

## Is Community College The Right Way To Go? By Stephen Conway

A lot of variables go into where to go to college these days. Is the college of my choice affordable? Will it support me with my major? Is it too far, not far enough?

One way to save money while planning to earn a bachelors degree is to attend a community college for two years first.

Community college enrollment is on the rise. In 2000, a report from US News stated that about 5.5 million students attended community colleges in the United States. The report concluded that in the 2010-2011 school year, this number skyrocketed to about 8 million. Currently in Massachusetts, over 190,000 students attend community college, according to the Massachusetts Community Colleges website.

“There is so much to offer at community colleges that are over looked when being brought up at the high school level,” said Chris Kostka, student at Massasoit Community College in Brockton.

Sally Chapman Cameron, vice-president of communications for Bristol Community College, said BCC and other community colleges have programs that make fiscal sense for families.

Kostka agreed. “With a tight income, it’s a smart choice,” Kostka said. “You can go to college for two years and earn an associate’s degree just for about \$6,000, compared to others who pay about \$40,000 for their schools.”

“You can stay close to home rather than having to live on campus which can cost thousands of dollars,” said Kostka. “You also have the chance to go into a transfer program and then carry your credits on to a four year school of your choice For example, students at some community colleges such as Bristol Community College, who receive a GPA of 2.5 or higher are guaranteed acceptance to a University of Massachusetts state colleges. Students with a GPA of 3.0 or better can receive a tuition discount to a UMass school. The college also has a partnership with Bryant University, where students with a GPA of 3.0 or better can get a scholarship.

Cameron said some students who graduated from BCC went on to schools such as the University of Pennsylvania, and Brown.

Massasoit Community College also has scholarship programs in place with Bridgewater State University and University of Massachusetts, as well as transfer partnerships with Bryant University, and the New England College of Business and Finance, to name a few.

“Programs are in place. It’s smart - makes a whole lot of sense,” said Cameron.