
College - or Not by Wes Beach



Keep in mind that many people live productive and fulfilling lives without formal college education. Job experience, internships, apprenticeships, travel, and independent learning of all kinds can lead to satisfying situations.

If your kid does want to go to college, she can go as far as she wants, regardless of what she has done as a teenager. With any kind of diploma or high school equivalency certificate (see section on Testing - CHSPE and GED), or without any document at all if they're 18 or older, people can enter a community college and prepare to enter a four-year college or university. Admission at the University of California (UC) or the California State University (CSU) can be based entirely on a community college record. Other colleges and universities will pay minimal attention, if any, to an applicant's high school record if a solid community college record is submitted. Any level of higher education can be reached this way; people with no high school experience at all have earned PhD's.

If a young person wants to enter a four-year school without first attending a community college, the college's freshman entrance requirements must be met (transfer admission requirements are different); sometimes admission on a special basis without having met all the regular requirements is possible. Regular requirements will most likely include specific coursework and test scores (see section below on tests). If a student has been part of a public school program, the coursework is documented there. It's essential that the work be considered college preparatory. In the case of UC, the school or program must have filed a list of UC-approved courses with the UC system-wide office; some public school programs have not done this.

Documentation is essential for independent homeschoolers. Increasingly, four-year colleges and universities are accepting non-traditional documentation of accomplishments outside of traditional schools for admission consideration. However, with some colleges, and with UC in particular, admission directly from an independent homeschooling situation is not easy (transfer admission is very straightforward - see above). It is possible to enter UC on the basis of testing alone; also, UC subject requirements can be met through SAT II testing. In every case, check carefully with admissions counselors at schools of interest.

