



**REthink Erie**  
208 E. Bayfront Parkway, Suite 100  
Erie, PA 16507  
(814) 454-7191  
[www.rethinkerie.com](http://www.rethinkerie.com)

# The Top 7 Community College Myths

More than 40% of the nation's college aged students begin their academic careers at community college, according to the US Department of Education. Despite their abilities to provide students with a stellar education, community colleges are surrounded by outdated, inaccurate myths. Although there are some elements of truth, there are many misperceptions, which may play a large role in the right choice you make for your college education.

## **MYTH #1: Students attend community college because they did not get accepted to four-year universities.**

**THE REALITY:** When reviewing statistics of transfer admissions, it is clear that universities see the academic strength in transfer students. For example, 33% of all applicants from California community colleges are accepted into UC Berkeley, which is significantly higher than the 26% of California high school students who applied. Or, for the University of Virginia, over 60% of transfer applications from Piedmont Virginia Community College were accepted, which is a greater ratio than the 50% of students who are accepted as freshmen from in-state high schools.

With the increasing economic burdens felt on individuals and families, many students are making the financially-savvy choice of attending community college. The continuously rising costs of university tuition can present a large burden for many families, and by attending a community college, students can save on tuition and living costs. And, although many students can be admitted into four-year universities prior to their enrollment in community college, they can also take the time during the first two years to explore majors they enjoy before applying to the top programs in their field.

## **MYTH #2: Community colleges are only for people who want a vocational technical job.**

**THE REALITY:** There is a large difference between community college and strictly vocational schools. Although some students can indeed obtain an excellent vocational education at community college, many students utilize community college as an affordable springboard to a four-year university, where they will graduate with a bachelor's degree – and even move onto graduate school.

## **MYTH #3: No one successful goes to community college.**

**THE REALITY:** The list of successful individuals who graduated from community college is extensive. Below is a very short list of famous community college alumni:

- Tom Hanks: Oscar-winning actor
- H. Ross Perot: Corporate executive and 1992 Presidential Candidate
- Calvin Klein: Fashion Designer
- Pete Rozelle: Commissioner of the NFL
- Melvin Salveson: Creator of MasterCard
- Walt Disney: Founder of Disney World and Disneyland
- Francine Neff: Former US Treasurer
- Arthur Goldberg: Supreme Court Justice
- James Sinegal: CEO of Costco
- Fred Haise: Apollo 13 Astronaut
- Clint Eastwood: Actor and Oscar-winning director
- John Walsh: "America's Most Wanted" host
- Gwendolyn Brooks: Pulitzer prize-winning writer
- Eileen Collins, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut

**MYTH #4: Obtaining a community college degree is not as useful as a university degree.**

**THE REALITY:** Attending community college offers two distinct benefits: an opportunity to directly enter into the skilled workforce, or an ability to attend an elite, four-year university. From an employer's perspective, attending community college demonstrates that you have intellectual passion and personal motivation. Regardless of whether you attend a community college or four-year university, employers review your entire candidacy, which includes your job experience, internships, volunteer work, and skills. In addition, the American Association of Community Colleges reports that the vast majority of many individuals in esteemed professions obtain their education at community colleges. For example, more than 80% of firefighters and law enforcement officers obtain their education from community college, as well as 62% of health professionals.

**MYTH #5: Most students who attend community college are older, with full-time jobs.**

**THE REALITY:** Whereas the flexibility of community college is indeed ideal for those who have rigorous professional demands, the largest population attending community college is students between the ages of 18 and 24. According to research conducted by Clifford Adelman in his study, "The Community College in the Lives of Traditional Age Students," 42% of community college students are 22 years of age or younger, which has increased 10% over the last ten years. Regardless of your age, community college offers an educational experience that can be conveniently suited for your professional endeavors and scheduling. In fact, it is a great way to obtain your education while building your professional resume and saving for your future.

**MYTH #6: It is not easy to transfer from a community college to a four-year university.**

**THE REALITY:** Community colleges were originally created to give students an affordable option of eventually obtaining a four-year degree. Therefore, there is a specific support and transfer system set in place, designed to help community college students seamlessly transition to a four-year university. In addition, as more students attend community colleges, four-year universities have created articulation agreements that specifically guarantee the awarding of university credit for comparable community college courses. For example, the University of California system has long-standing relationships with its state wide community colleges. In fact, according to the UC Board of Regents, they are aiming to increase the number of transfer students from California community colleges by another 50% in the upcoming school year.

Other four-year universities specifically advise students who did not receive admissions to attend community college before applying again. For example, wait listed students have an option of attending Blinn Community College, while also taking courses at A&M. If the students maintain a B average, then they will automatically be admitted to Texas A&M. In 2006 alone, there was an increase of 71% of students who choose this option.

**MYTH #7: Community college students cannot make it in a four-year university.**

**THE REALITY:** Upon reviewing the statistics, research demonstrates that community college students tend to earn a higher GPA than students who begin their academic careers at a four-year university. For example, according to the UNLV Institutional Analysis and Planning, transfer students from community college maintain a higher GPA in comparison to first-year students. According to the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, approximately 50% to 60% of community college students transfer to four-year universities.

Whenever a student enters into a new academic environment, there is always the possibility of "transfer" shock, but research shows that community college students have the academic skills to adapt and excel in four-year universities. If you are considering attending community college, you have the opportunity to build a solid academic foundation that can not only open doors in the professional world, but provides you with a financially-savvy option to obtaining a bachelor's degree.