

Angela Rebollar

Professor Scott Warfe

English-100-0855

01 November 2022

### Why College is the best option for me

In a world full of self-made social media influencers as well as a spike in young entrepreneurs, it's no wonder that some may contemplate if College is the best choice for them. We live in a society that wants instant gratification and success by taking the fastest route possible. Hence why social media influencers have skyrocketed the past couple years. It's no surprise that College is an avenue that leads to a brighter future, however it's one that's paved with patience, hard work and perseverance. Many young adults contemplate the decision to attend college and strive for a degree that will in turn hopefully better their future prospects, or simply enter the workforce and hope your dancing skills are on par so you can cash in on those social media followers. As I stepped into my 40's I realized that College is the path that is best for me in my journey to becoming a nurse. I strongly believe that College, specifically a Bachelors of Science in Nursing degree, is the best investment for me because it will give me financial stability, the ability to enter the nursing field and the potential for advancement and mobility in my career and life.

Financially stability, in terms of being able to provide adequately for my family, was the catalyst for my return to college in pursuit of my career in nursing. In the article, "Is a College degree still worth it?" Eleni Karageorge states "over four decades, workers with bachelor's degree earned on average 56 percent more and workers with and associates degree averaged 21 percent more than high school graduates" (Karageorge). This statement rings true to me since I have witnessed how a lack of a college degree has led to an unstable financial situation in my own family dynamics. As a young child, living in poverty and growing up in one of the worst parts of east Oakland, the pursuit of college was not at the forefront of my mind. I was surrounded by blue-collar workers with no prior college degrees and an

atmosphere that didn't encourage academic growth. I watched as my own mother, whom only had a high school diploma, struggle to provide even with two jobs. Everyone in my family never advanced beyond high school and I was witness to how that can affect them financially long term. Most of the adults in my family are in retiring years now and have no financial means to actually retire because their work income wasn't conducive to saving or preparing for the future. Being witness to this I knew if college wasn't part of my near future I too would be in the same position. According to Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 56%, or 36 million workers, of good jobs come from an educational level of Bachelors and above (Georgetown CEW). In essence more than half of good jobs in America are occupied by people who received a Bachelors and higher. I'm currently own a small business as a local photographer. I bring in \$20,000 a year, If I'm lucky. U.S Bureau of labor statistics shows I would be making a median salary of \$124,000 and an hourly wage of \$59.62 a year as a registered nurse with a bachelor's degree (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics). In other words, I would have an potential annual increase of \$104,000 according to these numbers as a registered nurse with a bachelor's degree. College, and specifically a BSN would provide exponentially greater means of financial stability for my family and my future. The likelihood of finding a job that provides the same annual income is significantly lower without a college degree. This is why I choose to enter into College and continue to a nursing degree.

As I entered college I had a clear drive for becoming a nurse from the get go. I personally know some nurses and could see that it was a field I could see myself thriving and growing in. After all, we will always need nurses in the world. With that being said, I knew there was some requirements I needed to meet before becoming a nurse. In California your required to complete pre requisites in college/community college before applying for a nursing program, may it be an associates program or a bachelor's program. Completion of one of one of those degrees is required to become a registered nurse. In the article, "What are Nursing School Requirements" by Imagine America Foundation," "No matter which degree level you choose to pursue, you can expect some prerequisites for both ADN and BSN programs" (Imagine America). Attending college is not only essential for preparing me for the nursing

courses but also a mandatory in my journey to becoming a registered nurse. Without a college education obtaining a job, with the potential earnings mentioned above, would be almost impossible in a medical field type position. Many would argue that you can enter the medical field with good pay and no degree as a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN). Sure, that is possible but is there opportunities to increase your pay substantially? According to Darby Faubion BSN, RN in the article titled “RN vs LPN Salary-Find out the Difference?” on NursingProcess.org he states, “In California, RNs typically earn approximately \$113,240 annually, and licensed practical/vocational nurses may earn around \$60,240” (Faubion). Ultimately, that is a \$53,000 difference between an RN vs LPN annual salary. This is a clear indication that a college degree really does pay off in the long run when we look at pay of a non-college graduate vs a college graduate in the same field of work practically doing the same exact job task. There is also little advancement as an LPN unless a college degree is achieved vs the many opportunities a RN has for advancement in the field.

Mobility and potential for advancement is one of the many reasons I believe college is a must for me. It seems that some jobs hit a wall on what you can achieve due to at some point a college degree is a requirement for advancement. Some types of nursing are no exception to this rule, for example a licensed vocational nurse (LVN) doesn't require a college degree, however they can't advance in the field past this level without first taking a bridge program obtaining a degree to become a registered nurse. As a Nurse with a bachelor's degree there is many opportunities for advancement such as nurse manager, nursing director, travel nurse, nurse educator and case management nurse among others. Beyond the job title advancements there is with a college degree, and specifically a nursing degree I'm able to have mobility and job security in another state if I choose. According to [registrednursing.org](http://registrednursing.org), “Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) was created largely to make it easier for nurses to continue to practice when moving to another state. States that are part of the NLC allow nurses to practice in other participating NLC states without having to obtain additional licenses or coursework” (RegisteredNursing.org Staff Writers). Currently there are 39 states that participate and allow for an easy transfer as a nurse. This information

was important to me because I have always envisioned myself moving out of California one day. Most jobs are restricted to the town or state they reside in which would prevent me from the freedom of mobility in the future. From experience I have been limited in opportunity for advancement based on my educational level since some positions required degrees or my position became terminated with the movement of the company. With a college degree I have more job placement opportunities near me or in another state if I choose, even if I don't want to be a nurse. The opportunity for job placement, even in a non-nursing field with a bachelor's degree is far more beneficial versus if I didn't have a bachelor's degree. This is one of the many reasons I find a college degree beneficial for long term mobility and potential for advancement.

In sum, I find it imperative for people to weigh the long term effects of a college degree vs a non-college degree future before they focus on the small sacrifices postsecondary education brings. Is college for everyone? Probably not depending on what career path speaks to you. As for me a college degree is an opportunity to break free from the generational shackles of mediocracy, poverty, and stagnation that has limited my own families' potential for generations. It allows me to have a life of better financial stability and opportunities to advance in a career. There will always be a need for nurses and that in itself creates a longevity and certainty none of my other jobs have possessed. As the years go on jobs that used to require no advanced education are now requiring degrees. As the non-degree jobs become limited the job opportunities for those with a college degree continue to grow. Even becoming a college student later in life at 39 years old I can see the benefits it will bring to my life. Obtaining a BSN, maybe a masters down the road, allows me to enter my career in nursing, have financial stability for my future and continue to advance in a career that seems to have few limitations. The College path is paved with opportunities once you grasp that hard earned degree. The doors and places my bachelor's degree will open leads me to feel that college is the right path for me.

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