

## Transferring from a 2-year community college to a 4-year university has merit

By Genesis Vasquez  
Chicago Tribune  
(TNS)

In recent years, the cost of receiving a post-secondary education has multiplied. According to the College Board, the average cost of attending a public school as an out-of-state student is \$23,893 and the average cost of attending a private school is a whopping \$32,405. Since the cost of attendance has increased 12-fold over the last 30 years, as stated by Huffington Post, there are a number of students who find it financially sensible to attend a community college and then transfer to a university.

There are many preconceived notions surrounding the idea of community college – some believe they’re for unintelligent students with bad grades and low test scores. What many fail to consider, though, is that a community college can save thousands of dollars.

A soon-to-be graduate of Northeastern Illinois University, Victoria Salas has almost completed her “two-year transfer plan.” As her last year at Northeastern comes to an end, she said she is glad she made the choice to attend community college. Before Northeastern, Salas went to Wilbur Wright College in Chicago.

Salas said she never had a moment where she doubted her decision to transfer into a university because she wasn’t “smart enough;” she did it because of financial circumstances. She said attending community college helped her receive her associate degree in art and saved her a lot of financial burden.

“I am undocumented and do not qualify for financial aid so I figured it’d be the cheaper route to take,” Salas said.

Many high school seniors who are interested in pursuing a two-year plan at a community college may be skeptical. Salas said her transfer from community college to a university was a bit difficult, but she had advisors to help her along the way and the extra work was worth it.

“My college experience has been very positive,” Salas said. “Northeastern is a very diverse school full of great professors and great people as well.”

Salas will also be the first to admit her journey didn’t exactly go according to plan. She initially wanted to major in secondary education in English, but after taking the required classes at Northeastern, she decided to focus solely on English. This realization came during her student teaching experience.

“In the midst of the process, I realized that it was not really something I was passionate about and so it was difficult for me to make the decision of leaving the program seeing as I had already taken all the required courses for it,” Salas said. “However, I decided that my happiness was more important.”

Salas said her parents, who didn’t attend a university, were her motivation to keep striving for her education. With the help of her parents and her advisor, Salas is in the process of figuring out future employment.

Ideally, the “two-year transfer plan” can save students money and provide them with an alternate route, as opposed to those who attend universities and end up paying more for the same general education classes.

“I think that stereotype is something that we as a society have to overcome, as well as many other stereotypes that we continue to abide by because going to a community college is a smart financial decision, not a sign of dumbness,” Salas said.

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### ABOUT THE WRITER

Genesis Vasquez, Phoenix Military Academy is a correspondent for The Mash.

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The Mash is the Chicago Tribune’s newspaper and website written for teens, by teens. The paper is distributed for free each Thursday at Chicago-area high schools and is written largely by high school students.

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