

Community College: FAQs

What is community college?

Community college is the most common type of two-year college. These colleges offer many types of educational programs, including those that lead to associate degrees and certificates. Certificates and some types of associate degrees focus on career readiness. Other types of associate degrees are good preparation for study at a four-year college where graduates can earn a bachelor's degree.

Can I get financial aid?

Even though tuition at community colleges is usually low, financial aid is available. The Federal Pell Grant, for example, is open to students attending any accredited postsecondary institution. You can even qualify if you go part time.

Who goes to community college?

More than 40 percent of U.S. undergraduate students attend community colleges. Students who are 18 to 24 years old make up the largest age group. Community colleges also attract working adults, retirees and others who want to learn.

Why should I consider going to one?

At a community college, you can:

- **Save money.** Costs are generally much lower than those at four-year colleges. On average, students at two-year colleges pay less than \$3,000 a year for tuition and fees.
- **Prepare for transfer to a four-year college.** Many community college graduates decide to transfer and complete their bachelor's degrees. Planning in advance can help ensure that the credits you earn will count toward your degree at the four-year college you hope to attend. Get more information about transferring, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/tips-on-college-transferring-from-a-2-year-to-a-4-year-college>
- **Get ready for a career.** If you want to enter the workforce sooner, you can earn a certificate or degree in a career-oriented field, such as firefighting or engineering technology.
- **Try out college.** Most programs are open admission. This means that you can go to college even if your high school grades are not strong. A community college is also a

good option if you are not sure you are ready for college. You will have a chance to challenge yourself and see if college is right for you.

- **Take advantage of a flexible schedule.** Most community colleges are convenient — you can attend full time or part time, and you can schedule your courses around home and work commitments. There is a campus within a short driving distance of almost every town in the United States.

How can a community college help me decide what to do with my life?

You can explore different subjects before committing to a program, without having to be too concerned about tuition costs. If you take a wide range of courses — including those in the liberal arts and those that are career oriented — you can check out many different options in one place. Many community colleges offer intensive counseling that can help you assess your abilities, interests and education options.

Why do I have to work hard in high school if open admission is common?

In order to succeed in college, you need a solid foundation in reading, writing and math skills. Unless you build them in high school, you may have to take remedial, or catch-up, courses when you arrive at a community college. They are also called developmental or basic skills courses. These courses do not count toward your degree, so graduating will take you longer and cost you more if you are not prepared.

You will probably take placement tests when you start college. The results will show whether you need to take any catch-up courses before beginning college-level study.

Is there an on-campus community?

Unlike residential colleges, many community colleges lack on-campus housing — most students live nearby. Therefore, many of these colleges make a special effort to build a sense of community on campus. You will find a wide variety of activities, similar to those at four-year colleges.

Has anyone famous gone to community college?

Plenty of high achievers started out at community college. Here is a short list of successful alumni:

- Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet
- Eileen Collins, former National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut
- Joyce Luther Kennard, California Supreme Court justice
- Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former United Nations ambassador
- Nolan Ryan, retired Major League Baseball professional athlete
- Jim Lehrer, news anchor

- Robert Moses, choreographer and dance company founder
- Sam Shepard, Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright
- James Sinegal, cofounder and chief executive officer of Costco
- Maxwell Taylor, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Source: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/how-to-find-your-college-fit/community-college-faqs>

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