

By Adam Price
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“I’m not college material.” “I don’t even know where to begin with all of this paperwork.” “There’s no way I can pay for college.” “I still need help. Where can I get it?”

If you’re a high school junior, these are just four of the thoughts racing through your mind about college. You’re afraid of the unknown, especially if you don’t have a parent who has been through the experience of applying for and attending college. Hey, this is scary stuff.

As you think about your future, you should also think about this cold, hard economic fact:

College graduates can expect to earn \$1 million more than high school-only graduates over the course of their lifetime.

That’s a lot of money – \$1 million. I didn’t just make up this statistic; it came from the U. S. Census Bureau. In today’s world, education or training after high school isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity.

Now, let’s look at those four thoughts to see if they should worry you, or if they’re true.

“I’m not college material.”

The truth is that most students are “college material.” Students who have 2.0 averages in high school often do better in a four-year college because of the different learning environment. Four-year colleges and universities, two-year colleges, community colleges, as well as vocational and technical training programs, are all viable options for you. You should consider all of your options, and never let anyone tell you that you aren’t “college material.”

“I don’t even know where to begin with this paperwork.”

The answer to this concern is simple: Ask for help. Ask your guidance counselor. Talk to a teacher. Talk to a classmate who is going to college. Talk to a family member who graduated from college. There are people and organizations that can help – if you just ask them. The Internet is also a great resource for information.

“There’s no way I can pay for college.”

Did you know that there are millions of dollars worth of scholarships that go unclaimed in America each year? Did you know that there are scholarships for almost anything that you might do, from bowling to being in Boy Scouts? If you do anything as a hobby or interest, there’s probably a scholarship to help you pay for college. There are scholarships for students whose parents work in specific occupations, or for specific companies. And don’t forget about the Promise Scholarship. West Virginia’s Promise Scholarship will pay for your tuition if you meet certain guidelines. If you don’t get the

Promise, don't give up because there are countless other grants and scholarships. There are also loan programs available for those who need additional help. Most local foundations and civic clubs offer scholarships, too. There are jobs and work study programs available to you while you're in college, during summers and breaks. You can work before or after class and on the weekends, if you manage your time well.

We've all seen the headlines: "Average yearly cost of college in America is \$20,000!" The truth is that West Virginia's colleges and universities are some of the best values in education anywhere in the country. They cost little compared to most colleges across the nation, and you get a great education.

I still need help. Where can I get it?

If your high school is partnering with College Summit, a national initiative to increase college enrollment, you and your classmates will be guided through the entire process during awesome summer workshops before the senior year and through a curriculum taught in a for-credit class during the senior year. Imagine receiving help every step of the way to college or other postsecondary education and training programs! This is what College Summit does.

How do I know so much about college and College Summit? I attended a College Summit summer workshop in 2004. In just four days, I learned everything I needed to know about enrolling in and paying for college. College Summit also helped me to find a great scholarship that is essentially paying for my education.

If you have the opportunity to attend a College Summit summer workshop next summer, do it. It will change your life, you'll meet new friends, and you'll learn a lot, but you won't realize it at the time – because you're having so much fun!

Setting the Record Straight

Now, let's set the record straight:

- You **ARE** college material.
- You **CAN** get help to complete the paperwork.
- There **IS** money available to help you pay for college.
- And if your school is partnering with College Summit, you **WILL** be given help every step of the way.

Final Thoughts

Just as you were a little scared moving from junior high to high school, you may be a little afraid to move on to college. Change is always scary. But this step to education after high school is probably the most important one you will ever make, as this decision will determine what you will earn in the future.

Make the right choice. Make the choice to further your education.

You want that million dollars, don't you?

Adam Price attended a College Summit summer workshop in 2004, graduated from Roane County High School in 2005, and is now enrolled at West Virginia State University. He's working for College Summit this summer as an Alumni Leader Coordinator, helping more West Virginia students enroll in college.