



# Pros and Cons of Online College Education

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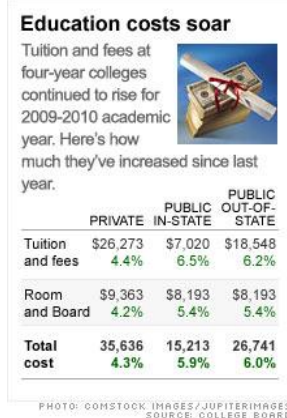
So you have decided to go (back) to school, a college education. You want a better career, more income, or at least more income security, better benefits. You dream of graduating with a college degree, or maybe an advanced degree, if you already have a bachelor degree. You know how proud your family will be if you finish what you are about to start.

## Principle 1: Finishing What You Start

For many adults, going to college is an enduring dream. Many of you start, and unfortunately many of you do not finish. If you have taken on debt in the process, assuming that you would make enough money after graduating to pay off your loans, you not finishing can become a major liability. It is therefore important to establish an achievable, realistic plan for your studies.

Your plan needs to be clear, detailed, and realistic, instead of overly optimistic. One major consideration is whether you will pursue your studies on a college campus or online, or a mix of the two methods, called “hybrid.” These three options have pros and cons that we will discuss in more detail in this [PickTheRightCollege.com](http://PickTheRightCollege.com) White Paper. But before we discuss these details, let’s make sure together that you have given your plans enough thought, that you have identified the risks and opportunities, and that you have made up your own mind what you want to do (and not just follow someone else’s opinion of what you future should look like).

With a good process and plan, you increase your chances greatly that you will actually finish what you start. Review Figure 1 to ensure that you have followed an organized decision making process and developed a reasonable, achievable plan.



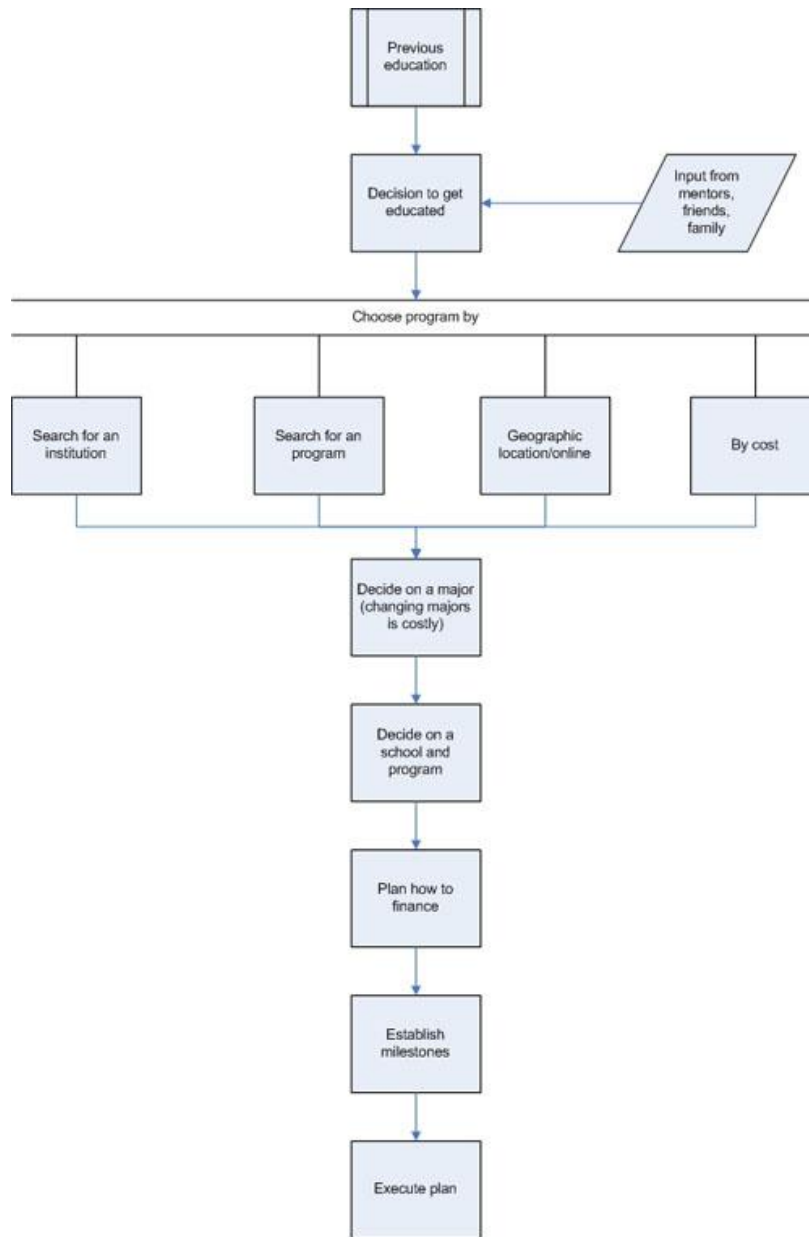


Figure 1 - College Education Decision Making Process

Now that you have a realistic plan, let's discuss the pros and cons of online education in some detail.

### Principle 2: Online Education – How To Make It Work!

Online education provides you with flexibilities and cost savings that an on-campus education cannot offer. Also, depending on where you live and what you want to study, your only option (without moving) is to pursue your studies online. On the surface therefore, online education trumps on-campus education in ease of access, flexibility, and potentially, cost.

Of course, online resources have dramatically improved over the last five or so years. Almost everyone now has a computer and pretty speedy Internet access, enabling them to access online education efficiently and reliably. You may very well have such a computer setup at your home that allows you to pursue online classes. In fact, even brick-and-mortar colleges and universities typically expect you to have such a computer-Internet setup. But in addition to hardware and networking, education software for online education also has improved dramatically. Tools like Blackboard™ provide rich interactive environments and tools that connect students with their teachers over a broad virtual communications channel. Students can experience a virtual version of a pseudo-classroom experience, with ample use of multimedia tools and interactive exercises.

Well, that's the idealized vision: what is technically possible, isn't always practically executed: online courses depend greatly on the quality commitment of the institution offering them. Too often, instructors are left to their own devices and courses can end up being much more shallow and dissatisfying than their on-campus equivalents.

It is critical therefore that, should you choose to pursue online or hybrid education, you must make sure that you enroll with an institution with a proven track record in delivering excellent online classes, using the best technology and with well-trained professional online instructors. Make sure to preview the online environment that will become your virtual classroom and seek out education about the value of the degree that you will complete online. Check with local employers, for example, to find out if they would hire you into an appropriate position with your online degree.

### **Principle 3: Personal Motivation and Discipline**

Even if you find a great online course of studies, your success is still far from certain. Many students terminate their online studies prematurely, because they simply underestimated the degree of personal commitment required to complete online work without the peer-pressure of on-campus studies. Online classes can be very lonely, and if you do not have the stomach for it long-term, you may find yourself struggling to stay motivated. On-campus, the physical and social environment make staying motivated easier for many.

### **Conclusion**

Pursuing your education online is certainly a viable option that can save you time and money and provide you with flexibilities not available on-campus. But be careful to select a study program and institution that will be of equivalent value to an on-campus course of study. Also make sure that you are the kind of person who will successfully complete courses without the added motivation and peer pressure of on-campus studies.

For more information, email us at [info@PickTheRightCollege.com](mailto:info@PickTheRightCollege.com).