Education aims to reach many goals simultaneously, some of which college achieves, some of which college only attempts to achieve. Ideally, the purpose of a college degree would be education. The primary goal of education is to have students get a degree having accumulated some amount of knowledge they previously did not have. Ideally this knowledge will allow them to work in their desired field successfully. More realistically, the primary function of a degree in today’s society is to provide opportunities to the graduate that ensures the graduate’s future well-being. This includes steady employment, monetary worth, the ability to think and act critically, and the possibility of endless opportunities.

Education presently sorts out those who are not able to maintain a high enough GPA, but this is not necessarily equivalent to the amount of knowledge they obtained from their education. Each student must decide on his own what value a GPA will really have, because some classes can be passed with little effort. Many students who attended the community colleges I attended passed without ever opening their textbooks or ever doing an assignment on their own; however, when the next class in the series asks them a question based in the previous class, will the student succeed? It only matters if the student is required to take the next class in the series or if the teacher is interested in teaching instead of getting good reviews from their students (which in community college can negatively impact their chances of tenure). Every student has a choice as to how important the intellectual portion of his education will be. The difference is not shown in the GPA but in the student.

Once these students graduate from school they will have to prove their abilities on the market. Many jobs advertise that they are fresh-graduate friendly. Without a resume to back up their degrees, most students will not find amazing jobs jumping at them. The real test of an education is how it allows the student receiving it to get a job. This is why schools advertise what percent of their students get jobs in their field within a year of graduating. In this sense, the purpose of an education is to allow a student opportunities and a future that is vastly different from the future of a person who has never attended, or even attended but not graduated from, college.

With a college degree, many doors open up, both in a specific and general arena. After graduating, a student will have access to jobs specifically related to his major, but also jobs that simply require the ability to pass through college. Many management positions, for example, do require a degree but not one that specifically relates to the job. This opens up an arena of jobs with a much higher pay scale. My mother attended college for all but her last 5 credit class. Her employer told her once what the difference in her earning would have been with the college degree: an additional 12,000 dollars a year to start. That does not include the fact that the raises happen with an increased percentage; instead of getting 3% a year, she would have gotten 5%. Over a ten year period she would have gained thousands from earning a degree. The importance of money should not be understated. Those with an education or with money can live in safer neighborhoods, have their children educated, own their property, take vacations, and do so much more. The ability to invest money allows a family to become a member of the middle class.

Being a family in the middle class is defined as having money or possessions of worth that will be passed from one generation to the next. Education is an investment that can provide this. A family in America today can only keep up with their bills; however, a person with a college degree will earn at a higher rate, allowing them to open doors for their entire family.