

Anonymous

Prof. Chris McCarthy

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My Journey with Online Education

“That’s smart,” is what a lot of people say when I tell them that I am doing online community college at Anoka Ramsey. But I have come to find out that many people are skeptical when it comes to my decision. I’ve been told that the “college experience” is something you shouldn’t miss out on, and that you need long lectures and note taking to succeed on exams. As a freshly graduated high school student navigating the complex world of education, I found myself at a fork in the road, facing a decision that would shape my future: traditional in-person college education or more flexible online schooling. Through many conversations and indecisiveness, I began to recognize the significant advantages that online education provides in my life, rather than the traditional in-person college campus route. With the route of online education, I will unlock more free time to achieve my entrepreneurial goals. I will also be able to save money to help build more for my future to come. Lastly, I will be able to flexibly learn and work around my own schedule, allowing me to travel and visit my friends at college, so I can embrace some of that college experience that so many say I’m lacking.

Just a couple of weeks ago my co-workers at the restaurant I work at were asking me what I was doing for college and how it was going for me. “I hear people say that there are many things that can go wrong with online school. What if you have technical errors, or bad internet or something?” a coworker asked during a slow lunch hour during our shift. But as we talked about online education and I told her my positive experiences, and it portrayed a different picture. “I understand what you mean, but I haven’t had any of those problems. ” I replied. I just moved into the basement and have a dedicated workspace

that allows me to switch between classes and assignments with ease. I also have a laptop for on the go so I can complete school from almost anywhere." Another co-worker of mine chimed in, expressing their own concerns: "But what if you can't easily reach your teachers when you have questions?" "I've found the opposite to be true," I said. "Teachers in my online classes are easily reachable through email, discussion posts, virtual office hours, or even video calls. Contacting them is quite simple. I usually receive fast responses from them, but I really do not have that many questions because my teachers do an excellent job of laying out our responsibilities and tasks for the week." To reflect on that conversation, I do agree with the concerns they have, but I just need to make sure to be prepared for the online format that I decided to pursue. I also believe that they can see why this is the route I decided to take. So, with that said, I think that the concerns about online education are valid, but my firsthand experiences have shown that these challenges can be effectively addressed with the right setup and mindset. Just the other day I had an exam I had to take. I got to prepare for it at my own pace and review notes and power points that I had. This allowed me to be mentally ready for the test, rather than be stressed out in a classroom and be on a time crunch. The freedom to choose my learning environment, combined with a dependable work environment, has enabled me to seamlessly transition to online education.

"Don't you think that meeting new people is easier when you go to a college campus?" My friends would say that when we talked about my future college plans. "How will you meet new people if you just do school online?" They would ask, curious if I would ever create new and meaningful connections online, or in my daily life in general. I have interacted with classmates who come from all over the world during my online learning experience. Through virtual platforms, we engage in open-ended discussions while sharing our diverse perspectives and experiences. Through this online community, I have met people I would never have met in a traditional classroom. Online meetings and discussion boards have helped me form meaningful relationships, challenging the belief that being nearby is the only way to connect with others. A couple of weeks ago in marketing class, a classmate was sharing his business ventures that he partakes in outside of school. He was involved in something I enjoy doing,

so I contacted him, and we talked and collaborated on ideas further! Little relationships like that could build into something much greater, and it can help build and develop new connections in the online realm. With that experience shared, online school can provide the opportunity to meet and connect with various kinds of people you may never meet in a traditional classroom or campus.

With that said, you can see that I don't fully agree when people mention that a structured classroom environment is essential for a focused education, and that the freedom of online learning could interfere with my academic progress and goals. "Entrepreneurship calls for discipline and dedication, which online platforms may lack," my dad said one night as we were watching the Wolves game. "Yes, but I'd rather shift my discipline towards my main passion and goals in life, rather than my general classes that I am taking first semester of college," I exclaimed. As you can tell from that conversation, I have a passion for business and entrepreneurship. Do not get me wrong, school is important, so I see and agree with where my dad comes from. But I do think that starting these types of ventures young is the smartest thing you can do. They say that online school could make me undedicated and form unhealthy habits, but I say that my passion for entrepreneurship has always driven me to seek opportunities outside of the traditional academic path. Recently, I have joined and trained in a fully remote part time job. The people around me are like minded and are always motivating me, and I am slowly building my own team so they can help us grow to make more passive income. Along with that, I also have hired a social media manager to help monetize and grow an Instagram account I have with 50k followers. These are the types of things I really enjoy doing, and online education makes this possible. Concisely, online education not only allows for flexible time management but also allows students to pursue their interests in addition to their academic journey. The ability to balance education and personal goals is a significant benefit that online learning provides.

In the end, these eye-opening experiences, and conversations that I have had have marked my path toward accepting online education. The online world has proven to be a beneficial choice, with its potential for meaningful connections, flexibility to pursue entrepreneurial goals, and the power and

freedom that online community college holds. I can already see the positive impact this decision has had on me. I have been traveling more, saving, and growing my income, and have more time to focus on the relationship I am in, which wouldn't be possible if I went off to a university. I was talking to my college buddies, and they were making comments like "I don't like it here, and I am running low on money," and "I have so much work to do in so little time." With that shared, this makes me more ecstatic as I stand on the edge of taking on this journey. I am overly excited about the doors that online education will open for me, pushing me towards a future full of opportunities and growth. After these experiences, "That's smart" has unlocked a whole new meaning to me as I continue to dive deeper in this journey.