can take with me once I have finished my education.
97	Somewhat.
98	For the most part yes. While I may have made a different decision had I know what I would end up studying I do not regret the one I made. I have been largely content with my choice.
99	YEs, because students are responsible for their own homework, transportation, and whatever else that might interfere with schooling. Also, the ideas and desires a student has have is to be linear, organized and fully responsible for their homework.
100	I have gotten way more out of college than I ever anticipated. Networking skills, how to plan and manage time, and understanding processes for life skills.

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101	No, It is not, I did not get everything I wanted out of it, mostly because I did not know what I wanted at first
102	Yes. College is delivering what I expected. It is full of social and academic situations.
103	No, my college experience has not been what I expected. What is expected from college is the "American Dream." After college, you're suppose to be able to find a job, work towards paying off your student loans, and buy a home with your partner. The career center on campus has been less than helpful in find a job for me that pays above \$13/hr. The current job market is bleak and the idea of being crushed underneath the weight of my student loans is quite burdensome. I am aware that I am have taken on this debt with my own accord but stressing over how I am going pay off my loan and survive on a shoe-string budget is something I could do without.
104	Yes, I am a lifelong learner, so I excel in the college setting.
105	Yes; I admit I do feel overwhelmed at times, BUT the reward of a job well done far exceeds that overwhelming feeling.
106	As an education major, I have been very happy with the Ed program that Western has. Aside from my specific experience in the education department, I do not feel like Western challenged me to the extent I had expected from a four year degree, although I will say that is partially my own fault. Living in a college community as small as Monmouth was another than I was not expecting. I imagined all college communities to have a bit more going on a regular basis but I would say I enjoyed Monmouth while I lived there for the most part.
107	I would say in a way. I put forth the energy and the results based on my efforts.
108	Yes and No.
109	Yes, I have learned lots and decided what really interests me in school and what I enjoy.
110	It was way harder than I thought it would be. I also thought I would make closer friends but overall it is what i expected.
111	For the first two years of college at Chemeketa, no, it was not what I had expected at all. After transferring to Western, yes, and then some. CCC was just kind of depressing really, I was growing academically, but not personally. It was just school and hardly any interaction with people my age. WOU provided me personal development opportunities, experiences, and people who shared new ideas/perspectives and life experiences.
112	Yes :)
113	Yes. I am receiving knowledge through my coursework and professional development through my on-campus employment.
114	yes, learned lots and it's getting me ready for a job I want.

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115	Yes. I have really enjoyed all the people I have met and so far am enjoying most of my classes. I am very happy with the size of the school.
116	It is more. Wou has given me an education in leadership that I never thought I could be a part of. I feel more ready and confident to take on the real world.
117	I think it is, I'm definitely doing what I expected to be doing in college and I remember when I first started college how much I liked it when compared to high school.
118	Yes, although I did not have a clear expectation of college before I got here. I knew that Western had fewer or smaller degree programs than other state schools because it is smaller. The class sizes and accessibility to teachers is better than in other schools, also because of the size of the school.
119	Yes and no. I expected to be an undergraduate for four years and it has now been nearly six years. As far as experience and learning goes, I feel like my experience has lived up to my expectations thus far.
120	Yes - college has challenged me. I have learned much about myself, my field, and the world. No - illness has created many challenges throughout my college career.
121	I feel like it is. I am learning a lot about topics I love and get to focus on what I want to do in the future.
122	Yes because I'm on the right track to graduate
123	I thought college would be a little more challenging and prepare me for the real world more. I have been disappointed with that aspect of school.
124	Didn't expect anything. Once you've worked yourself to death in the military, nothing is ever going to be that difficult.
125	Well, not quite. In the 6 years of being a student, I still don't know what I learned; academically ... Personal growth has been outstanding though. Receiving a degree in personal growth sounds like a better option, really
126	No. When I was in high school, I believed I'd be going to a University and be living on campus and have the full "college experience." That didn't happen. However, that was my own fault. I put all my eggs into one expensive basket and when I couldn't afford to go I went to a community college. I let my husband talk me out of college so I could work full time and then I had to go back to college later on in life. By that time I was too established in life and focused on the next level to have the full "college experience."

Do you think you put in enough effort, time, and interest into your post-high school options? (While you were still enrolled in high school.)

Yes: 64 responses No: 52 responses No answer: 10 participants

Student	Response
1	No. I just knew I wanted sports and I had some interest in a major. I had not thought about what I would do with that major, what I wanted to get out of college, and exactly what my goals were. I just knew I needed to go and I chose something that was distant from home, a good school, and affordable. I

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	wish I had thought more about where I wanted to go and what my goals were for the future. It seemed rushed and I had no idea what I wanted to do or get out of college.
2	Yes. I took college courses.
3	Yes, because I knew the degree I wanted to pursue.
4	No. I had little motivation to research and little available information on what my options were after school.
5	College was really never not the option. I didn't want to pursue other options.
6	
7	yes, I looked everywhere
8	Yes, I think I did.
9	I ended up where I ultimately want to be, but I am not sure that you can really plan for what your experience will be and where will work for you the best. I put a lot of time into researching on my own, but did not outreach to others about the institutions I was looking into much, which could have been beneficial. I don't know where more time would have put me. I put in at least adequate time to learn that attending Western would make me happy and it did, but I don't know that I put in enough effort. My family could not help me with the college search except for emotionally supporting me. I could have asked my counselor, but I don't honestly remember much of what we talked about regarding specific colleges. We talked about what I could do in high school to increase my chances of being accepted into the institution I wanted.
10	Yes, I knew that I wanted to teach and WOU is known for its education program. After talking with family, friends and teachers it was the clear choice for me.
11	I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher so the next logical step for me was to go to college. If I had known better in high school I would have taken classes and done volunteer work that would better help with my degree.
12	No. I should have applied to more scholarships.
13	yes
14	I put in as much effort as i needed to get to college, and I wish i could have found a retail job at some point in high school so that job hunting wouldn't be such a pain in the butt.
15	I think I made the right choice to come to Western. I don't even wish I checked out more schools because at the end of the day I knew Western was the school for me. Everything about Western is unique and perfect for me.
16	I was satisfied while being employed all four years I was here.
17	I honestly didn't, my main goal was just getting into a 4 year school the next fall and not really looking past that.
18	
19	Yes.
20	yes.
21	I think I did.
22	No. I think I made the right choice, but I should not have been so whimsy

Why College?: Making the Decision

	about it. I should have looked for other things, like internships and career things before delving into going straight to college.
23	<p>I'm not sure, to be completely honest. I thought I was on the right path (I wanted to be a veterinarian for 8 years). I volunteered and job-shadowed in my field, sought out a very well-known school to visit and potentially apply to in Colorado, did everything right. Then, suddenly I no longer had a desire to pursue that career anymore.</p> <p>I felt completely lost in what I wanted to pursue, and now--four years later and a month and a half away from graduation--I still am lost. So it feels to me as though I didn't put in enough time or effort in my options, but the reality is that I completely did, I just changed my mind.</p>
24	Perhaps not, but I'm happy with how it turned out.
25	
26	
27	I could have looked into more universities, maybe, but I think I got lucky landing at the first/only school I applied to. I'm happy here.
28	No. I could have spent more time researching colleges. I still believe I picked the best college, but I should have spent more time researching.
29	Yes
30	Since price was the biggest factor and I refused to go to community college just because of the stigma of it I really limited my own options.
31	Yes, I think I did. I worked hard to search my options and made sure that I made the decision that overall made me the happiest, I didn't base my decision on other people's opinions.
32	I was amazingly busy and involved in high school and driven to find a good higher education path. The only thing I would have changed was putting more effort into studying for the ACT and SAT for increased scholarship funding.
33	In high school I put a lot of time in researching what I thought I wanted to do and where I thought I wanted to go, but I did not end up where I thought I was going to end up and I'm not pursuing what I thought I would.
34	Yes
35	No. I just always thought I would go to college. It wasn't a question. I never considered other options, other than a few thoughts about not going to college and traveling instead.
36	Yes.
37	I knew I was going to college just did not know where.
38	I always planned on attending university after high school, so doing something other than that was never a serious consideration.
39	As my options were mostly set, I could have certainly put more effort into my specific fields of study, in finding departments of different universities and what they had to offer, or find technical schools that focus on similar topics.
40	Yes
41	Yes
42	Not really. I could've done more and probably gotten more scholarships.

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43	I don't think I spent enough time really understanding what I was getting into when I decided on my major and career goals, as well as my paths and options for getting there.
44	No. This is what I would have liked to do more of. I waited too long to apply to colleges, and that hurt my scholarships.
45	I didn't have any interest in going to college so I didn't really spend much time looking at several different colleges. I picked Western because of the size and degree program and just stopped looking.
46	Given the resources available to me, I would say that I gave enough if not more effort in my post-high school options.
47	
48	Not really.
49	Yes
50	Yes.
51	I think I could have put in more time. Maybe I could have applied to some schools that were farther away or searched for more scholarships.
52	I didn't think of much outside of college while in high school - but I think that has worked out for me. I was offered a full-time position working for a newspaper as a freshman but turned that down to complete my degree, and that was the right choice, for me, at that time.
53	I think I did. The first time I visited WOU, I was a sophomore in high school. From that point on, I never questioned my decision, so i think that two years was plenty of time.
54	No
55	Yes and no. Yes because I knew which school I was going to and no because I should have applied for more scholarships.
56	No. I could have looked into other programs in the medical field aside from going to a four year university more.
57	Yes I think I looked enough into other pathways and came to the conclusion that college would be the best place for me.
58	Yes, I believe so. I feel that I chose a school that very well suits both my academic and personal needs.
59	Yes
60	Yes, I think so.
61	I believe that I spent a good amount of time looking into college. I was never really interested in any other options, so I just went with what I knew and what I wanted to do.
62	No
63	No.
64	No I wish I would have spent at least two hours a week my senior year.
65	
66	I think so, I knew I wanted to go to a University and only looked into those options because it was what was best for me.
67	

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68	Yes, I think I put a lot of interest into my future after high school.
69	No, I don't believe I planned my post-high school options out at all. UO didn't even have the program I wanted to go to school for.
70	Having a high school diploma with coursework geared toward my field of interest has helped me.
71	Oh yes, I wanted my GPA to be a nice number and I did my SAT and ACT a little early so that way in my Jr. year of HS i applied and was accepted the start of my senior year of HS. I also did things like JROTC and took a pep class that did helpful stuff around school. I even took an AP class to get credit that would go into college and count as a HS class.
72	No not at all. I didn't think about college until I was enrolled in a college writing class and my teacher started lecturing about getting into college and how you need to start early.
73	Well I know I was going to college so I didn't look up other opportunities.
74	Yes, once I decided on a school I spent the rest of my time invested into scholarship applications. I still currently have zero college debt. Also, right out of high school I applied to the forest service as a wild land firefighter, which has greatly helped me get through college. Any money that my scholarships don't cover, this job has!
75	Yes. I knew what I wanted to do after high school and I made sure I perused that.
76	I put in no thought while I was in high school. No one told me I should,
77	I feel like I put in the right amount of time
78	No, I should have had a gap year, I had great academic maturity at 17 years, but not enough emotional maturity.
79	I am sure I could've put more time into searching for other alternatives, but I had very little knowledge about how to get myself out there, so I didn't take a lot of chances.
80	No I think I should have spent more time looking at ways to pay for college. I knew nothing about OSAC and scholarships and other programs that would have helped me bridge the huge gap I had.
81	Some what. I was very involved in my community, had multiple jobs with the school district. I was some what ready, just not academically prepared.
82	Sure why not!
83	Somewhat. I did it all last minute.
84	No. I wish I would have applied for more scholarships.
85	Yes, but barley.
86	I believe I did, however I should have given more consideration to leaving my home town.
87	No I do not.
88	
89	I never really considered any other options other than going to a four year university.
90	No, I did not put a lot of effort into it. I knew I was going to college and that was it. I was going to make it happen whether I knew what I wanted to be or

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	not. Any effort I put into -post-high school options went to getting my classes ready for fall term at UCC following high school.
91	Yes
92	
93	Yes. I put a lot of thought into what I wanted and since I wanted to be a teacher more than anything, college was the only option.
94	I think I did put in enough effort, time, and interest into my post-high school options.
95	No, not at all, I didn't really know what I wanted to do and didn't really feel like I had enough support for anyone to help me choose. I always knew I would go to college for sure but studying for what, I wasn't sure. I wasn't till two years after I started coming to school here that I really decided what I wanted to major in.
96	Looking back now it would have been nice to have explored more options but then I was not interested enough.
97	yes.
98	I feel I did. However, the effort was spearheaded by my mother (and then me) as I rarely set foot in my high school after my sophomore year. I was instead attending courses at the local University to complete my graduation requirements.
99	Hell ya, sometimes I think I went overboard with the studying and worries I had at both colleges.
100	I think that I could have thought more about graduate school, especially in the career field of gerontology. I wish that I would have planned more out while I was in high school and in college.
101	No I wish I had applied to higher level schools and earned the grades to get into them
102	No, I think that I should have researched more on what I wanted to do when I graduated.
103	I would say that one can never put in effort toward these feats; however, I was a slacker in high school with decent degrades. I do believe that I put in some effort into my college options while I was in high school.
104	Yes
105	N/A
106	Yes I do, overall I am very happy with the education I received through WOU.
107	I don't think i put in enough time, but I also didn't completely disregard my preparedness for school.
108	Yes
109	I don't think I put very much thought into it. Most students at my school were already planning on going to Oregon State or University of Oregon so I thought those might be the options for me as well. I was never really exposed to other schools until my senior year.
110	Yes.
111	No, not at all. I had no idea where to even begin looking, and I think it was a bit overwhelming for me so I went with the sure-thing/easy option.

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112	Yes.
113	I do. I considered alternate options and researched their feasibility, and then decided a college degree would be more affordable and practical for my goals.
114	yes
115	Yes I believe so.
116	Not at all.
117	No, I think I could have definitely put in more time and effort into looking at more options. WOU was just one of the first and easiest options that I had, so I didn't really continue to look after that.
118	I think I weighed my options carefully and put a lot of effort into the process of applying for college. I took college preparatory courses. I remember the process being very stressful.
119	yes
120	At the time, yes, it was enough. If I were to do it over again, knowing what I know now, though, in regards to my desired field of choice, I may have taken a different route.
121	I think that I did.
122	Yes
123	I do. I was very involved in high school more so than in college. I was doing so many things to build my resume and help me when I was applying to college.
124	I had quite a few jobs and learned a lot, I gave enough time and effort.
125	Not at all! I didn't put in any effort.
126	No. I feel like I had a fair-moderate understanding of what school to give me if I went onto college, but I didn't take high school as seriously as I wished now that I would have.

Before attending college, did you have a realistic idea of how much your degree would cost you?

Yes: 58 responses No: 67 responses Undetermined: 1 response

Student	Response
1	No. I knew people said it would cost a lot, but now I actually understand just how much. In high school I never had real experience managing money and understanding how much everything would be. Now I see it is a lot and it's stressful.
2	Yes, and no. I relied on family support.
3	No, not at all. The "sticker price" of college makes it seem unrealistic to be able to attend to afford to go to school at a university, but with additional research it can be done. Scholarships/grants really help lower the cost of college.
4	I thought I would have a lot of debt but it has actually cost less than expected.
5	No, I overestimated big time.
6	no
7	Sort of...

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8	I knew that college was expensive, but didn't really realize how expensive it was. I planned on applying for a bunch of scholarships and my parents were willing to help me make up the difference because they knew I'd worked really hard to pay for it myself.
9	I more or less had a realistic idea of how much my degree would cost. I researched prices of institutions and was nervous about the costs knowing that my mom could not help me pay for college at all. In the end, though, I have paid and owe a lot less than I expected to. Part of that is due to jobs I have worked and some scholarships for being in my specific major as a woman. Part of it is work I did in high school to receive renewable scholarships and grants. I only acquired debt my first year and one or two terms here, and have been able to pay everything up front since then, which was unexpected. I came in with no idea how I was going to pay for everything, but a stubborn attitude that I could do it if I really wanted to. I'm not sure yet how to pay back what I owe since I don't have a stable job for after I graduate, but in talking with people I have learned that I owe a lot less than normal with ~\$7-8,000 in debt.
10	No, I believed that scholarships were more readily available for all. I have been able to cut costs through scholarships and work and feel fortunate that I owe the average. That being said, I still believe that a college degree costs more than most people anticipate.
11	I knew that college was going to be expensive but I never had a number to work with. I just filled out as many scholarship applications as I could.
12	Not really, I didn't know until this year. It will cost a lot.
13	Yes, I knew ahead of time that my degree was going to be incredibly expensive, especially because I knew I wanted to continue on to graduate school, so I applied for numerous scholarships and financial aid.
14	I knew from the beginning that college would bend both me and my family over the table, but I thought at the time it would be worth it. However recently I have begun to wish that I could just work instead of attend school due to my specialty and favorite subject History has been cut to pieces and dumbed down for the reason of the lack of "business importance" and it has caused me to hate more and more the educational system in this god damned country.
15	I knew that I would have to take out a ton of loans and I finally came to terms with the idea of that this year. I don't like it, but it had to happen.
16	I had no clue, I really wish I did!
17	I did, with the help of my parents i won't have to cover the entire bill but i did take out a personal student loan that i will need to pay back upon my graduation.
18	no
19	Yes.

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20	yes.
21	I knew that my degree would cost a lot of money. I don't think I realized how I would have to pay for it all myself and only have a few scholarships. I thought my parents would be helping me, and since they aren't, I thought I could get grants, which I can't because my EFC is too high.
22	Yes.
23	I don't believe I understood completely how much others have had to pay for their education; however, I am extremely fortunate and will not have any loans to pay back to due the scholarships I received.
24	Yes, 80,000 at WOU
25	Nope!
26	no
27	Not really. I knew that wherever I ended up, it was going to cost way more than what I had or would be able to earn. I think I was expecting to get more scholarships and have to pay for less, and though I still got a lot of scholarships and grants, I'm coming away with more student loans than I expected in high school.
28	Yes, my family helped me expect exactly what I was getting myself into.
29	Yes
30	I knew I'd be broke for the rest of my life. Lol. I saw my parents still paying off their school so I knew it was a huge financial commitment.
31	Yes and no. I knew and expected it to be expensive, but knowing something and experiencing it are two totally different ball games. Watching my money disappear into the oblivion of tuition, housing, textbooks, and everything else scares the crap out of me, I would be lying if I said it didn't. But I keep going because I know that in the long run, it will be well worth the investment even though it doesn't seem so right now.
32	No. College is exorbitantly expensive!! My parents had put away money and told me that they would help fund my undergraduate degree; any further education would have to be out of my pocket. While I am incredibly luck and fortunate, I always tried my best because I knew that they were putting a huge financial investment in my future.
33	My family never talked about money, I just knew that I would get a degree. I knew that college was expensive so I assumed I would graduate with mounds and mounds of debt, but as of now I am on track to have none.
34	No
35	Not at all. At the beginning of sophomore year, I realized that I had a lot of loans and that I had no way to pay them off before graduating. Also, the job market is terrible and so there will be no guarantee that I will be able to use my degree to pay off my loans. This added a huge amount of stress to my personal health.
36	Not at all. College is way more expensive than I thought all the little fees that add up, and don't get me started on the cost of living on campus.

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37	I did not I just knew some colleges were going to be expensive and some are not has expensive as others.
38	I guessed I would be in debt by around \$20,000 at the end of four years (I'm at \$27,000), and my parents would have another chunk (through the Parent PLUS loan). I knew I would have to take out loans, though I was able to get a few in-school scholarships which helped greatly.
39	For me personally, I cannot accurately say as I knew my parents could fully supply my financials, though this was not an expectation. All told, (after scholarships and the like) I expected the actual out of pocket costs for WOU after 4 years to be around 18-24K (just for school expense and dorming, not including other living expenses outside school), which seems to be near correct in looking at summaries, and all told with my personal financials/parents/scholarships I will have no debts.
40	Yes, I was well aware of costs of attendance
41	Kind of. I kept track of the renewable scholarships and interest free loans.
42	Nope.
43	I spent a great deal of time calculating the costs associated with getting my degree. I know, with confidence, just how much it will cost to complete my bachelors and have taken the time to figure how I would afford it. I took and continue to take advantage of scholarship and grant opportunities, I work part time, and have made reasonable expectations of what I can afford and when I do need other financial assistance like loans.
44	Yes. I knew that it would be pretty expensive, but my parents have been helping me out with payments for college.
45	Yes I did and I worked summers all through high school to earn as much money as I could before students loans would be necessary.
46	Nope, didn't know what I wanted to major in til the beginning of my second year.
47	I knew it would cost a lot, but it wasn't until I actually had to fork over \$4,000 out of my own pocket for fall term that it hit me.
48	I had about an estimate of \$20,000 a year.
49	I had a pretty realistic idea, however with the unexpected help of my family I will be graduating with a lot less debt than I originally expected.
50	Yes. i knew it would cost a lot
51	Yes. I was planning to get a job and to try to keep my cost of school down by budgeting time and money.
52	Nope! Just a fuzzy picture that it would be "expensive" but no idea what that actually meant how to pay for it, or what the actual expenses would look like. My plan was to see how it went, knowing that I had lots (perhaps an unusually large amount) of scholarship support.
53	Honestly, no. I knew it would be expensive, college always is, but I knew that I would be able to find a way to pay for it.
54	No

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55	Kind of, I had an idea through researching the schools tuition price.
56	No. My mom said that she would find a way to pay for college and not to stress about it. However, circumstances have changed and now I have to find a way to pay for it without much help for her or financial aid due to my mom's rather high gross income. I am now realizing that I will be in huge student debt if I go for a career as a doctor. Hopefully it will be worth it.
57	I had a pretty good idea but not a good plan.
58	Yes, because I did my research. The cost of college was one of the biggest influences on where I would be attending school, and I feel that I have made the right choice financially. I have had several opportunities for scholarships, and have not had much need for student loans, making it easier for me to start my life after I graduate.
59	Yes
60	Yes; I researched the cost of tuition, considering books, fees, gas, and parking.
61	I had a somewhat realistic idea of how much my degree would cost. I knew that college was expensive, and I knew that I did not have the money to pay for it unless I took out loans. I remember being very optimistic when I would receive financial aid packages back, though, especially from my top three schools as I really wanted to go to them. I tried really hard to crunch the numbers and make them work - trying to get my parents to see that it was not that big of a deal taking out \$20,000 a school year. If I did not have my parents input, though, then I would have probably ended up in extreme debt because I would have gone to a school that would have put me \$80,000 to \$100,000 in debt after four years. My parents also made me see think about the long term plan, instead of just freshman year. They warned me that many times universities will not give you as much financial aid your second, third, or fourth year. They just give you a good financial aid package your first year to get your foot in the door.
62	No, I didn't
63	Yes, but I didn't have a plan to pay for the degree.
64	Not really.
65	No
66	Yes, I had a fairly good idea. I knew that no matter what college I chose I would have to pay off my loans after, so I chose the one that best suited my plans.
67	yes, I got many scholarships, and lived with friends and family to keep the cost down
68	Sort of, I know it's expensive but my parents and I are working it out so it's possible.
69	I knew it would be a lot but never had a concrete idea of how much.
70	I had been able to pay as I went over the years. I graduated with my Associates Degree with no debt. I have not been able to do that this time. I am hopeful that I will find work that will allow me to pay off my school debt

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	quickly. As an older student with a profession, I hope that will happen.
71	Not really, but I knew I could have the FASFA and the VA cover my classes for me and when I was done with classes I could pay off my FASFA.
72	I knew college was expensive but I have no idea! I am almost 70,000 dollars in debt and don't even have a degree yet. It's not just money for classes that is expensive but you have to pay to live while you aren't working too.
73	Yes and no.
74	I did, that's why I was able to cover the costs of a 40,000 dollar private university and am still able to go to college without the weight of debt on my shoulders. I work really hard every year to apply for scholarships to go to school.
75	Yes, my plan was to utilize scholarships as I knew my grades were good as well as student loans.
76	No. I didn't think about it.
77	Oh yeah but education is important
78	yes I had done the scholarships and degree analysis, In fact with scholarships I am not a penny in debit.
79	Yes, I looked up the cost of tuition
80	No!!! I definitely had no clue how much it was going to cost me or how much the interest was going add over the years.
81	no... And so now that I am graduating in the spring with 19,000+ in debt its a little reality check.
82	no!
83	No. I thought I would get tons of financial aid.
84	Yes. My plan was financial aid, scholarships, and grants.
85	Not at all.
86	Not at all. I knew college was expensive but didn't realize the extreme financial burden I was placing on my family.
87	Yes I did. I took out one small loan, I work quite a bit, and I received a scholarship.
88	No
89	I knew it would be a lot, and I would acquire a lot of debt regardless. I also knew that if I went to a private institution it would be more.
90	I knew it would be a lot of money but didn't really want to think about how expensive it would be because that would damper my spirits and perhaps it would have lessened by resolve of going to college.
91	Yes. I am currently on loans, but I have a plan for paying them off.
92	I knew my degree was going to be expensive and i thought that there was no way i could pay it off but i was able to find help even if it was in loans. I think that even though its extremely expensive its and investment to my future.
93	I had somewhat of an idea what it would cost, which is part of the reason why I chose WOU over George Fox.
94	Before attending college, I did not have a realistic idea of how much my

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	degree would cost me. I just knew that all I had to pay for was the loans that I take out once I graduate. Wish I would've thought more about it than I had.
95	No, I knew it would be expensive but it actually turned out to be cheaper than I thought. I come from a very low income home so I always received big amounts in grants plus scholarships I had every year. Right now I owe more than I would have wanted to but its because I traveled with my financial aid money. I was in an exchange program and had to pay for the dorms with student loans that I never needed in the past because all my classes were fully paid for in grants and scholarships. I also participated in two service trips, that where an amazing experience due to attending WOU.
96	Yes I believe I had a realistic idea of how much my degree would cost and a solid financial plan.
97	No not necessarily.
98	I was actually expecting it to be more expensive. However, that is due to scholarships and the set tuition that I had at WOU. Prior to coming here, my exposure focused on an in-state institution that raised tuition as much as possible every year, making it rival the cost of private schools.
99	Hell no, all I had in mind was applying for FAFSA and counting on the grants to pay off all of my shit (tuition) and getting some loans when I was going a University and sometimes thought about scholarships but really did count on them because of the high volume of applicants.
100	I thought it would be much cheaper and that I would get more scholarships for all the things that I've done.
101	yes
102	No, my mom always just told me that it was worth it. She never actually discussed with me how much I would be in debt after graduation. I wish my school counselor would have shared more information about the cost of college.
103	I had a general idea of how much it may have cost. I planned on applying for scholarships for to pay for college. I never received any, including the ones that had me prove that it was an income-based need which made me wonder if I'm living on food stamps and have an out of work mother, who the heck is poorer than I am? I ended paying for college with student loans, Pell grants, and money brought in by my part time jobs.
104	Yes, scholarships, grants, loans, and working
105	Yes; which is part of the reason I hesitated. I am so thankful for the financial aid and grants that have been made available to me. It is such a blessing. Attending WOU was not as expensive as I assumed, and I am pleasantly surprised by this.
106	Yes I did, my family and I have been putting money aside for it my whole life. I will be debt free when I graduate due to those savings, support from my parents, and working throughout the last five years. Also, my parents chose to have my two sisters and I five years apart so they would never have to pay for

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	college for more than one child at a time.
107	I had no idea. I didn't realize getting a higher education would cost me so much per class/per term/per year.
108	Yes. Loans, Loans and more loans.
109	I did somewhat, knew I would come out with loans that I will have to pay back but feel that pretty much everyone has this sort of debt going to school.
110	Yes but I thought I would get more scholarships. I didn't realize that most scholarships ran out after the first year. I always knew I would have to take student loans. I also thought my parents would help me more.
111	I had some idea, but I didn't worry about it too much because my parents had set up a college fund for me. I didn't really ever worry or think about if we had enough money to pay for it all until my senior year of college when those funds ran low.
112	I knew it would cost a lot and that I wouldn't be able to afford it without taking out some loans but I know it will all be worth it in the end.
113	Yes and no. I had a ball-park figure, but I wasn't thinking of dollars-and-cents. Halfway through my college experience now, I feel much more aware and involved with the financial cost. This is because I am 100% responsible for my finances and paying for school, the debt is not being incurred by a family member.
114	yep
115	I had an idea of what a large cost it would be and I worked out a plan with my parents.
116	Nope, I thought it would be 20k at most but that was about 2 years of college. I am lucky i got grants to help pay. But my college degree is like a mortgage on my future goals. It is way expensive but its better then working an entry level job.
117	I knew that it was going to be really expensive, and I would be paying it off for years afterward. I pay for everything through loans, grants, work and scholarships, so I know that I will have significant debt afterward, but I plan on having a career that will help me to pay it off relatively quickly.
118	I don't think I had a realistic idea of how much a degree would cost and I was mostly dependent on scholarships to pay for my degree. I did consider cost when picking which college I would attend.
119	No. I didn't realize how long it would take me and I didn't realize that tuition costs would increase year by year (unless at WOU).
120	Not really. I knew it would be a lot. However, my first year was covered as my father was an employee. The rest was covered by Post 9-11 GI Bill.
121	I didn't really have much of an idea, but did look at information about estimated costs at each school I applied to.
122	Not really
123	I had a very good idea how much it was going to cost me and my family. We all sacrificed to make college a real dream for me.

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124	Thankfully I have the 9/11 G.I. Bill, so I would say I had a pretty good idea. I did end up going for a small loan, but that was just for convenience.
125	Nope! I'll be over 65 thousand dollars in debt ... Not sure what I'm supposed to do with that now ...
126	I don't know if anyone could really have a realistic idea of how much the degree costs. Even if you are told exact and factual numbers, to a high school student, I just thought, "Well, I'll be a lawyer before I have to deal with that and I'll be making six figures, so school will be easy to pay off." No, I don't think I had a realistic idea of how much it would cost.

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