

A Bachelor's Degree for All May Not be Realistic, Or Necessary



(Santa Barbara City College illustration)

By Anthony Beebe | July 3, 2017 | 10:00 a.m.



Should the goal of society be a bachelor's degree for all?

While a four-year college degree for all is a noble goal, it may be more idealistic than realistic.

This year, nearly a third of the nation's 3 million high school graduates will walk off stage and never pursue a bachelor's degree. Given only about a third (i.e., 34 percent) of the U.S. population holds a B.A., the nonbaccalaureate pathway is the usual route for the majority of our population.

Before going any further, I need to clear the air: While a great accomplishment, achieving a bachelor's degree is not the end all, be all in the world. We all know plenty of people who have bachelor's degrees in obscure disciplines or areas completely unrelated to their careers. Likewise, we also know plenty of successful people without B.A.s.

The point here is that while a bachelor's degree can be an important pathway to success, there are lots of routes and opportunities to a happy, successful life.

I am a strong advocate for some college for everyone! This is a realistic goal and is particularly important in today's job market. According to the [Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University](#), 3.1 million jobs created during this long economic recovery have gone to workers with an Associate degree or some college, but less than a Bachelor's degree.

Unfortunately, those with only a high school diploma have been left behind in the job market.

I did a quick [Google search](#) of "Associate Degree Preferred" to see what kinds of jobs might show up for those with some college, but less than a Bachelor's degree. I got several excellent job listings, including the following:

- » Registered nurse
- » AutoCAD drafter
- » Radiology technician
- » Patient access coordinator
- » Auto damage adjuster
- » Helpdesk technician
- » Architectural drafter
- » Medical sales coordinator
- » Production graphic artist

So what if you want to take me up on the "some college" idea, but you don't want to commit to two years to get an Associate degree?

The great news is that you can choose a short-term college certificate program. These usually run only a couple of semesters for full-time students in technical areas such as [Auto Technology](#), [Water Technology](#), [Early Childhood Education](#), [Justice Studies](#), [Animation and Gaming](#), [Culinary Arts](#), [Cosmetology](#), etc.

Experts indicate that the skills students learn in certificate programs are increasingly in demand as the economy grows, becomes more complex and quickly changes. Certificate programs are very efficient, as you get right into the topic without taking all the general education courses.

It is interesting that studies have shown that 40 percent of those with certificates earn more than their peers with Associate degrees, and 25 percent with certificates earn more than those with bachelor's degrees!

A final option to get some college are **digital badges**. These are a type of mini-certificate that can be completed in narrow areas of expertise with classes ranging from eight to 16 hours of instruction. They might cover marketing tools, branding concepts, negotiating strategies, coaching skills or other quick topics, designed to be studied one week and put to work the next!

Yes, a bachelor's degree for all would be wonderful; but realistically, there are a variety of reasons this may not be possible. Research shows that lack of academic potential or ability is not one of them. It is all the other things of life, including work, family, finances, transportation, time, etc., that make a bachelor's degree for all more idealistic than realistic.

Some college for all, however, is possible. We have some amazing community colleges here on the Central Coast. Like **Santa Barbara City College**, they are a great starting point for your future.

Whatever your age, whatever your past educational experience, whatever your dreams — get set for Fall 2017 semester today!!

— *Anthony Beebe Ph.D., Ed.D. is superintendent/president of Santa Barbara City College. [Click here for previous columns.](#) The opinions expressed are his own*