

Pursuing a Degree During a Pandemic/ COVID-19

With concerns over COVID-19, many colleges and universities have made an informed decision to transition to a fully virtual setting. However, some schools have held hybrid classes that are part remote and part in-person, and others will soon be fully in-person. If you're feeling discouraged about this change or you're reconsidering your higher education goals, you're not alone. Many students are finding it difficult to adjust to the new "normal" virtual college experience.

If you're still unsure about whether or not you should continue your educational goals, here are some statistics and facts that may help solidify your decision:

I. Obtaining a college degree can provide a safety net, for example, the ability to work remotely during difficult times. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the higher a person's education, the more likely they are able to work from home during COVID-19:

- 46% of people with a [Master's Degree](#) can work from home
- 32% of people with a [Bachelor's degree](#) can work from home
- And only 12% of those with a high school diploma are likely able to work from home.

II. Pursuing education beyond high school is an investment in [YOURSELF, YOUR FUTURE](#), and [YOUR FAMILY](#).

- College is a place to explore your full potential, even virtually! Take classes on a variety of new topics, or take a deep dive into your favorite subjects.
- You can still experience clubs, organizations, and communities in a remote setting that you may not have an opportunity to participate in otherwise.
- Over the course of a lifetime, and accounting for the cost of obtaining a degree, individuals with a bachelor's degree earn about \$400,000 more than individuals with a high school degree.
- College graduates are also more likely to have children who also graduate from college and attain higher salary careers.

Coronavirus: The Majority of Americans Can't Work from Home, KVUE
Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society
Why Going to College is Still Worth It, College Forward

"My family is earning a lower income right now due to COVID; why should I continue paying for education rather than working full time?"

Various higher ed institutions are aware of the financial hardships that students may be facing during this recession. As a response, universities and other organizations have increased scholarship and financial aid opportunities so that students can continue pursuing their educational goals. Some other financial aid can include:

- Applying for emergency financial aid funds made available through the CARES Act or the American Rescue Plan. Apply for these funds through your school's financial aid office.
- File your FAFSA or TASFA for an increase in your financial aid awards.
- Talk with your financial aid office about filing a financial aid appeal if your financial situation has changed since you completed your FAFSA or TASFA.
- Apply to emergency educational grants provided by your university or other organizations.

"How will I have time for school if I'm working part-time/full-time?"

If taking a full-time course load is not possible during this time, some alternative options include: taking courses at your local community college for a lower cost, taking a part-time course load, taking night classes, or just even one course per semester. We encourage you to discuss course options with your academic advisor or look into a technical skills certification program!

"I don't do well with online classes, I learn better with in-person classes. I'll just wait until in-person classes resume"

Because of the uncertainty and ever-changing status of COVID-19, it's hard to say when we can expect in-person classes to resume. The question of whether face-to-face learning is of higher quality than online learning is not well supported by research. You'd be surprised to learn that one study found no significant difference in grade-based student learning outcomes (AKA grades) from taking similar online vs. in-person courses— a difference of less than 0.07 grade-point-average points on a four-point scale.

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Researchers have also found that while students generally perceive face-to-face courses more positively, there is no difference in learning outcomes.

“Positive” Impacts from Earning a Degree Online during COVID-19

With more and more classes being held online, students may find themselves with more flexibility in their schedule—compared to having an in-person class schedule.

You may have more time to:

- Work a full/part-time job
- Spend more quality time to spend with family, friends, or roommates
- Revisit or pursue a hobby
- Practice regular self-care!

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