

Take stock in a college degree

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By Elaine P. Maimon

Forget the stock and real estate markets for the time being. The only safe, smart investment today is in human capital. You cannot lose by investing in education. That is a fact of life in good times and an imperative in challenging times. The knowledge economy is here to stay. The only way to plan for long-term economic health, personally and as a society, is to earn at least a four-year baccalaureate degree.

Please encourage every high school student you know to prepare now by selecting and acing the toughest courses available, especially in English, math, and science. Excellent high school preparation will lead to college success and save money by avoiding the need to pay for remedial courses before beginning real college study.

As students think about pathways to the bachelor's degree, consider 2+2. Students begin at one of our excellent south suburban community colleges -- Prairie State, South Suburban, Moraine Valley, Kankakee, Joliet -- and then transfer to a public university for upper-division work. Because it is essential that students follow a clear four-year pathway even when working with two different educational institutions, Governors State University (GSU) has greatly expanded a program called Dual Admissions. That means that students who are accepted at one of the local community colleges can be accepted at the same time at Governors State. Each student receives a letter of acceptance affirming admission to GSU, pending successful completion of the community college program. Students can then map an efficient pathway toward fulfilling requirements toward degrees at GSU, including those in education, business, health professions, criminal justice, art, English, history, environmental biology, criminal justice, and the full array of arts and sciences.

Advisers from the community colleges and GSU work together to counsel Dual Admissions students. At Kankakee Community College, students visit the Baccalaureate Completion Center to talk with GSU and Kankakee advisors. Financial aid officers from both Kankakee and GSU are available to guide students through a seamless pathway of financial support. Students can be assured that their interests will be put first without considerations of academic turf. If a student might be better served at another university, GSU advisers will provide information that suits the student.

We will soon open another Baccalaureate Completion Center at Prairie State, and we hope that centers will follow at all south suburban community college sites in addition to sites at selected City Colleges of Chicago.

Thinking 2+2 is smart math. Students can achieve a high quality education at a reasonable price, with many students eligible for financial aid that will cover most costs.

The partnership between first-rate community colleges and GSU, the Southland's only public university, means that 2+2 equals success.

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