

# CALCULATE: What is the Value of a College Education?

When thinking about the value of a college education, it's important to consider both the quantitative (monetary) and qualitative (non-monetary) factors you can benefit from. In this activity, you'll analyze data and reflect on both of these factors to find out what the value of a college education might mean for you.

## Part I: Estimate the Value of a College Education

Take some time to first reflect on what *you* believe is the value of a college education. *Without using the chart on the next page*, answer the three questions below.

**TIP:** Remember, these are simply estimates. You want to focus more on *how* you arrive at your answers rather than if your estimates are correct. The process is the most important part so be sure to explain your thoughts in great detail.

1. Quantitative value: How much money do you think a college education is worth (in dollars)?

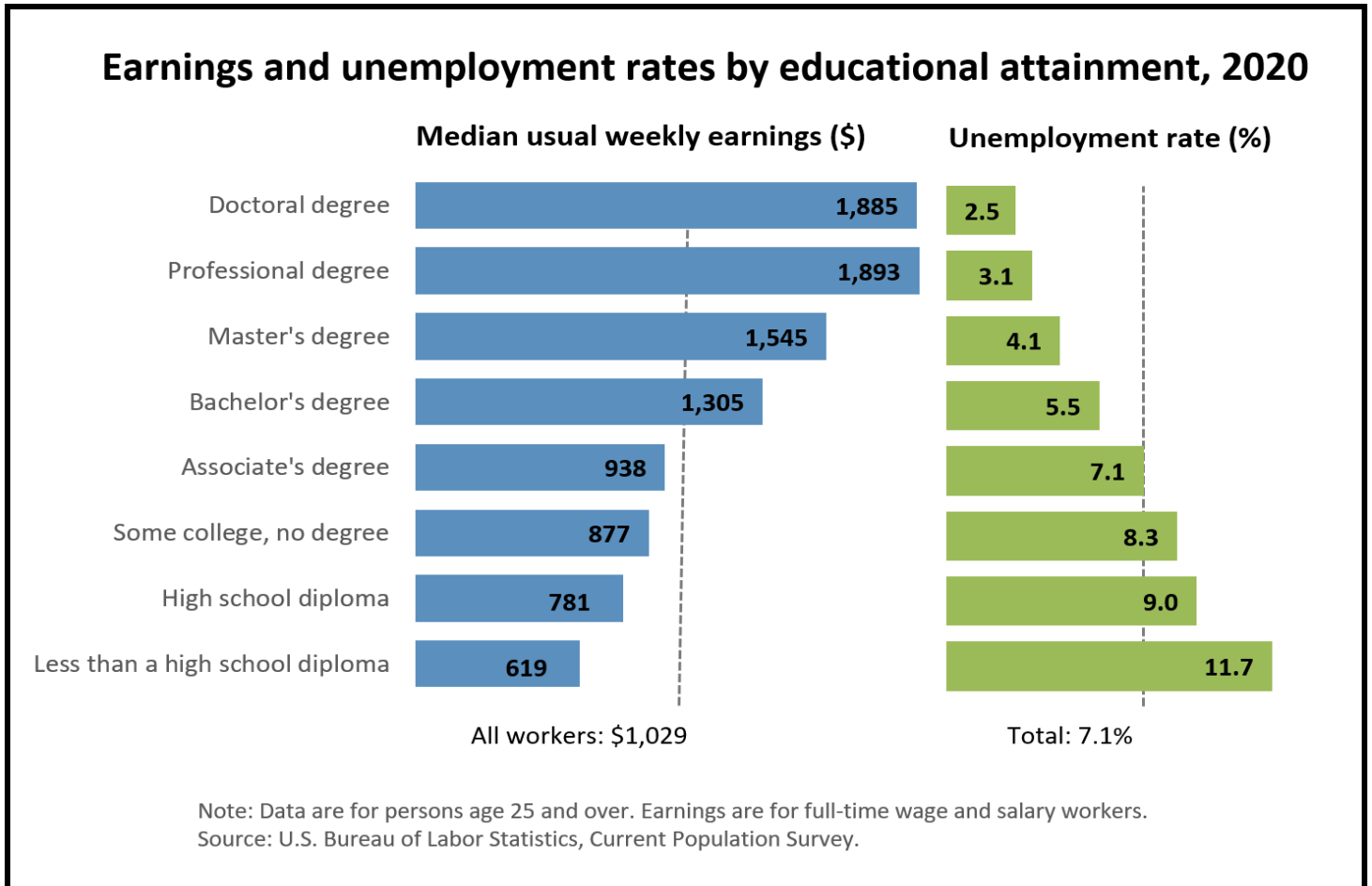
2. How did you arrive at your answer? Explain your thought process in 4-5 sentences.

3. Qualitative value: What other value does college have besides any monetary benefits?

## Part II: Analyze the Data

While the actual value of a college education will be different for everyone, there are statistics that can give us a reasonably accurate picture of the quantitative side of things. Below is a chart that displays U.S. workers' median weekly earnings and unemployment rate based on the level of education they've completed. We are going to examine three categories in this chart:

- *High School Diploma* - These people graduated high school but never attended college
- *Some college, no degree* - These people attended college, but did not graduate
- *Bachelor's Degree* - These people graduated from a four-year undergraduate college or university (but did not go on to achieve higher degrees)



4. What is the relationship between education level and unemployment rate? Why do you think this is?

5. Use the data in the chart to fill in the table below on workers' earnings.

Earnings Over Time	High School Diploma	Some college, no degree	Bachelor's Degree
Weekly Earnings			
Yearly Earning			
Earnings over a 40-year career			

6. How much more value are you creating for yourself over a 40-year career by completing college than *only completing high school*? Please show your work.

7. How much more value are you creating for yourself over a 40-year career by completing college than *starting college but not finishing*? Please show your work.

**Part III: Reflection - How Do You Value a College Education Now?**

8. What was your initial reaction when you saw the actual quantitative value of a college education? What emotion(s) did you feel? Surprise? Frustration? Happiness? Explain your answer.

9. How did your quantitative estimate compare to the actual quantitative value of a college education?

10. Why do you think the quantitative value of *some college* is much closer to the value of a high school diploma than the value of a bachelor's degree?

11. After doing this activity, do you have a different view on whether or not a college education is a smart investment? Why or why not?