

# What is College?

You've heard it before: "A college education is important." You've seen the statistics showing a college-educated individual can earn as much as double the income throughout a lifetime compared to someone who is not college-educated. So, what does it mean to be "college" educated?

There is little doubt the definition of "college" is changing. Just a few years ago, going to college meant going to a four-year college or university, earning a bachelor's degree. However, that is no longer the case.

When "going to college" is mentioned now, it often refers to a few different types of quality, postsecondary education. This includes:

## Certificate or Licensing Programs

- When planning to pursue a trade, postsecondary students often take specialized plans of study which can be completed in a matter of months. Missouri offers many certificate and licensing programs throughout the state's public community and technical colleges. Some Missouri employers and trade groups provide programs such as these as well.

## Associate Degree

- An associate degree is a degree awarded to students who have completed a two-year course of study. Technical fields/careers often require associate degrees, but there are other professional and business careers which also require an associate degree. Missouri has many public community and technical colleges where a student may earn an associate degree. Furthermore, students seeking associate degrees are often eligible for many financial aid programs.

## Bachelor's Degree

- A bachelor's degree is awarded to students who have completed a four-year course of study at a college or university. The classes a student takes during this period focus on a student's career field as well as general education subject areas. Students seeking these degrees also often qualify for state and federal financial aid programs.

By 2018, an estimated 60 percent of all jobs in the state will require some form of postsecondary education, or "college."

Missouri has set a goal to increase the percentage of working age-adults with a two- or four-year degree or professional certificate to 60 percent by the year 2025. Currently, about 49 percent of Missourians have a college degree or certificate.

So, when next you hear, "College is important," understand that yes, it is important. These types of postsecondary education are vital to our future in Missouri.