

So, You Want to Get a Degree?

Are you thinking of going to college? I returned to college for a master's degree when my children were nine, seven, and six years old. I chose The University of Texas in Austin, which meant moving every summer. It was quite an adventure and a challenge.

As a life coach I work with single moms who want to set career goals. They often don't know where to begin or if they should go to college. If you are uncertain about what your next career step should be or if you have questions this article may be helpful.

Here is what you do:

1. First ask yourself, "Why?"

Will having a degree:

- Increase your income?
- Improve your chances for a promotion?
- Increase the likelihood of you getting a better (not just different) job?

If you answered no to these questions perhaps you should rethink.

Earning a degree requires:

- Commitment
- Determination
- Time
- Money

The pay off needs to be worth all of the above.

When I decided to return to college for a master's degree I wanted to:

- Increase my pay scale as a teacher
- Increase my opportunities for a job in other fields

Be clear and honest with yourself about why you want a degree. A degree may not be the answer for you.

2. What do you want a degree in?

- Seriously review your personal strengths, jobs in which you have excelled.
- What subjects do you enjoy that also translate into an employable skill?
- Research online the colleges that offer degrees in these fields of study.
- Again, ask yourself how earning this degree will make a difference for you.

3. Look around. What jobs are companies hiring for in your area? Unless you plan to move, you need to target possible employers. For example, if you want to study interior design, but there are no furniture or design stores in your area, what good will it do you? Be realistic.

4. Talk to someone who has the degree you are considering. Find out if they are working in the field in which they earned a degree. What has surprised them about this type of work? Do they enjoy their work? And, most important, are there openings for others in the area?

5. Apply for FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid <https://fafsa.ed.gov>).

Once you have answered these questions and taken the baby steps mentioned here you may take the next step: deciding where you will earn the degree. Return next month for my article – "A Single Mom Deciding on a College"