

## How to Enroll in College

It used to be that you could make a good living without ever having to go to college. But those days are gone. Today, if you want a job that not only pays well but also paves a way to a solid career, you'll need more than a high school diploma.

The first step to a successful career is higher education. Regardless of what you plan to do with your life, you'll likely have to enroll in a community college, vocational school or university. "Know who you are and what you want to accomplish," advises Monica Taliaferro, director of marketing and public information for Brookhaven College. "We encourage people who are embarking on a career to talk to one of our advisers—they know the job market and can help you sort through the choices for continuing your education."

The number of choices can be overwhelming. That's why it's best to narrow them to your particular interests, Ms. Taliaferro says. For many fields, an associate's degree from a community college can be the factor that separates you from other candidates. An associate's degree is equivalent to two years of study from a university. This type of degree can lead to careers such as data processing, health services, public service, mechanics or engineering.

"We offer certification programs that take just a few months; hands-on education, where you learn by doing; continuing education courses and corporate training that provide instruction in using new software programs; and traditional two-year programs that enable you to transfer to a full college or university," she says.

Some community colleges, including Brookhaven, do not require students to have a high school diploma or GED. However, some degrees (such as an associate's degree in nursing) will require a high school diploma or GED.

A bachelor's degree can open even more doors than an associate's degree. A bachelor's degree will usually require four years of study and be more costly. Universities that award them are generally more selective than community colleges and vocational schools. As many colleges, advisers can answer questions you might have about your career goals. "We have advisers for a variety of needs," Ms. Taliaferro says. "They will assess your needs—from taking fulfilling prerequisites to providing development courses to get a student up to the skill levels needed to take college-level courses.

Brookhaven also has specialists who can help senior adults, returning-to-work students, international and multicultural students, and transfer (core curriculum) students. Advisers are an invaluable resource when planning your course of study. Many schools require that you meet with an adviser before signing up for classes. An adviser should help you develop an academic plan that takes into account past education, career goals, current commitments and current skill levels. He or she will help you plan your class schedule to fit into your personal schedule. An adviser will also help you complete the registration process and inform you where to go for help.

You can also access the Internet for information about specific career requirements (<http://online.onetcenter.org>), which can help you focus on what you'll need to succeed, Ms. Taliaferro says. The sooner you start working toward your future, the more likely it is you'll get there.