

Should I Go to College? By Ryan Allis

You might ask why I was even considering the possibility of not going to college. I was a good student and had a chance to go to a great university on a near-full ride. Here is where my story really begins.

You see, since August of 2001 I had been working with a guy who had developed a product that was effective in treating arthritis in humans and pets. He had heard that I owned a website development business by reading an article on me in the local newspaper and asked me to come in and meet with him. I set up a website about his product and got a shopping cart and merchant account for the site so we could take orders online . . .

After I got the initial site up I began to market it . . . We also started a monthly newsletter and sweepstakes and began to write a lot of informational content for the website. We set up two informational websites, one on arthritis and the other on arthritis in pets, and drove each to the top of the search engines for our targeted keywords.

Things progressed slowly the first few months but soon picked up. In January we did \$31,130 and in April alone we did \$87,578. These sales were on one product with just the owner, myself, and one person to ship out the product. Our net profit was 51% and we were growing at 20% per month. In short, we were doing very well.

So it was now April and I saw that the company was taking off . . . I was seventeen and had the chance to make a couple hundred thousand dollars in salary and commission if I would just defer college for a year. Now you can see why I was seriously considering not going to college right away after knowing my whole life that I would . . .

My Decision

However, I wanted something more than this and knew there was much more to life than money . . . In the end, I chose to accept the offer and on August 14, 2002, my eighteenth birthday, I drove up to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with my dad and moved into the Ehringhaus dorm.

So why did I choose to go to UNC? If I had the chance to earn more at age 18 than the average person with an MBA [Master's in Business Administration], why did I forgo this opportunity to go off to college? . . .

New Knowledge, New People and New Surroundings

I know now that I made the right decision. Although I still become frustrated at not having enough time to work on my businesses or read what I want to read, I know I have done what has been best for me. College really makes one go through many formative and developmental changes. I have learned how to take care of myself. I have learned that I must put the twisty-tie back on the bread or else it will mold. I have learned that I should not put whites in with my colors in a hot wash. I have learned who I am.

Just as important, I have developed a network of contacts and built strong relationships that will be a great asset to me in the future. I have found other students like me and have made some friends that may turn out to be my business partners in years to come . . .

Why I Am in College

In sum, I feel that these first three months of college have been a great experience for me. I have learned how to take care of myself and how to live away from my parents. I have met some great people and built some key relationships. I learned how to use the resources of UNC and will be studying what I want to study next semester yet still working towards my degree . . .

College Is Not for Everyone

In case there is anyone reading this that is considering starting their own company and not going to college, let me say this. Be very careful. For most people I would say that both a college degree and the college experience would be extremely beneficial . . . I may have been part of a select group that already had such specialized skills and such knowledge about the way the world worked that I might have been fine without going to college. If you feel you are in this group by all means go for it.

Ryan P. Allis is the author of *Zero to One Million: How I Built a Company to \$1 Million in Sales . . . and How You Can, Too*.

1. What reasons does Ryan Allis give for deciding to attend college?
2. Do you think he made the right decision? Why or why not?
3. Why is college not for everyone?
4. What kind of economic reasons would there be for going to college or not going to college?