



The
**PSYCHOLOGY
MAJOR**

*Career Options
and Strategies
for Success*

Fifth Edition

R. Eric Landrum • Stephen F. Davis

FIFTH EDITION

THE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

CAREER OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

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PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

Loyalty is a fine trait that we both value. We appreciate the loyalty of our readers in asking for a revision to a fifth edition, and we appreciate the loyalty of Pearson in actively pursuing and supporting this enterprise. Way back when we wrote the first edition of this book it was because we saw a need for a resource for our students—a resource that was not available elsewhere (demonstrating, once again, that necessity is the mother of invention). Our goal for this fifth edition continues to be to provide strategies for success that will allow students to achieve their career goals, whatever they may be. Also, we wanted to provide some fundamental tips and advice that can be useful to all students, but especially useful for psychology majors.

Thanks to colleagues and students around the country, the book has been modestly successful, and thus there was an opportunity for a fifth edition. With the continuing growth in the popularity of psychology, a chance to update the resources and statistics is always welcome. Also, a revision gives us a chance to continue to add to our collective knowledge base about these topics, hopefully making this book more valuable to the students and to our colleagues.

Our basic approach to writing this book was to provide immediately useful and helpful information to students majoring in psychology or thinking about majoring in psychology. The approach of this book is applied—to provide students with practical, timely, up-to-date information that helps them. This text standardizes and catalogs much of the practical advice that professors often give to students on a one-to-one basis—this book does not replace that interaction, but it helps to supplement it. We hope this will be a one-stop shop for advice about the psychology major, discipline, job market, and employment strategies. We provide tips on how to do well in all classes, how to find research ideas, and how to write papers in APA format. Also, the book contains up-to-date career information that faculty might not normally have at their fingertips, including the latest salary figures for a number of psychology-related jobs and occupations. Other benefits include the coverage of ethics for undergraduate students, sections on self-reflection, and an overview of disciplines related to psychology. These features are important perspectives that may not often be shared with the new or prospective psychology major.

- We continue to update the book thoroughly as new information becomes available. Consider the reference section. For the fifth edition, we added 85 new references, with two-thirds of these new citations being 2010 or later. We try to stay on top of this rapidly changing landscape so that faculty and students don't have to.
- We kept the best of the previous four editions, but we also reread every word of the manuscript and worked hard to improve readability where needed and continue to provide solid, useful advice wherever possible.

This book will be helpful for: (1) any course that requires students to conduct research and write papers in APA format, (2) any course that discusses potential careers and earnings in psychology, and (3) any course that covers the opportunities for psychology majors and the ethical implications for being a psychologist. This might be one of the first books that an undergraduate student keeps for his or her own professional library. Specifically, this book makes a good supplemental text for research methods/experimental psychology courses, any capstone course, introductory courses, careers courses, etc. The unique mix and coverage of topics makes this text useful in a variety of teaching situations.

Projects such as this one do not occur in a vacuum. We would like to thank Jessica Mosher and Stephen Frail at Pearson for seeing the value and potential in a fifth edition of the book. We thank Crystal McCarthy for her exceptional

patience as we waded through seas of permissions. We also want to thank our colleagues who have helped shape the direction of this fifth edition—whether through formal reviews, e-mails, conversations at conferences, etc.—you have greatly helped confirm the value and necessity of such a book. We would like to thank the following reviewers: Douglas Engwall, *Central Connecticut State University*; Erinn Green, *Wilmington College*; Katherine Hooper, *University of North Florida*; Andrea Lassiter, *Minnesota State University, Mankato*; Greg Loviscky, *Penn State*; Mary Anne Taylor, *Clemson University*; and Patti Tolar, *University of Houston & UH-Downtown*.

Finally, we dedicate this book to our students—past, present, and future—our students are the reason we wrote the book, and it continues to be our honor and privilege to teach and profess in a manner that positively influences others' lives. Thank *you* for allowing *us* to maximize the opportunity.

R.E.L. & S.F.D.

Why College?

Because you are reading this book, odds are that you are part of an elite group. We wrote this book primarily for two audiences: (a) college students thinking about majoring in psychology and (b) college students who have already declared psychology as their major. Not only do we present updated information about careers in psychology (both with a bachelor's degree and with graduate training), but also we provide you with valuable strategies to get the most out of your undergraduate experience and maximize your chances for success in college and beyond. But what about answering the question asked in the title of this chapter—why college? Menand (2011) wrote persuasively about this topic, when he said:

Society needs a mechanism for sorting out its more intelligent members from its less intelligent ones, just as a track team needs a mechanism (such as a stopwatch) for sorting out the faster athletes from the slower ones. Society wants to identify intelligent people early on so that it can funnel them into careers that maximize their talents. It wants to get the most out of its human resources. College is a process that is sufficiently multifaceted and fine-grained to do this.*

WHO GOES TO COLLEGE?

The demand for a college education continues to grow. From 1989 to 1999, college enrollments increased 9%; in the following 10 years (1999 to 2009), enrollments increased 38%, and there are ample opportunities for students to attend college in the United States, with 4,495 accredited institutions offering an associate's degree or above—2,774 institutions offer a bachelor's degree or higher. However, there appears to be a growing demand for these opportunities—total enrollment in degree-granting institutions for 2009 was 20.4 million students (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). We wrote this book to help you make the most of your undergraduate education to maximize your opportunities for future success, whatever that route may be. With this number of people attending and completing college, how will you stand out? If you follow our advice, you will know what to do to stand out from the crowd!

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING COLLEGE

Students clearly have multiple goals they want to accomplish when going to college, but the public has high expectations about what students should learn. In a report published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2002), the public's expectations were:

*From Menand 2011, para 6.

- 87% of the general public agree that a college education is as necessary as a high school diploma used to be, only 63% believe it is essential for college to improve students' ability to solve problems and think analytically
- 57% identify top-notch writing and speaking skills as essential outcomes of a collegiate education
- No more than 44% view active citizenship (e.g., voting and volunteering) as an essential college outcome
- Two-thirds of U.S. voters believe it is very important for higher education to prepare people to function in a more diverse society and work force.*

When Americans were asked similar survey questions, 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Having a college degree is essential for getting a good job in this country.”** A 2003 survey conducted by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* identified the public's views on higher education, as well as highlighted the important roles for a college to perform. For instance, 91% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “colleges and universities are one of the most valuable resources in the U.S.” When presented with the statement “college graduates today are well prepared for the work force,” 56% agree or strongly agreed. Interestingly, when presented with the statement “a graduate-school or professional-school degree will soon be more important than a four-year degree for success in the U.S.,” 64% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. If you believe that your future may include graduate school, many chapters of this book will be particularly helpful to you.

One reason that society might expect so much from colleges and their students is because there are benefits to society. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2010) nicely summarized the benefits of higher education, both for individuals and for society:

- Individuals with higher levels of education earn more and are more likely than others to be employed.
- The financial return associated with additional years of schooling beyond high school and the gaps in earnings by education level have increased over time.
- Federal, state, and local governments enjoy increased tax revenues from college graduates and spend less on income support programs for them, providing a direct financial return from investments in postsecondary education.
- College-educated adults are more likely than others to receive health insurance and pension benefits from their employers and be satisfied with their jobs.
- Adults with higher levels of education are more active citizens than others.
- College education leads to healthier lifestyles, reducing health care costs for individuals and for society.
- College-educated parents engage in more educational activities with their children, who are better prepared for school than other children.†

Moreover, college graduates have lower smoking rates, better perceptions of personal health, and healthier lifestyles (Meara, Richards, & Cutler, 2008). For instance, Cooney (2008) reported that better educated Americans enjoy a longer life span—“in 2000, a 25-year-old who did not go beyond high school would still be expected to live to almost 75, but the better educated 25-year-old's life expectancy went up to 81.6 years” (para. 2). Additionally, higher levels of education are related to higher levels of civic engagement, including volunteerism and voting. If you agree that these items are good (and most would), you can appreciate the positive

*With permission from *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*, p. 9. Copyright 2002 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

**From English, C. (2011). *Most Americans see college as essential to getting a good job*. Gallup, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149045/americans-college-essential-getting-good-job.aspx>.

†From Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2010). *Education pays 2010: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*, pp. 4–5. The College Board. Retrieved from http://trends.collegeboard.org/downloads/Education_Pays_2010.pdf.

benefits that society reaps from its investment in higher education. But beware that in the United States, an education/preparation gap is emerging. By 2018, it is estimated that 63% of U.S. jobs will require some sort of postsecondary education or training; currently, however, about 41% of adults in the United States possess a college degree (Lumina Foundation, 2011)—as a nation, it would be prudent for us to “mind the gap.”

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS ABOUT GOING TO COLLEGE

In a survey of Fall 2011 freshmen (Pryor, DeAngelo, Blake, Hurtado, & Tran, 2011), the top five reasons for deciding to go to college (with the percentage reporting an item as very important) were (a) to be able to get a better job (85.9%); (b) to learn more about things that interest me (82.9%); (c) to get training for a specific career (77.6%); (d) to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas (72.4%); and (e) to be able to make more money (71.7%). Ernst, Burns, and Ritzer (2011) specifically studied high school students’ transitions to college.

In this same study, Ernst et al. (2011) also asked college students about (a) what they were most nervous about prior to entering college and (b) what these students thought they should have been nervous about, which may lead to interesting patterns of matches and mismatches. See Table 1.1 for the results.

These findings can provide excellent advice both for students and for faculty advisors and mentors: Students may want to pay more attention to interactions with professors.

We believe that psychology is an excellent choice! As you will see throughout this book, psychology majors can get good jobs with a bachelor’s degree; they learn about human behavior (what could possibly be more interesting than our own behavior?); they can prepare to go on to graduate school so that they can receive training for additional careers. In general, college graduates do make more money than nongraduates (more about this later in this chapter), and psychology at the undergraduate level tends to focus on general education and the appreciation of ideas, particularly from critical thinking and psychological literacy perspectives.

As a recipient of a college degree, you will be in an elite group, but you are not alone. In 2008–2009, there were 1.6 million bachelor’s degrees awarded in the United States. In the same year (the latest data available at the time of this writing), 94,271 bachelor’s degrees in psychology were awarded (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). We will tell you more about this in Chapter 3.

TABLE 1.1 College Student Perceptions of the Transition from High School: What Students Were Most Nervous About Compared to What They Self-Report They Should Have Been Most Nervous About

Most Nervous About	Should Have Been Most Nervous About
Getting good grades	Getting good grades
Picking the right major	Picking the right major
Paying the bills	Paying the bills
Making my parents proud	Interacting with professors
Making friends	Making my parents proud
Living in the residence halls	Making friends
Finding my way around campus	Living in the residence halls
Interacting with professors	Finding my way around campus

TABLE 1.2 Necessary Skills for Workplace Know-How**Workplace competencies***Effective workers can productively use:*

- Resources—they know how to allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff
- Interpersonal skills—they can work in teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Information—they can acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information
- Systems—they understand social, organizational, and technological systems; they can monitor and correct performance; and they can design or improve systems
- Technology—they can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment

Foundation skills*Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:*

- Basic skills—reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening
- Thinking skills—the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to solve problems
- Personal qualities—individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2004).

DESIRABLE SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Indeed, graduates need to be ready for a variety of work situations and experiences. Chen (2004) reported that the average college graduate will have eight different jobs that will require work in three different professions or occupations. What types of skills and abilities will lead to success during a lifetime of work and career change? Table 1.2 presents the workplace competencies and foundation skills identified by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report as presented by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2004).

However, even though we want college graduates to come away with these skills and abilities (and apparently so does the public), there is more to a college education than vocational training. An undergraduate education fosters lifelong learning and a sense of civic responsibility. Perhaps Chen (2004) says it better:

Put simply, the objective of liberal education is to produce thinkers, not workers; the education should be useful—but not utilitarian. It is therefore not so much a question of *what* is taught but of *how* it is taught. The question is not so much about *subjects*, but about *processes*.* (italics in original)

Although we'll say much more about the topic of skills in later chapters, there is emerging evidence from a number of sources (e.g., Levine, 2005; Rose, 2010) that college graduates are either unprepared or underprepared for the workplace. If you choose to follow the advice we offer throughout this textbook, you will possess the information you need to avoid being unprepared for transitions to the workforce—and other good resources exist on this topic as well (Landrum & Hettich, in press).

THE COVERT CURRICULUM

There are at least two distinct curricula of an undergraduate education (Appleby, 2001); the curriculum of coursework to complete toward the undergraduate degree is called the *overt curriculum*. When a college or university describes their classes,

*Chen, E. K. Y. (2004). What price liberal arts education. In Siena College (Ed.), *Liberal education and the new economy*, p. 3. Loudonville, NY: Siena College.

prerequisites, and other requirements, they are describing the overt curriculum. However, Appleby (2001) and others (e.g., Hettich, 1998) discuss the less obvious or *covert curriculum*. According to Appleby (2001):

Colleges and universities often call these “lifelong learning skills” because they refer not to the specific information that students acquire during their formal education (i.e., the contents of their education), but to how successfully they can continue to acquire information after their formal education has ended (i.e., the processes they developed as they acquired the contents of their education).*

In other words, the covert curriculum addresses *how* to learn, as opposed to *what* to learn. The skills (with brief descriptions) presented in the following list should be useful in the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Reading with comprehension and the ability to identify major points.

People employed in management positions are constantly in search of new ideas and methods to help them perform their jobs more successfully. They understand they must keep up with the current literature and innovations in their profession and obtain relevant information from other sources.

Speaking and writing in a clear, organized, and persuasive manner.

The ability to communicate in a clear, organized, and persuasive manner is one of the most crucial characteristics of successfully employed people. The inability to do so leaves others confused about what we have written or said (because we are unclear), convinced that we do not know what we are talking or writing about (because we are unorganized), and unlikely to do what we ask them to do (because we are not persuasive).

Writing in a particular style. Not only do you need to be able to write clearly, but be able to write in a particular style. Psychologists use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Although future employers may not require writing in this particular style, the ability to follow the format guidelines of businesses and clients and the ability to follow precise instructions is an important ability—remember, attention to detail is important!

Listening attentively. Successful employees listen carefully and attentively to their supervisors’ instructions, understand what these instructions mean (or ask for clarification to improve their understanding), and then carry out these instructions in an accurate and complete manner.

Taking accurate notes. Employees must often listen to others and accurately remember what they hear. This process can take place in a one-on-one situation or in groups. Unless the amount of information provided is small or the employee’s memory is large, it is wise to take notes.

Mastering efficient memory strategies. All jobs require employees to remember things (e.g., customer’s names, meeting dates and times, locations of important information, etc.). Memory refers to the ability to select, store, and use information, and these skills are vital to effective and efficient workplace behavior. The results of a lack of memory skills are confusion and disorganization.

Developing critical thinking skills. Employees must not only be able to remember vital information (i.e., *retention*), they must *comprehend* it so they can communicate it to others in an understandable manner. They must *apply* the information they comprehend in order to solve problems in the workplace. They must *analyze* large, complex problems or sources of information

*From Appleby, D. C. (2001, Spring). The covert curriculum: The lifelong learning skills you can learn in college. *Eye on Psi Chi*, p. 28.

into smaller, more manageable units. They must *evaluate* ideas and methods by applying appropriate criteria to determine their value or usefulness via checking or critiquing. Finally, employees may be asked to *create*, whether generating a marketing schedule, planning a conference, or producing an innovation solution to a problem.

Submitting work on time and in acceptable form. Employers pay their employees to perform jobs accurately, completely, and in a timely manner. Employees are terminated if they cannot perform their jobs (i.e., their work is incorrect, incomplete, and/or late).

Behaving in a responsible, punctual, mature, and respectful manner. Employees who fail to show up for work (or often late), or whose behaviors are immature or disrespectful are seldom employed for long.

Managing stress and conflict successfully. Employees are often exposed to stressful working conditions and must work with less-than-perfect fellow employees. Stress and conflict management are essential skills that successful employees possess.

Organizing the physical environment to maximize efficiency. Employees must be able to organize their physical environments so they can perform their jobs competently and efficiently. Poor organizational skills often result in appearing confused, making mistakes, and losing important information.

Observing, evaluating the attitudes and behaviors of role models. Successful employees quickly learn the culture of their organization by observing their supervisors and other successful employees. Learning which behaviors to avoid and learning which behaviors to imitate is a crucial skill for an employee who wishes to remain with an organization, receive above-average salary increases, and earn promotions.

Maintaining an accurate planner or calendar. Successful employees in today's fast-paced world must be capable of managing their time and controlling their complicated schedules. Forgetting meetings, neglecting appointments, and missing deadlines are not the signals you want to send to your employer.

Working as a productive member of a team. Employers pay employees to perform complex tasks that almost always require some degree of teamwork—very few people work alone. The ability to work as a productive member of a successful team and to be seen as a “team player” requires a set of crucial skills and characteristics that must be acquired through practice.

Interacting successfully with a wide variety of people. The working world is filled with people who differ in many ways. Successful employees are those who have developed the ability to interact in a congenial and productive manner with a wide variety of people (e.g., a supervisor who is older, a client of a different race, or a coworker with a different sexual orientation).

Seeking feedback about performance and using it to improve future performance. Employees are hired to perform certain duties. Successful employees gain rewards such as promotions, raises; unsuccessful employees remain at lower positions and pay levels or are terminated. Savvy employees understand that their performance must satisfy not only their own standards of quality, but also the standards of their supervisor(s).

Accepting responsibility for your own behavior and attitudes. Being able to act in a responsible manner is the cornerstone of personal growth and professional maturity in any occupation. College is the perfect time to learn how to take responsibility for your own actions (rather than blaming your failures on others), and to understand that it is the way you interpret external circumstances that determines how you will respond to them, not the circumstances themselves.

Utilize technology. Future employees need to be technologically sophisticated in order to qualify for many jobs. The ability to word process, use spreadsheets, understand databases, work with statistical programs, and do library searches using bibliographic databases (not just Wikipedia) are important aspects of technological literacy.

As you can see, no one course could accomplish all of those goals. However, by carefully examining this list, you might better understand why college teachers structure their courses the way they do. Over the span of your undergraduate education, hopefully you will have multiple chances to develop and sharpen these skills and abilities from the covert curriculum.

THE CIVIC, LIBERAL ARTS VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Earlier we indicated that your college education is not all about the accumulation of skills and abilities to get you a job. There are larger goals of an undergraduate education. All universities attempt to produce better-educated citizens who are capable of using higher order critical thinking skills.

One of the major characteristics of a liberal or liberal arts education is that it is not focused on a specific career, but aims instead to provide an environment both within the curriculum and outside it that helps students to learn how to think, how to be creative, how to be flexible, how to get on with others—and how to go on learning for the rest of their lives.*

Over 150 years ago, John Henry Newman (1852) communicated this idea quite well (see Table 1.3).

THE FINANCIAL VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

We have already explored many of the reasons for coming to college, whether it is to obtain a good job, to improve yourself, to become a better citizen, to gain critical thinking skills, or to master the covert curriculum. These are all appropriate motivations, but so is the motivation to improve your financial standing. Money is not everything in life, but it sure helps. We would be remiss if we did not address this important issue.

TABLE 1.3 The Aim of a University Education

If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world. It neither confines its views to particular professions on one hand, nor creates heroes or inspires genius on the other. Works indeed of genius fall under no art; heroic minds come under no rule; a University is not a birthplace of poets or of immortal authors, of founders of schools, leaders of colonies, or conquerors of nations. It does not promise a generation of Aristotles or Newtons, of Napoleons or Washingtons, of Raphaels or Shakespeares, though such miracles it has before now contained within its precincts. Nor is it content on the other hand with forming the critic or the experimentalist, the economist or the engineer, although such too it includes within its scope. But a university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a [person] a clear, conscious view of their own opinions and judgements, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them.

Source: John Henry Newman (1852).

*From Chen 2004, p. 2.

TABLE 1.4 Estimates of Average Annual Earnings and Median Lifetime Earnings for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Average Annual Earnings ¹	Median Lifetime Earnings ²
Doctoral degree	\$ 99,697	\$3,252,000
Professional degree ³	\$125,019	\$3,648,000
Master's degree	\$ 70,856	\$2,671,000
Bachelor's degree	\$ 58,613	\$2,268,000
Associate's degree	\$ 39,506	\$1,727,000
Some college	\$ 32,555	\$1,547,000
High school graduate or GED	\$ 31,283	\$1,304,000
Less than 9th grade	\$ 21,023	\$ 973,000

Notes. ¹U.S. Census Bureau. ²Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011). ³Professional degrees include M.D. (physician), J.D. (lawyer), D.D.S. (dentist), and D.V.M. (veterinarian).

Source: Day & Newburger (2002)

In later chapters of this book we will discuss the specifics of what you can earn with the various degrees in psychology, including specialty areas. For now, let's focus on the general benefit of staying in college. How much more money can you expect to make with a college degree compared to a high school diploma? Is there much financial advantage to getting a master's degree compared to a bachelor's degree? These types of questions are answered in Table 1.4. We should note that although the findings presented in Table 1.4 are generally correct, your results may vary—that is, reality is more complicated than the rows and columns of the table. Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011) summarized this nicely with the following four rules:

- 1. Rule 1:** Degree level matters, and on average, people with more education make more money than those with less education.
- 2. Rule 2:** Occupations can trump degree levels, meaning that people with less education can sometimes outearn people with more education, typically because of occupational differences.
- 3. Rule 3:** Although occupation can sometimes trump education, degree level achieved still matters most within individual occupations (e.g. an accountant with more education will make more than an accountant with less education).
- 4. Rule 4:** Race, ethnicity, and gender are wild cards that can trump everything else when trying to develop general statements about determining career-based earnings.*

Again, it is important to reiterate that financial reasons alone should not dictate your life decisions—do you really want to be quite miserable while making a good income? However, these data are useful as one component of your decision-making process. Also, if you are in the middle of your sophomore year in college and having a hard time staying motivated, the information in Table 1.4 might be helpful. For instance, you might think about getting your associate's degree (an intermediate degree that can typically be earned in 2 years) if you are too burned out to finish the bachelor's degree. And remember, there are over 4,400 colleges and universities in the United States—if you drop out and then decide to drop back in, there will be opportunities to do so.

*From Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Cheah, B. (2011). *The college payoff: Education, occupations, lifetime earnings (executive summary)*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegerepayoff-summary.pdf>.

Success Stories

Dr. Salvador Macias, III
University of South Carolina–Sumter

I am a second generation Mexican American . . . my grandparents moved to New Mexico, then on to California in the 1920s just before my father was born. He was one of eight children, only a few of whom graduated high school (my father earned his GED in the Army). I am one of only four in my generation to have graduated college (I believe this is correct, but I have lost touch with some of the over 30 grandchildren and my count may be wrong), and the only one with a Ph.D. There are a few in the next generation who have earned baccalaureate degrees (I'm proud to say that all three of my children have; the oldest has earned a Ph.D. in Forensic Chemistry; and the younger two are both in graduate school!).

My parents just “assumed” that I would attend college, so I pretty much grew up with that plan. When I was 15, my father died unexpectedly . . . our future was in some doubt. I was the oldest of 9 children, but it was still assumed that I would attend college. In my senior year in high school (Catholic school, southern California) I applied to UCLA . . . but in March! Obviously, my application was too late, and was forwarded on to UC Riverside, probably the best thing that ever happened to me! At that time there were about 5,000 students enrolled, classes beyond the freshmen level were fairly small, and I got to know many of my professors on a personal level.

One professor in particular, Austin H. Riesen (who became my advisor and undergraduate mentor), was especially important to my academic development. I first came to know him in a somewhat circuitous fashion. A friend of mine worked in his lab observing monkeys . . . they were short of help, this work was absolutely fascinating to me . . . and I was brought into the research team. At that time I was a biology major, but quickly added psychology, stayed in Riesen's lab for a couple of years, branched out into a few other labs as a volunteer, a paid assistant, for academic credit, etc., in short, by whatever means I could. I am convinced that had my application to UCLA been accepted I would have, at best, floundered along, eventually graduating . . . but in such a large institution I doubt that I would have had the opportunity or courage to approach a professor and ask to participate in an ongoing research program! With such easy access to my professors, even playing on some softball teams with a few, it become normal that some would know my name. I'm sure this is responsible for my having discovered a passion for psychology, the opportunity to develop sufficient academic skills, and the confidence to believe I could handle graduate school.

We would encourage you, with our strongest possible advice, to finish what you start. There are financial benefits to completing your education, but as you read earlier, there are health-related benefits, child-rearing benefits, etc. You might be surprised at the percentages of college students who actually end up earning their bachelor's degree. After four years, 38.9% complete a bachelor's degree; after five years, 56.4%; and after six years, 61.2% (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011). To the extent possible in your life, finish what you start!

OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO TO COLLEGE . . .

Better pay typically comes with more education. However, to be fair, if pay is your primary consideration, we should to point out that you can have a top-paying job without a bachelor's degree at all. From recent research, Careercast.com (2012) reported that for jobs where college is not required, the average beginning salary was \$28,350—with midlevel salaries at \$47,200 and top levels around \$79,150. When compared to individuals with a four-year degree or more, the average beginning salary was \$51,250—with midlevel salaries at \$85,300 and top levels around \$130,600. So more education also means more salary within these data, but it should also be evident that good money can be earned without the bachelor's degree. We probably all know of some individuals who did quite well without a college education.