

March 23 - 27

Pay Equality

Name _____

1. In the United States, the current wage gap between men and women is about 20%, meaning that for every dollar men earn, women only earn about 80 cents. In spite of decades of activism and gains in women's wages, the issue has yet to be resolved; there is even some evidence that progress in closing the wage gap has recently slowed down. In order to address this persistent issue, some have proposed solutions such as salary transparency, while others call for new ways of approaching the problem.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize material from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-written essay in which you develop your position on the most important changes that can be made to promote pay equality.

- Source A (Elsesser)
- Source B (chart)
- Source C (Oelz)
- Source D (Gaag)
- Source E (Wingfield)
- Source F (table)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that may establish a line of reasoning.
- Provide evidence from at least 3 of the provided sources to support your thesis. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Source A

- Elsesser, Kim. "Two Solutions for the Gender Pay Gap that Can Be Implemented Today." *Forbes.com*, 19 Nov. 2015, www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2015/11/19/two-solutions-for-the-gender-pay-gap-that-can-be-implemented-today/#396b1c9d2d35.

The following excerpt is from an article in an online business magazine.

The gender pay gap is still going strong. In the U.S., women are taking home only 82.9 cents for every dollar earned by men, and the discrepancy is worse for minorities and for those at the high end of the pay scale. Globally, things aren't much better. The World Economic Forum



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released data today indicating it will take 118 years until the global pay gap between men and women is closed. Recommendations on how to reduce this problem are available, but many, like better child-care options, are difficult to implement and prohibitively costly. Fortunately, there are two fixes we could implement immediately that would help eliminate a big portion of the gender pay gap. And, they are free.

1. Implement Pay Transparency

Pay transparency lets everyone know what their colleagues are earning and would make women aware if they are making less than their male counterparts. When the Sony hack revealed a gender pay gap among actors, Charlize Theron took action to correct a \$10 million pay discrepancy between her and her male co-star, Chris Hemsworth, in *The Huntsman*. It's a natural response. We all want to be treated fairly. It makes the gender gap problem self-correcting.

Yes, it would be a bit of a headache for managers, especially in the early days. But having to defend the pay of their employees would not necessarily be bad for the corporation. It may ultimately work as incentive for employees to increase their productivity. It would force organizations to establish a meritocracy. Those who are most productive get paid the most. The highest pay wouldn't go to those who ask for it, to those who threaten to quit, or to those who are friends with the boss, but, instead it would go to those that actually deserve more pay.

Some tech companies are already implementing these strategies in order to reduce the gender pay gap. According to the Guardian, New York based analytics company, SumAll provides an online document so employees can view the salaries and pay histories of all their colleagues. Social sharing startup, Buffer also makes all their employees' salary information public. Ideally, more organizations who care about gender parity will follow suit, but it will probably require legislation to get the larger organizations on board.

2. Eliminate Negotiation

A second fix for the gender pay gap is to eliminate negotiation. Study after study show that women don't perform as well as men in negotiations. Often women avoid negotiation altogether, accepting the first offer presented by a prospective employer. One study of graduating masters' students examined who negotiated their first job offer. Despite urging from their university to negotiate, only 7% of the female graduates negotiated for a higher salary, but 57% of the men asked for more money. That's more than 8 times as many men asking for



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more money. Sadly, many women report that they fear they will not be liked if they aggressively pursue a higher salary.

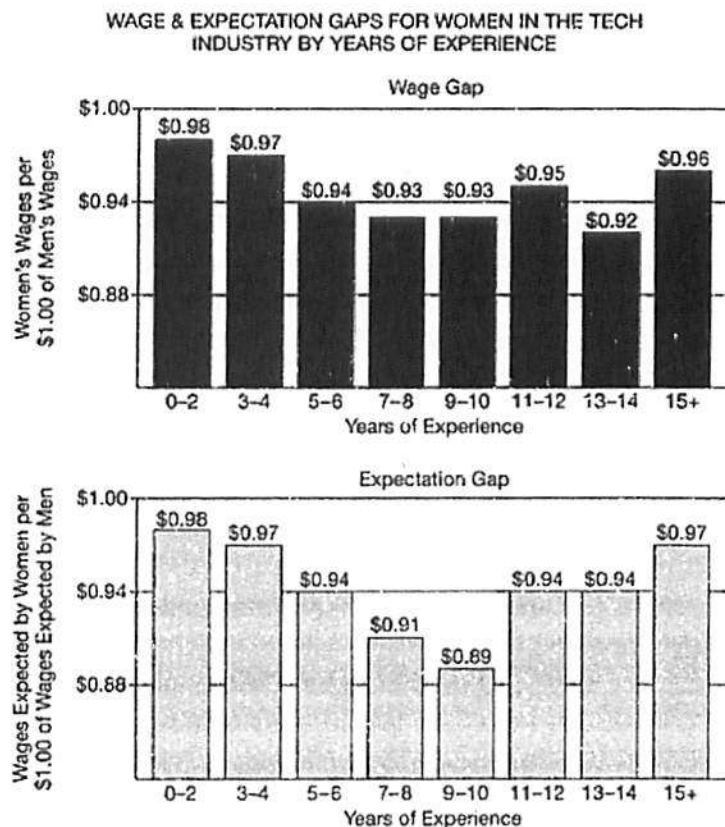
from "Two Solutions for the Gender Pay Gap that Can Be Implemented Today" by Kim Elsesser © 2015 by PARS International Corp. Reproduced with permission.

Source B

- Hired. The State of Wage Inequality in the Workplace. hired.com, 2018.

The following is a chart from a report published by a tech career site.

Wage & Expectation Gaps for Women in the Tech Industry by Years of Experience



Source C

- Oelz, Martin, et al. Equal pay: An Introductory Guide. International Labour Office, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unomaha/detail.action?docID=1531554.



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The following is an excerpt from a guide to pay equity published by a United Nations agency that sets international labor standards.

Different factors explain the gender pay gap. The relative importance of these factors varies by country and over time . . .

Gender differences in work experience

Women have more intermittent work patterns than men. They often withdraw from the labour force because of their child-rearing responsibilities, although a growing proportion of women remain in the labour market after giving birth. Skill loss due to work interruptions is penalized for both women and men (who often face military service and unemployment), but is greater for women. When they return to work, unlike men, women tend to lose access to jobs that are commensurate to their skill level.

Occupational gender segregation

Women work in a smaller and lower-paying range of occupations and industries than men. This is called horizontal occupational segregation. Women work as, for example, secretaries and nurses or day care workers, which are typically paid less than jobs mostly performed by men, such as truck drivers, machinists and miners. This is often a result of stereotyped assumptions regarding what type of work is "suitable" for women.

Women are under-represented at highly paid levels and kept in lower level positions. This is called vertical occupational segregation. It applies even in sectors where the majority of the workforce is women, such as in the health and education sectors.

Female-dominated jobs (often defined as occupations where more than 60% of employees are women) are generally less paid and less valued than male-dominated jobs. The lower rates of pay discourage men from entering these jobs. As a result women are concentrated in different jobs than men. This reinforces the view that low pay results from market factors and skill requirements rather than the under-valuation of women's jobs. Women's skills are often overlooked, as they are regarded as "natural" female characteristics rather than acquired through experience or training. The classification of occupations as "skilled" or "unskilled" thus also often has a gender bias.

Source D



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- Gaag, Nikki van der. *Feminism and Men*. Zed Books, 2014.

The following is an excerpt from a book on the role of men in the feminist movement.

Crucially, while women have been moving into paid employment, they are still doing the same amount of unpaid work and childcare in the home. Until men and women share the unpaid work, women will still be doing the double shift that makes it difficult to move up the career ladder. This becomes particularly true once they have children, although of course household arrangements are becoming ever more diverse, and roles may be hugely different in some cultures. . . .

In a 2006 survey at Princeton University in the USA, 62 per cent of women said they anticipated work/family conflict, compared with 33 per cent of men—and of the men who expected a conflict, 46 per cent expected that their wives would step away from their career track. These expectations yield predictable results: among professional women who take time off for family, only 40 per cent return to work full-time.

Many companies structure their workers' days around the expectation that someone else is handling the home front. Even where men have welcomed women into the workplace, housework, cooking and child-rearing duties are still borne largely by women. . . .

In some countries, women (for it is still their problem) have found another solution: get someone else to do the work in the home. Recent research on women in senior management in the emerging BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) found that this directly correlated with being able to go back to work when children are young. "We found, for instance, in India, that the combination of . . . extended family and low-cost domestic help meant that child care was really not a problem," says Sylvia Ann Hewlett, one of the researchers. "Women in the BRIC countries are able to return to work sooner after having children, while many women in the U.S. disengage from the workforce completely while their children are young. That means that they lose about 18 percent of their earning power permanently, because it's so hard to get back in." So rather than looking to a male partner or husband (if there is one) to share these tasks, middle-class women with means would rather hand them on—by paying another woman.

Source E

- Wingfield, Adia Harvey. "About Those 79 Cents." *The Atlantic*, 17 Oct. 2016, www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/79-cents/504386.

The following is from an online magazine article.



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[T]he gender-wage gap is not just a story of women making less money than men; it is indicative of how race also shapes earnings disparities, such that women of color often find themselves financially in even worse shape than their white female colleagues.

Importantly, these racial disparities exist on both sides of the gender-pay gap. While researchers and policymakers are more likely today to draw attention to how women of color are differentially affected by these gaps in pay, men of color . . . are facing earnings gaps unique to them. When it comes to hourly wages, white men earn an average of \$21 an hour, compared to \$15 an hour for black men and \$14 an hour for Latino men. (White and Asian women actually earn more per hour, on average—\$17 an hour and \$18 an hour, respectively—than black and Latino men.) Further, a recent report from the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning think tank, showed that in 2015, after controlling for education, region, and work experience, black men earned 22 percent less than white men working in the same occupations, a disparity that has worsened in the aftermath of the Great Recession.

Other sociological research can provide some insights into the processes that enable and perpetuate these particular gaps. New York University's Deirdre Royster has shown that social networks help white men more than black men when it comes to looking for skilled jobs. . . . Further, my own work on black male professionals—specifically, lawyers—shows that they often are steered to organizational tasks that give firms the appearance of greater diversity but obscure their ability to contribute in other, more valued ways. Thus, it's important to think about how race operates in conjunction with gender when considering pay disparities not just for women, but for men as well.

Recent data from California are particularly illustrative of this. In the state's 37th congressional district, which is in Los Angeles county, data from 2015 seemed to show an encouraging erasure of the gender-pay gap, with women's average earnings above men's. But it turns out that it was not so much that the pay gap had closed as it was that the 37th district has a very high proportion of black and Latino men relative to the rest of the country; when women's—particularly black and brown women's—wages were being compared to those of a group of mostly nonwhite men, the gender-pay gap effectively disappeared—an effect that can be explained by the fact that the wage gap between men and women of color is smaller than the one between women of color and white men. . . .

So, while the gender-pay gap certainly exists, it is a little more complicated than the basic assertion that men make more than women; an intersectional approach reveals that some groups of men—namely, men of color—actually earn less on average than white women. Therefore, any efforts to close the gender-pay gap should address not just the processes that perpetuate gender discrimination—the motherhood penalty, gender stereotypes, and a lack of policies to support working parents, to name a few—but also the mechanisms that reproduce



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racial inequalities. Pay gaps will still remain, but they should be driven only by differences in skill, education, and experience—not by race or gender.

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Source F

- Hegewisch, Ariane, and Emma Williams-Baron. "The Gender Wage Gap: 2017, Earnings Differences by Race and Ethnicity." Institute for Women's Policy Research, 7 March, 2018, iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-2017-race-ethnicity.

The following is a table from a fact sheet published by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS AND GENDER EARNINGS RATIO FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS,
16 YEARS AND OLDER BY RACE/ETHNIC BACKGROUND, 2016 AND 2017

	Racial/ Ethnic Background	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings
2017	All Races/ Ethnicities	\$770	\$941	81.8%	N/A
	White	\$795	\$971	81.9%	81.9%
	Black	\$657	\$710	92.5%	67.7%
	Hispanic	\$603	\$690	87.4%	62.1%
	Asian	\$903	\$1,207	74.8%	93.0%
	Racial/ Ethnic Background	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings
2016 (in 2017 Dollars)	All Races/ Ethnicities	\$765	\$934	81.9%	N/A
	White	\$782	\$962	81.3%	81.3%
	Black	\$655	\$733	89.3%	68.0%
	Hispanic	\$598	\$677	88.4%	62.2%
	Asian	\$921	\$1,176	78.4%	95.8%

Notes: Hispanic workers may be of any race. White, Black, and Asian workers include Hispanics. Annual average of median weekly earnings.

Source:

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, Annual Averages <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf> (retrieved March 2018).



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Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.



March 16-20

AP[®] English Language and Composition 2014 Free-Response Questions

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Many recent college graduates have faced record levels of unemployment. This situation has led people to question what they value about higher education. Some high school students and their parents are wondering if a college education is worth the cost. Others, however, believe that a college education prepares students for more than just a job or career.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that evaluates whether college is worth its cost.

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the sources to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Crawford)

Source B (Roth)

Source C (chart)

Source D (Leonhardt)

Source E (Wieder)

Source F (Pew)

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Source A

Crawford, Matthew B. "The Case for Working with Your Hands." *New York Times Magazine*. New York Times, 24 May 2009. Web. 19 Dec. 2011.

The following is excerpted from an article in the Sunday magazine section of a national newspaper.

High-school shop-class programs were widely dismantled in the 1990s as educators prepared students to become "knowledge workers." The imperative of the last 20 years to round up every warm body and send it to college, then to the cubicle, was tied to a vision of the future in which we somehow take leave of material reality and glide about in a pure information economy. This has not come to pass. To begin with, such work often feels more enervating than gliding. More fundamentally, now as ever, somebody has to actually do things: fix our cars, unclog our toilets, build our houses.

When we praise people who do work that is straightforwardly useful, the praise often betrays an assumption that they had no other options. We idealize them as the salt of the earth and emphasize the sacrifice for others their work may entail. Such sacrifice does indeed occur—the hazards faced by a lineman restoring power during a storm come to mind. But what if such work answers as well to a basic human need of the one who does it? I take this to be the suggestion of Marge Piercy's poem "To Be of Use," which concludes with the lines "the pitcher longs for water to carry/and a person for work that is real." Beneath our gratitude for the lineman may rest envy.

This seems to be a moment when the useful arts have an especially compelling economic rationale. A car mechanics' trade association reports that repair shops have seen their business jump significantly in the current recession: people aren't buying new cars; they are fixing the ones they have. The current downturn is likely to pass eventually. But there are also systemic changes in the economy, arising from information technology, that have the surprising effect of making the manual trades—plumbing, electrical work, car repair—more attractive as careers. The Princeton economist Alan Blinder argues that the crucial distinction in the emerging labor market is not between those with more or less education, but between those whose services can be delivered over a wire and those who must do their work in person or on site. The latter will find their livelihoods more secure against outsourcing to distant countries. As Blinder puts it, "You can't hammer a nail over the Internet." Nor can the Indians fix your car. Because they are in India.

If the goal is to earn a living, then, maybe it isn't really true that 18-year-olds need to be imparted with a sense of panic about getting into college (though they certainly need to learn). Some people are hustled off to college, then to the cubicle, against their own inclinations and natural bent, when they would rather be learning to build things or fix things. One shop teacher suggested to me that "in schools, we create artificial learning environments for our children that they know to be contrived and undeserving of their full attention and engagement. Without the opportunity to learn through the hands, the world remains abstract and distant, and the passions for learning will not be engaged."

"The Case for Working with Your Hands" by Matthew B. Crawford from *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*, copyright © 2009 by Matthew B. Crawford. Used by permission.

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Source B

Roth, Michael. "What's a Liberal Arts Education Good For?" *Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 1 Dec. 2008. Web. 20 Dec. 2011.

The following is excerpted from an online article by the president of a liberal arts university.

Rather than pursuing business, technical or vocational training, some students (and their families) opt for a well-rounded learning experience. Liberal learning introduces them to books and the music, the science and the philosophy that form disciplined yet creative habits of mind that are not *reducible* to the material circumstances of one's life (though they may depend on those circumstances). There is a promise of freedom in the liberal arts education offered by America's most distinctive, selective, and demanding institutions; and it is no surprise that their graduates can be found disproportionately in leadership positions in politics, culture and the economy. . . .

What does liberal learning have to do with the harsh realities that our graduates are going to face after college? The development of the capacities for critical inquiry associated with liberal learning can be enormously practical because they become resources on which to draw for continual learning, for making decisions in one's life, and for making a difference in the world. Given the pace of technological and social change, it no longer makes sense to devote four years of higher education entirely to specific skills. Being ready on DAY ONE, may have sounded nice on the campaign trail, but being able to draw on one's education over a lifetime is much more practical (and precious). Post secondary education should help students to discover what they love to do, to get better at it, and to develop the ability to continue learning so that they become agents of change—not victims of it.

A successful liberal arts education develops the capacity for innovation and for judgment. Those who can image how best to reconfigure existing resources and project future results will be the shapers of our economy and culture. We seldom get to have all the information we would like, but still we must act. The habits of mind developed in a liberal arts context often result in combinations of focus and flexibility that make for intelligent, and sometimes courageous risk taking for critical assessment of those risks. . . .

America's great universities and colleges must continue to offer a rigorous and innovative liberal arts education. A liberal education remains a resource years after graduation because it helps us to address problems and potential in our lives with passion, commitment and a sense of possibility. A liberal education teaches freedom by example, through the experience of free research, thinking and expression; and ideally, it inspires us to carry this example, this experience of meaningful freedom, from campus to community.

The American model of liberal arts education emphasizes freedom and experimentation as tools for students to develop meaningful ways of working after graduation. Many liberal arts students become innovators and productive risk takers, translating liberal arts ideals into effective, productive work in the world. That is what a liberal education is good for.

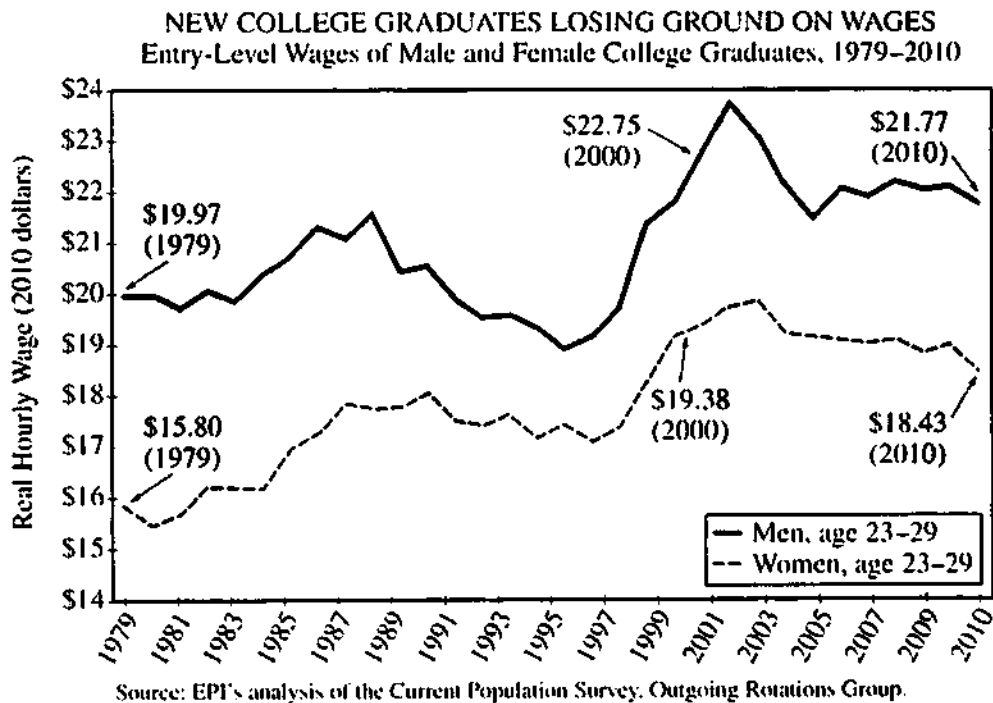
President Michael S. Roth
Wesleyan University
Huffington Post

Source C

Shierholz, Heidi. "New college grads losing ground on wages." *Economic Policy Institute*. Economic Policy Institute, 31 Aug. 2011. Web. 20 Dec. 2011.

The following is from an online article published by a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to broaden discussions about economic policy to include the needs of low- and middle-income workers.

As college students head back to the classroom this semester, a harsh reality confronts them—the rewards for the time, energy, and money that young people put into college are less than they were a decade ago. Since 2000, America's young college graduates have seen wages, adjusted for inflation, deteriorate. This lack of wage growth may be particularly surprising to those used to reading about the vast unfilled need for college graduates, which if true would lead to *increases* in their earnings. The **chart** below tracks the average inflation-adjusted hourly wage for young college graduates with no advanced degree from 1979 to 2010.



After gains in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, hourly wages for young college-educated men in 2000 were \$22.75, but that dropped by almost a full dollar to \$21.77 by 2010. For young college-educated women, hourly wages fell from \$19.38 to \$18.43 over the same period. Now, with unemployment expected to remain above 8% well into 2014, it will likely be many years before young college graduates—or any workers—see substantial wage growth.

Source: EPI's analysis of the Current Population Survey, Outgoing Relations Group. Taken from "New college grads losing ground on wages" by Heidi Shierholz, copyright © 2011 by Economic Policy Institute. Used by permission.

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Source D

Leonhardt, David. "Even for Cashiers, College Pays Off."
New York Times. New York Times, 25 June 2011.
Web. 20 Dec. 2011.

The following is excerpted from an online article in a national newspaper.

The evidence is overwhelming that college is a better investment for most graduates than in the past. A new study even shows that a bachelor's degree pays off for jobs that don't require one: secretaries, plumbers and cashiers. And, beyond money, education seems to make people happier and healthier.

"Sending more young Americans to college is not a panacea," says David Autor, an M.I.T. economist who studies the labor market. "Not sending them to college would be a disaster."

The most unfortunate part of the case against college is that it encourages children, parents and schools to aim low. For those families on the fence—often deciding whether a student will be the first to attend—the skepticism becomes one more reason to stop at high school. Only about 33 percent of young adults get a four-year degree today, while another 10 percent receive a two-year degree.

So it's important to dissect the anti-college argument, piece by piece. It obviously starts with money. Tuition numbers can be eye-popping, and student debt has increased significantly. But there are two main reasons college costs aren't usually a problem for those who graduate.

First, many colleges are not very expensive, once financial aid is taken into account. Average net tuition and fees at public four-year colleges this past year were only about \$2,000 (though Congress may soon cut federal financial aid).

Second, the returns from a degree have soared. Three decades ago, full-time workers with a bachelor's degree made 40 percent more than those with only a high-school diploma. Last year, the gap reached 83 percent. College graduates, though hardly immune from the downturn, are also far less likely to be unemployed than non-graduates.

Skeptics like to point out that the income gap isn't rising as fast as it once was, especially for college graduates who don't get an advanced degree. But the gap remains enormous—and bigger than ever. Skipping college because the pace of gains has slowed is akin to skipping your heart medications because the pace of medical improvement isn't what it used to be.

The Hamilton Project, a research group in Washington, has just finished a comparison of college with other investments. It found that college tuition in recent decades has delivered an inflation-adjusted annual return of more than 15 percent. For stocks, the historical return is 7 percent. For real estate, it's less than 1 percent.

Another study being released this weekend—by Anthony Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose of Georgetown—breaks down the college premium by occupations and shows that college has big benefits even in many fields where a degree is not crucial.

Construction workers, police officers, plumbers, retail salespeople and secretaries, among others, make significantly more with a degree than without one. Why? Education helps people do higher-skilled work, get jobs with better-paying companies or open their own businesses.

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Source E

Wieder, Ben. "Thiel Fellowship Pays 24 Talented Students \$100,000 Not to Attend College." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. The Chronicle of Higher Education, 25 May 2011. Web. 20 Dec. 2011.

The following is excerpted from an online article in a publication for college and university faculty members and administrators.

The winners were announced today for a new fellowship that has sparked heated debate in academic circles for questioning the value of higher education and suggesting that some entrepreneurial students may be better off leaving college.

Peter Thiel, a co-founder of PayPal, will pay each of the 24 winners of his Thiel Fellowship \$100,000 not to attend college for two years and to develop business ideas instead.

The fellows, all 20 years old or younger, will leave institutions including Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Stanford University, to work with a network of more than 100 Silicon Valley mentors and further develop their ideas in areas such as biotechnology, education, and energy. . . .

At least one student initially chosen as a Thiel fellow, however, ended up turning down the deal, opting to continue her traditional education by accepting admission at MIT.

Mr. Thiel said he had expected some applicants would decide to stay on their academic track.

He admits he probably wouldn't have applied for a program like the Thiel Fellowship when he was a student in the 1980s either.

Mr. Thiel studied philosophy at Stanford in the 1980s and later completed law school there, but he now wishes he had given more thought to the educational decisions he made and their implications.

"Instead, it was just this default activity," he said.

Questioning the Value of College

The fellowship seeks to help winners develop their ideas more quickly than they would at a traditional university. Its broader aim goes beyond helping the 24 winners, by raising big questions about the state of higher education.

Mr. Thiel ignited controversy when he told TechCrunch in April that he sees higher education as the next bubble, comparable to previously overvalued markets in technology and housing.

Both cost and demand for a college education have grown significantly in the years since Mr. Thiel was a student. He sees that rise as irrational.

Students today are taking on more debt, and recently tightened bankruptcy laws make it more difficult to shake that debt, he argues, and those factors make higher education a risky investment. "If you get this wrong, it's actually a mistake that's hard to undo for the rest of your life," he said.

Critics contend that even so, Thiel's advice to leave school and develop a business is applicable only to a tiny fraction of students and that Thiel's own success, aided by business relationships forged during his days at Stanford, argues against leaving school.

But Thiel is convinced that the social pressure for students to pursue "lower-risk trajectories" in their career choices will lead to less innovation in the future.

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Source F

Pew Social & Demographic Trends. "Executive Summary." *Is College Worth It?* Pew Research Center, 15 May 2011. Web. 20 Dec. 2011.

The following is excerpted from a 2011 report on a national survey of 2,142 adults ages 18 and older.

Here is a summary of key findings:

Survey of the General Public

Cost and Value. A majority of Americans (57%) say the higher education system in the United States fails to provide students with good value for the money they and their families spend. An even larger majority—75%—says college is too expensive for most Americans to afford. At the same time, however, an overwhelming majority of college graduates—86%—say that college has been a good investment for them personally.

Monetary Payoff. Adults who graduated from a four-year college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 more a year as a result of having gotten that degree. Adults who did not attend college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 a year less as a result. These matched estimates by the public are very close to the median gap in annual earnings between a high school and college graduate as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010: \$19,550. A more detailed Pew Research Center analysis . . . shows that this gap varies by type of degree and field of study.

Student Loans. A record share of students are leaving college with a substantial debt burden, and among those who do, about half (48%) say that paying off that debt made it harder to pay other bills; a quarter say it has made it harder to buy a home (25%); and about a quarter say it has had an impact on their career choices (24%).

Why Not College? Nearly every parent surveyed (94%) says they expect their child to attend college, but even as college enrollments have reached record levels, most young adults in this country still do not attend a four-year college. The main barrier is financial. Among adults ages 18 to 34 who are not in school and do not have a bachelor's degree, two-thirds say a major reason for not continuing their education is the need to support a family. Also, 57% say they would prefer to work and make money; and 48% say they can't afford to go to college.

Split Views of College Mission. Just under half of the public (47%) says the main purpose of a college education is to teach work-related skills and knowledge, while 39% say it is to help a student grow personally and intellectually; the remainder volunteer that both missions are equally important. College graduates place more emphasis on intellectual growth; those who are not college graduates place more emphasis on career preparation.

For Most College Graduates, Missions Accomplished. Among survey respondents who graduated from a four-year college, 74% say their college education was very useful in helping them grow intellectually; 69% say it was very useful in helping them grow and mature as a person; and 55% say it was very useful in helping them prepare for a job or career.

Above All, Character. While Americans value college, they value character even more. Asked what it takes for a young person to succeed in the world, 61% say a good work ethic is extremely important and 57% say the same about knowing how to get along with people. Just 42% say the same about a college education.