

The Road to College Readiness: Dispelling the Myths

The mission of the University of Minnesota’s College Readiness Consortium is providing students with the knowledge, skills and habits for success in college and other forms of postsecondary education. Researchers Michael Kirst and Andrea Venezia capture some of the misconceptions that must be dispelled if we are to achieve that goal in the following list of “Ten Myths That Students Believe About College”:¹

Common Student Beliefs	The Truth
I can’t afford college.	Students and parents regularly overestimate the cost.
I have to be a stellar athlete or student to get financial aid.	Most students receive some form of financial aid.
Meeting high school graduation requirements will prepare me for college.	Adequate preparation for college usually requires a more demanding curriculum than is reflected in minimum requirements for high school graduation, sometimes even if that curriculum is termed “college prep.”
Getting into college is the hardest part.	For most students, the hardest part is completing a degree.
Community colleges don’t have academic standards.	Students must take placement tests at community colleges in order to qualify for college-level work.
It’s better to take easier classes in high school and get better grades.	One of the best predictors of college success is taking rigorous high school classes. Getting good grades in lower-level classes will not prepare students for college-level work.
My senior year in high school doesn’t matter.	The classes students take in senior year will often determine the classes they are able to take in college and how well prepared they are for those classes.
I don’t have to worry about my grades, or the kind of classes I take, until my sophomore year.	Many colleges look at sophomore year grades, and in order to enroll in college-level courses, students need to prepare well for college. This means taking a well-thought-out series of courses starting no later than the ninth grade.
I can’t start thinking about financial aid until I know where I’m going to college.	Students need to file a federal form for aid prior to when most colleges send out their acceptance letters. This applies to students who attend community colleges, too, even though they can apply and enroll in the fall of the year they wish to attend.
I can take whatever classes I want when I get to college.	Most colleges and universities require entering students to take placement exams in core subject areas. Those tests will determine the classes students can take.

¹ Kirst, Michael W. and Venezia, Andrea. 2004. From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education. Jossey Bass Education Series, p. 295