A key factor associated with academic success and dropout prevention is parent involvement. In order to help parents and students succeed in school, Cooperative Extension offers the Together for a Better Education program. The program brings together partners from high schools, local colleges, families of 9-12th grade students, college-age mentors, local nonprofits and UNCE staff. The program consists of six sessions held in English and Spanish in various locations across Las Vegas. This fact sheet provides an overview of Session 4: Options After High School.

Options after High School
The basic educational options after high school are a certificate program in a vocational field, an associate degree program or a bachelor’s degree program. The following is a description of the institutions that offer the programs and the advantages of each.

Two year Colleges (Community & Junior)
- Two-year schools offer certificate programs, technical programs (associates degrees) and transfer programs.
- The coursework leading to an associate’s degree is usually transferable for credit at a four-year school.

Advantages
- Open enrollment policy
- Lower tuition cost as compared to a four-year school.
- Transfer agreements between community colleges and four-year schools allow a student receiving a two-year degree to be accepted with junior status at any four-year school state wide.
- Good options for:
  - Students who are unsure of academic ability
  - Students who are unsure about long-term goals
  - Students who are concerned about cost
  - Students who are interested in updating existing work skills

Four-Year Colleges and Universities
- Offer bachelor’s degrees.
- Most also offer post-graduate degrees such as master’s degrees, doctoral degrees and professional degrees.
Advantages
- Greater selection of majors and classes than are available at a two-year school.
- Generally considered to be more prestigious.
- Increased access to faculty members who are involved with research.
- A student starting at a four-year institution is more likely to finish a bachelor’s degree than a student who starts at a two-year institution.
- More opportunities for extracurricular activities including intermural sports, clubs and sororities/fraternities.
- More opportunities for paid and unpaid advanced internships in selected degree programs.
- Good options for:
  - Students who are confident in their academic ability.
  - Students who are confident about career goals.
  - Students entering professional fields or occupations such as those in health sciences, law, education or engineering, which may require more advanced degrees.

Scholarships: a form of aid that does not have to be repaid. Scholarships may be awarded for a number of reasons, including excellent grades, economic need, community involvement, membership in organizations, athletic ability, etc. Scholarships can be awarded through federal agencies, private institutions including corporations, religious/community groups and nonprofit organizations, as well as, through the academic institution itself.

Grants: a form of aid that does not have to be repaid and is typically awarded based on financial need, but can also be based on merit.

Federal Work Study: allows students with financial need to earn money through part-time work that does not have to be paid back. Students work on or off campus in jobs that often have flexible schedules that cater to the student’s school schedule. There are eligibility requirements that must be met.

Loans: a form of aid that does have to be repaid. Loans are made by public or private agencies to help pay for school expenses.

Eligibility Requirements
To be eligible for federal or state financial aid, students must meet the following requirements:
- Complete and send the FAFSA form (www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Be a citizen of the United States or an eligible legal resident
- Have a valid Social Security number

For more information on all of these options, go to: www.gotocollegenv.org.
In conclusion, parents can help their children navigate the financial aid process by understanding the various forms of assistance available and knowing the deadline and requirements. Most parents will need to provide their financial information in order to help their child demonstrate need. Parents may also provide support by staying vigilant of application deadlines and encouraging their child to apply to as many scholarships as possible. Finances should not stop someone from going to college!


To learn more about this topic and “Together for a Better Education” contact: Nora Luna at (702) 940-5420 or lunan@unce.unr.edu.