

The Value of a College Education

When thinking about the value of a college education, it's important to consider both the monetary incentives and qualitative factors you can benefit from. In this activity, you'll analyze data and reflect on both of these factors to find out what the value of a college education might mean for you.

Part 1: Estimating The Value Of College

Answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Remember, these are just estimates and you should focus more on how you arrive at your answer than if the estimate is correct. Be prepared to explain your reasoning.

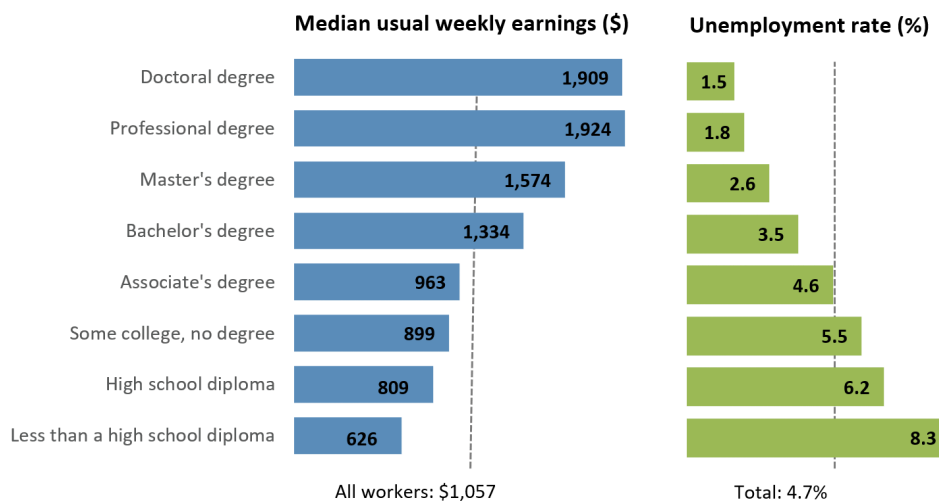
1. How much money do you think a college education is worth (in dollars)?

2. How did you arrive at your answer? Explain your thought process in 2 to 4 sentences.

Part II: Analyze the Data

For the next series of questions, use the chart below which displays U.S. workers' median weekly earnings and unemployment rate based on the level of education they've completed.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

	High School Diploma	Some college, no degree	Bachelor's Degree
Weekly Earnings			
Yearly Earning			
Earnings over 40 years			

Part III: Reflection - How Do You Value a College Education Now?

8. What was your initial reaction when you saw the actual quantitative value of a college education? What emotion(s) did you feel? Surprise? Frustration? Happiness? Explain your answer.

9. How did your quantitative estimate compare to the actual quantitative value of a college education?

10. Why do you think the quantitative value of some college is much closer to the value of a high school diploma than the value of a bachelor's degree?

11. After doing this activity, do you have a different view on whether or not a college education is a smart investment? Why or why not?
