

What's the Value of Higher Ed: Graduates

Each year, 2.8 million students in the United States earn two- and four-year degrees from our colleges and universities. Trustees should know the facts about the significant return on investment for today's graduates and share it with others. *Use these facts and figures in your discussions on the value of higher education for graduates, and consider all the ways that graduates benefit from receiving a degree from your institution.*

College graduates earn more over their lifetimes.

A college degree pays off. Median annual income of recent graduates with a bachelor's degree (ages 22-27) is \$17,500 higher than those with a high school diploma. Over time, **those with bachelor's degrees make an average of \$25,000 more per year** and those with associate's degrees make \$10,000 more annually than those with high school diplomas.

College graduates are connected to their communities.

On average, college graduates **donate to charity in amounts 3.4 times higher** than high school graduates and are twice as likely to volunteer their time. Degree holders are **also 3.2 times more likely to serve as leaders** in school, community, service, and religious organizations.

College graduates enjoy greater job security and satisfaction.

Those with a college degree consistently experience lower levels of unemployment. During the peak of the Great Recession, those with bachelor's degrees experienced an **unemployment rate of 4.7 percent, while the rate for those holding a high school diploma was twice as high.** They are also more likely to describe their work environments positively.

College graduates promote a legacy of learning.

Individuals who hold college degrees **are more likely to engage in personal and professional learning opportunities throughout their lives.** They can also pass on that desire to their children: **85 percent of children whose parents have a college degree go on to attend college themselves.**

College graduates feel happier and healthier.

College graduates are **more likely to say they are happy** with their lives than those who do not hold a degree. They are more likely to **own their homes** and to be **married.** They also tend to **smoke less, exercise more, and reflect lower levels of obesity.**