

Why College is Important to Me  
by Derrick Flakoll

Why is college important? Almost all parents want their children to attend college. The federal government offers various subsidies and supports to make paying for higher education easier. It is a truth universally acknowledged that as many people should attend college as possible. But what, when you get right down to it, is the point of a university education? What justifies the huge sums used to fund it and the unanimous support for awarding degrees? Most people will explain these phenomena in economic terms, praising the skills that higher education brings as an engine for future growth, innovation, and the creation of high-income jobs. However, such sweeping justifications may be irrelevant to the individual. So what intrinsic motivations can drive an individual to devote so much time, effort, and expense to attending college? I cannot answer for everyone, but I can answer for myself.

It is practically cliché to say that college is a place for young adults to grow and develop, to try new things and “find themselves.” Though this idea is well-worn, there is a ring of truth about it. I don’t need to find myself; I know who I am. I am Derrick Flakoll, a sixteen-year-old boy, intelligent, perfectionist, well-meaning, occasionally funny, and a bit of a fish out of water. It’s that last part that’s most important: throughout my life, I have often struggled to fit in among my peers, because they didn’t share my interests, or because I was too afraid to take chances and get to know them better, or because I couldn’t find the words to talk with them. In college, I’d be surrounded by people my own age at all times; with that much exposure to others, my social skills would naturally improve. If you can’t interact with people, you can’t really live, and going to college is my way of learning to better interact with people.

Of course, a college is, first and foremost, a place of education. While I learn to deal with people, I will also learn about great literature, and the Battle of Cannae, and the Periodic Table of Elements – and

I'll love every minute of it. All right, I suppose that's a bit of a hyperbole, but though there are some subjects and classes that I may not care for, on the whole, I can't bear the thought of a life without learning. I've always had the inexplicable conviction that I can understand the universe if I only try hard enough and because of that I've taken in all the knowledge I can. I love to exercise my intellect; even my least favorite subject, math; I feel the satisfaction of an honest effort rewarded when I solve an equation. College is, obviously, one of the best places for me to sharpen the keen edge of my mind.

College is a place for education, but in more ways than one. It teaches one about people as much as it does about science and history. College is important to me because it is there that I will learn the skills I need in order to truly take my place in the world.