

SPEECH EXAMPLES

Persuasive Speech: "Finish Your Degree"

I ran into a high school friend of mine the other day, a person who finished in the top 10 percent of our class but decided to drop out of college in the middle of sophomore year. She is now working as a manager at a local department store—the same store she worked at in high school. This person makes about \$12 an hour and has some benefits as a full-time employee—but no more room for growth at the company. I don't tell this story to get you to pity her, but rather to illustrate the difference between finishing a college degree and not doing so. As a college student with dreams of my own that involve more than managing a department store, I decided to research some more concrete information on why we should all finish our degree programs. Even though there is nothing you can do to guarantee success in life, I want to encourage you to get that degree, and today I am going to tell you why. **First, I will share the economic benefits of finishing college.** Then I am going to explain the other benefits you can earn in the job market with a college degree. Finally, I am going to detail the health and wellness incentives for finishing your degrees. So, let's get started so that we can finish our degrees.

Our professors think a degree makes us a more rounded person, but let's be honest, we want the degree for financial reasons. The United States Census Bureau shows that an associate's degree recipient will make approximately \$1.2 million

This short story serves to capture the audience's attention by making the topic of the speech real for them.

This statement establishes the speaker's credibility by citing his/her position as a student and explaining that the speaker did research the topic.

These sentences preview how the speaker plans on making his/her case to the audience.

Here is the speaker's argument, clearly stated for the audience.

This is an effective, if simple, transition to the main body of the speech.

Here is proper verbal attribution of the source of the evidence the speaker used to support his/her claim.

more than a person with just a high school degree throughout his/her working career, and it gets even better for those who complete their BA. Listen to this: A person with a bachelor's degree will earn around \$2.1 million more in his/her career than a worker with just a high school degree.¹ My friends, does that sound significant to you? It does to me.

The economics don't just stop with total earnings. In 2007-2008 the U. S. economy went into recession and we all heard the gloomy forecasts about investments, and most especially the high unemployment numbers. Fox News reported in December 2008 that those without a college degree had a jobless rate of 7.2%, but those with a degree had a jobless rate of 3.7%.² That report quoted Lawrence Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., as saying: "College grads have a privileged position in the labor market."³ One of the reasons is that a person with a degree earns more and has a more secure job, but it is also much easier for a person with a college degree to take a demotion.⁴ Essentially, a college degree gives you more security. Now that I have provided you with evidence that the college degree is worth the effort economically, let's look at some other benefits to getting that degree.

With a college degree you get more money, and with that you also get better benefits. A report by Collegeboard.com in 2007 noted that college graduates are more likely to have a job that provides health insurance and retirement benefits. College grads also are noted as having better overall health, probably because of their health insurance.⁵ Degreeadvantage.com noted that studies show that a college graduate's children had a better life, were able to save more money, made wiser decisions on purchases, and had improved time off work. It also noted that research found that college grads are more rational thinkers, more willing to accept other opinions, more consistent in their application of logic and ethics, and better managers.⁶ Additionally, grads "pass on" those positive things to future descendants.⁷

Here is proper verbal attribution of the source of the evidence the speaker used to support his/her claim.

Not convinced to stick with your degree program? Well here is more evidence. The collegeboard.com report I mentioned earlier noted that college grads are less likely to smoke, pay more in taxes to society, and are less likely to need government assistance. Additionally, college grads are more likely to be involved in civic activities, volunteer, vote, donate their own blood, and be tolerant of the opinions of others.⁸ All in all, in addition to the doors of financial opportunity a college degree opens, what those college professors tell you about becoming a well-rounded citizen through your college education is also true. There really is a reason why getting a college degree is so coveted by our parents, families, and society.

In summary, there are significant financial advantages to getting a college degree. With a college degree you will earn an average of over \$2 million more than if you dropped out, and you are much more likely to have a job in a down economy like the one we face today. Then there are the quality of life issues for both you and your family. You will be more likely to have health insurance; you will live a happier life; you will be more open minded; and, you will be more likely to get involved in the community. Yeah, it may take awhile, but we are all here anyway so let's finish that degree to improve our lives. As Nike has said for years: "Just do it."

ENDNOTES

1. Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Eric C. Newburger, "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings," *Current Population Reports, Special Studies*, 23-210, Washington, D.C.: Commerce Dept., Economics and Statistics Administration, Census Bureau. [Online], 2002, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf> (accessed December 3, 2009).
2. Christopher Leonard, "College Grads Avoid Brunt of Layoffs," *Foxnews.com*, January 10, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2009Jan10/0,4670,MeltdownCollegeGraduates,00.html> (accessed December 3, 2009).
3. Ibid.

Here is a useful example of a metaphor in that opportunity is not actually a door.

Here is a summary of the main points offered within the speech.

This employs a famous quotation from an ad campaign as the clincher.