HOW THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE & COLLEGE DEGREE IMPROVES YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE

About 27% of Americans have earned a college (bachelor’s) degree. Research comparing college graduates with individuals from similar social and economic backgrounds who have a high school diploma indicates that college is well worth the investment. It has been found that college graduates experience multiple advantages, such as the following. (Explanations for these advantages are provided in chapter 2.)

1. Colleges graduates enjoy greater CAREER:
   - Security & Stability—lower rates of unemployment
   - Versatility & Mobility—ability to “move out” of a job and take other positions
   - Advancement—opportunity to “move up” to higher positions
   - Interest—find their work stimulating and challenging
   - Autonomy—independence and opportunity to be their “own boss”
   - Satisfaction—enjoy their work and feel it allows them to use their special talents
   - Prestige—job status

2. College graduates experience ECONOMIC advantages:
   - Higher income—the difference in income between high school and college graduates is increasing. Individuals with a bachelor’s degree now earn an average salary of about $51,000 per year, while those with a high school diploma earn an average salary of about $27,000. The lifetime income of families headed by persons with a bachelor’s degree is about $1,600,000 more than families headed by persons with a high school diploma.
   - Make wiser consumer choices and decisions
   - Make more effective long-term investments

3. College graduates have more advanced INTELLECTUAL skills:
   - More effective problem-solving skills
   - Better ability to deal with complex and ambiguous (uncertain) ideas
   - Greater openness to new ideas
   - More advanced levels of moral reasoning
   - Have a clearer sense of self-identity—more awareness and knowledge of personal talents, interests, values, & needs
   - More likely to continue learning throughout life

4. College graduates enjoy better PHYSICAL HEALTH:
   - Have better dietary habits
   - Exercise more regularly
   - Live longer

5. College graduates experience SOCIAL advantages:
   - Have higher levels of social self-confidence
   - Understand and communicate more effectively with others
   - Are more popular
   - Have more effective leadership skills
   - Experience greater marital satisfaction

6. Colleges graduates experience EMOTIONAL advantages:
   - Lower levels of anxiety
   - Higher levels of self-esteem (feelings of self-worth)
   - Higher sense of self-efficacy—feeling able to control their own destiny
   - Higher levels of psychological well-being (mental health)
   - Higher levels of personal happiness (life satisfaction)

7. College graduates are more effective CITIZENS:
• Have greater interest in social and political issues
• Have greater knowledge of current affairs
• Have higher voting rates
• Participate more frequently in civic affairs and community service

8. College graduates improve the quality of life for their CHILDREN:
• Spend more time and energy on their children
• Provide better health care for their children
• More likely to involve their children in educational activities that stimulate their mental development
• Their children are more likely to go on to be college graduates
• Their children are more likely to go on to higher-status and higher-paying careers.

References:

Classic Quote
“A bachelor’s degree continues to be a primary vehicle of which one gains an advantaged socioeconomic position in American society.”
—Ernest Pascarella & Patrick Terenzini, How College Affects Students