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### **The Necessity of Earning a College Degree**

Throughout the history of America, the amount of people who have been able to achieve enviable success may seem like a large portion of the population. To begin, one must define success. Here, I will define success as the ability to achieve a life of comfort, not necessarily luxury. A successful person is one who is able to earn enough in their career to provide for themselves and their futures and live comfortably. People like Bill Gates, who is the owner and founder of Microsoft Corporation, have made an awesome success without having earned any kind of college degree; in fact, he only earned a high school diploma. When hearing about those who become wealthy without earning a degree, some people might wonder if success can be easily reached without attending college as they try to make the American Dream become a reality for themselves. Realistically, most of the people who achieved this kind of success were lucky. Is it really advantageous to take a risky shot trying to become a successful businessperson without having earned any kind of college degree? The answer is no.

To achieve success, one must earn a college degree because it makes it possible to earn a higher salary. Success can be defined as a numeric value on a chart that, in America, starts somewhere in the upper thirty-thousands per year for a single person and moves upward. In 2008, polls were taken that attempted to find an average of the earnings of six different classes of workers based on their levels of education: Professional, Doctorate, Masters, Bachelors, Associates and, finally, those who have not earned any kind of college degree. The statistics showed that the average person working full time year-round in the

United States with a four-year college degree earned \$49,900 annually, which is 62% more than the \$30,800 earned by someone who was also working full time, year-round who had only a high school diploma. This huge gap in the average amounts that these groups of people are making, almost \$20,000, supports the idea that those who were able to achieve success without any college education are flukes, the exception rather than the rule. A limited number of people are able to achieve a moderate amount of success after receiving a certificate from a trade school and having a career as an electrician, a plumber, or other jobs characterized by manual labor. These blue-collar jobs generally do not pay as well as jobs that require a degree and while some people become successful with only a certificate from a trade school, most of them do not make a lot of money.

To be successful, a college degree is needed because it allows one to be hired more easily if their original job is lost. Some people start their careers directly after high school in a low position in a company and are able to work their way up through the ranks in the company because of their hard work and skill. In today's economy, with layoffs now a normal part of life, these people's positions may not be safe and they may find themselves without a job and back where they started when they graduated from high school, with nothing but experience and a diploma. The same chance to rise through the ranks in the company may not come for them during their second job search when they are older and don't have the college degree that most companies expect of potential employees now. For example, my Uncle Alfred worked for Bank of America since 1976 but found himself without a job in 2008, after 32 years at the troubled bank, after the financial crisis left the corporation with no choice but to cut some of its workers. Unable to find a new job, my uncle now spends his days living off government pension and searching for new positions online, but with little success. He has found that many companies do not value his experience but are looking instead for younger people who have college degrees. Recently, my Aunt Alfonsina,

who had been a housewife since she married my uncle when she was 19, has been forced to supplement their meager income by taking a cashier job at a local grocery store, the only position she could find without a college degree. Although, logically, my uncle has all the knowledge and experience necessary to compete in today's job market, the lack of a college degree on his résumé makes it extremely difficult for him to even be granted an interview. The college degree would be the "foot in the door" he needs to be able to prove to prospective employers that he was qualified for the job.

Others may find that they are able to keep their jobs but reach a point where their companies will no longer promote them because they are underqualified for the position they would otherwise take if they had completed college and earned a degree. One person whose story can clearly explain this point is my brother Luca. In 1992 at the age of 21, Luca worked for the computer company Linea Base, which makes personalized software for small businesses. At the very beginning, my brother used to install the software made by Linea Base onto his customer's computers. After almost a year of working for Linea he decided to ask for a promotion. He would have liked to code software as a professional programmer, but his manager denied his request explaining that, to be promoted to a higher position, he would have needed at least a bachelor's degree. For being successful, a college degree was needed because it would have enabled him to become qualified for a higher position. Those who reach this roadblock may find their employer requires that they go back to college so that they are able to continue in the same career.

In conclusion, although there are exceptions, most people who want to be successful will need to earn a college degree. With a degree, it has been shown that one is able to earn a better salary, to more easily find a new job if one finds themselves unexpectedly searching for one again, and, finally, to reach a higher position in a company. The examples given are only a few, but seem to prove this point. Any education, and especially a college degree, is

never a waste of time and obviously is a very valuable thing for those who want to achieve success.

### Works Cited

“PayScale College Salary Report”. Payscale.com, 2008. Web. 27 October 2009.

“Current Income Data”, Census.gov, 2009. Web. 27 October 2009.