A college education opens doors to opportunities that wouldn’t otherwise be available. Adults with postsecondary credentials are more likely to:

- Be employed and earn more than others
- Have more access to health care and retirement plans
- Engage in healthy behaviors, be active and engaged citizens, and be positioned to provide better opportunities for their children.¹

EARNING A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR A GRADUATE DEGREE LEADS TO THE HIGHEST EARNINGS, LOWEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, WIDEST RANGE OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE SHARPEST DIFFERENCE IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND HEALTH-RELATED BEHAVIORS.³

The benefits of college aren’t just in future earnings. Students also:

- Develop personally and intellectually
- Engage in new and varied opportunities
- Enjoy the experience of being a college student.⁴

Affordability is about more than what you can pay right now. Having a sense of the value of educational experience is critical to thinking about college affordability.”

About 36 percent of students at four-year public universities finished their bachelor’s degree without any debt, and 79 percent graduated with less than $30,000 in debt.”

—APLU Public Universities fact sheet

1 What high schoolers and their parents know about public 4-year tuition and fees in their state. (2018). National Center for Education Statistics.
There are many ways for students and families to consider the “right” amount of borrowing to finance their college education. Your school counselor can be an invaluable resource as you search for right-fit programs.

Know the Facts

- Taking more time to earn an associate or bachelor’s degree has financial implications beyond tuition and fee expenses. The faster students complete their degrees, the more time they have to earn college-level wages and reap the financial benefits of postsecondary education.

- Lack of academic preparation, inadequate financial resources, or enrolling in institutions or programs that offer a limited chance of success can hinder timely college completion and delay financial success as well as personal and intellectual growth.

Resources

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for financial aid, including grants, work-study, and loans.

- Use as much “free” money such as grants and scholarships that don’t have to be paid back before taking out loans.

- Use FinAid’s Loan Calculator to get an estimate of the size of your monthly loan payments [http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loannpayments.phtml](http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loannpayments.phtml)


- Visit the Urban Institute’s online resource, Understanding College Affordability, to figure out what “affordable” means for your family.

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3. **The investment payoff: Reassessing and supporting efforts to maximize the benefits of higher education for underserved populations.** (2013). Institute for Higher Education Policy.