



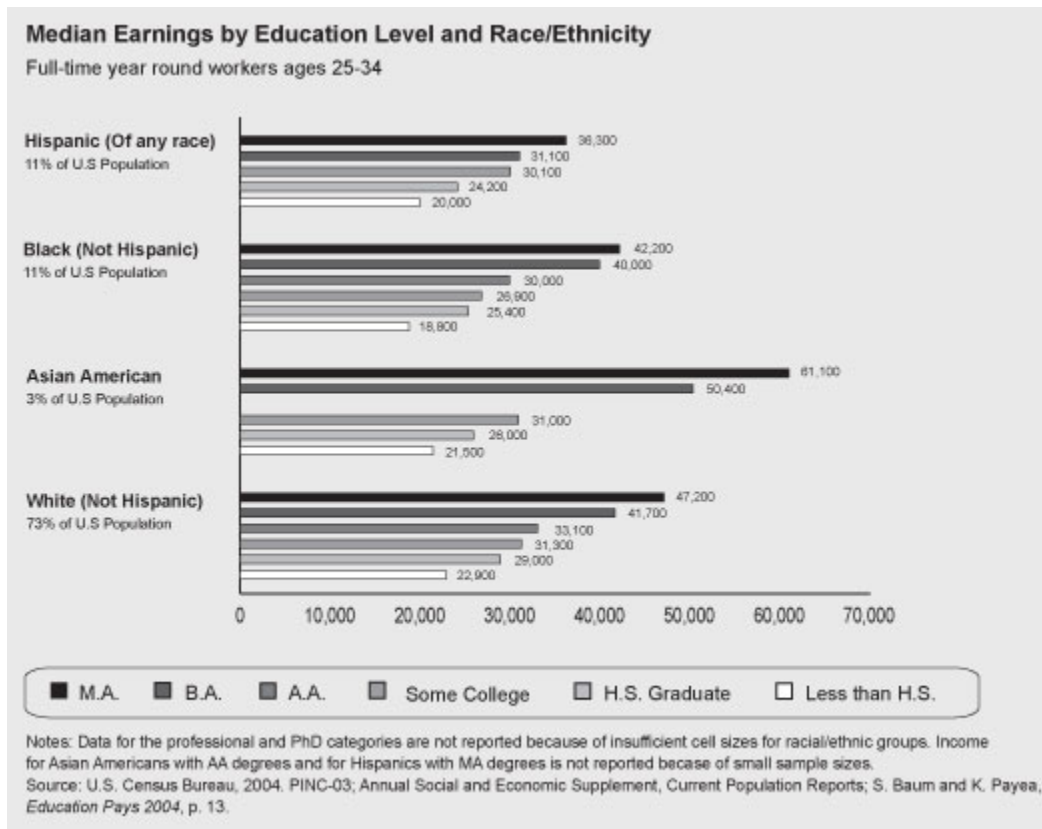
## Mom's Turn to Learn

### Reasons to Earn a College Degree

#### Income disparities

According to a Census Bureau study on 2003 yearly income and education, **a college graduate on average earned over \$51,000**, compared with \$28,000 for someone with only a high school diploma or an equivalent degree.

Earnings for those without college degrees have been going down since 1980 more quickly than earnings for those with a degree are going up. Earnings of those with less than a high school diploma decreased \$5,200 from 1980-2004, while the earnings of those with a bachelor's or higher degree increased \$2,700.



Graph from: [http://www.solutionsforourfuture.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education\\_pays](http://www.solutionsforourfuture.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education_pays)  
*Solutions for Our Future is a project of the American Council on Education. Used with permission.*

#### Does a college education matter?

Women with a college degree earn more than women without this credential. For example, on an hourly basis, women with a four-year college degree earned about 80 percent more than women with only a high school degree in 2001. Moreover, during the past two decades, this difference has grown. Men and women with college degrees

enjoyed a real increase in the purchasing power of their earnings between 1973 and 2001. Women without these credentials saw little or no improvement, and men with a high school education or less saw a decline in the purchasing power of their earnings. Nevertheless, while women with a college education earn considerably more than women without this credential, women continue to earn less than men with similar educational backgrounds.

	Men (2003 dollars)	Women (2003 dollars)	Earnings Ratio (percent)
Less than high school	11.04	8.57	77.6
High school	15.07	11.87	78.8
Some college	17.03	13.60	79.9
College graduate	26.63	20.19	75.8
Advanced degree	33.31	25.47	76.5

Source: Economic Policy Institute, *The State of Working America 2004-05*, Table 2.18 and Table 2.19 (Washington D.C.)

Table from <http://www.aauw.org/research/statedata/faq.cfm>. Used with permission.

**Women and men with a college education are also more likely to have employee benefits such as health insurance.** About nine out of 10 college-educated women and men had health insurance in 2002, compared to eight out of 10 among those with only a high school degree. College-educated women and men are more likely to have employer-based health insurance, while those with a high school degree or less are more likely to have public health insurance (such as Medicaid or Medicare).

- 50% of full time college students in the U.S. are employed.
- 38% of all college students in U.S. are 25 and older. The majority of these students attend school part-time.

According to the Census Bureau, over an adult's working life, high school graduates earn an average of \$1.2 million; associate's degree holders earn about \$1.6 million; and bachelor's degree holders earn about \$2.1 million (Day and Newburger, 2002).

Although the cost of college education is significant, the increased income and job benefits over a lifetime dwarf the expenses of college. A full-time student at a public 4-year college pays an average of \$8,655 for in-state tuition, room and board (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002). A full-time student in a public 2-year college pays an average of \$1,359 per year in tuition (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002). While it is clear that investment in a college degree, especially for those students in the lowest income brackets, is a financial burden, the long-term benefits in income appear to far outweigh the costs.