

# is CollegePlus! for you? by Shawn Cohen

Toward the end of September 2007, at the age of 17 and in my senior year of high school, I started my college studies from home. As a homeschooler for my entire school career, I had no intention of completing a degree through the traditional means of attending lectures in a college classroom or spending four years or more on a college campus.

Now, 15 months, 84 credits, and under \$13,000 later, I am well on my way to completing my BA in English and hope to be entirely finished by next summer, one year after graduating from high school. Through a cutting-edge approach to college, not only am I saving valuable time instead of spending it on unnecessarily long courses, but additionally, neither I nor my parents are spending exorbitant amounts of money or going into any debt whatsoever on account of my college education.

## College Tuition Is Skyrocketing

Finding an alternative to college is absolutely essential for many families these days—and for more reasons than one. Financially speaking, college is just out of reach. At the end of 2008, for example, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education released *Measuring Up 2008*, a comprehensive report on college affordability across the US. Sadly, but not surprisingly, 49 states failed the survey, making it clear that college is just about unaffordable for a huge portion of the American population. The report also showed that college tuition has more than tripled since 1982—an amount that is adjusted for inflation and that takes into account college costs after financial aid (scholarships and grants) have been factored in to lower the degree's ticket price.

As homeschooling parents, you realize that the financial costs to college are only the tip of the iceberg. Liberal professors are infamous for deliberately taking advantage of the impressionable minds of their students to pervert them with ungodly philosophies and justification for sin. Additionally, students on campus are exposed to lifestyles that stand in direct contradiction to biblical standards. Living in a college dorm is often too overwhelming for a young person to continue pursuing a godly lifestyle after continual exposure to corrupt influences from their peers.

## Thinking Outside the Box

Homeschoolers, on the other hand, have positioned themselves to think outside the education box to avoid the pitfalls of today's school system—whether that be on a primary, secondary, or postsecondary level. Unlike millions stuck in the public system, homeschooling parents and students are open to college alternatives that include features like online courses, and distance education. However, many families still educate their children the world's way, with a grade-segregated, fact-emphasis approach. Incidentally, this system of "schooling" is a recent phenomenon dating back to the early twentieth century. With the advent of "assembly line" production plants, industry giants like the Ford Company and US Steel required a large amount

of laborers who were willing to work on an assembly line instead of engaging in skilled labor as an artisan or business owner.

At the turn of the twentieth century, manufacturing magnates like Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller Sr. were largely responsible for funding a system of education that would produce a generation of students who never learned to ponder life for themselves but were primarily trained to work in factories performing menial tasks. The graduates from newly established public schools were carefully taught what to think but not how to think. Another aspect of this new method of schooling favored the incorporation of textbooks into education as opposed to students learning from the classics as previous generations had for centuries. You can read more about this negative revolution in American education from John Taylor Gatto's book *The Underground History of American Education*.

The model of education that many homeschoolers are going back to now actually predates the twentieth century system of grade-segregated study. Students in this model focus on one subject at a time, mastering a single "module" before they move on to the next. This approach to education closely parallels that of the Founding Fathers, some of the greatest minds and most godly individuals in American history.

## Education the Founding Fathers' Way

You may have wondered how men like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe were able to graduate from college at the age that most young people these days graduate from high school. The answer is fairly simple: high school didn't exist in the 1700s. It's a fact grudgingly admitted by college officials that the first two years of college are little more than a review of high school. The Founding Fathers were able to embark on their college studies at the same age American students today start high school.

For example, Thomas Jefferson graduated from The College of William & Mary at age 18 after studying there for only two years because he learned how to think early on in his education. Jefferson started studying classical languages before he was 10 years old; his education mainly comprised grammar, logic, and persuasive public speaking or "rhetoric." Later on, he studied with George Wythe, an attorney who spent time mentoring many young men just like Jefferson. The future writer of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wasn't taught simply how to get good grades. Rather, he learned how to develop innovative concepts about life, society, and government.

Using a similar approach as the Founding Fathers will enable me to complete my degree shortly after my high school studies have ended. Now, I have had some help along the way, mainly through a coaching service called CollegePlus! This organization has opened the door to all of the alternatives out there for obtaining an accredited degree without spending years on a brick and mortar college campus.

## CollegePlus!: The Program for Distance Learners

Since its inception in 2005, CollegePlus! ([collegeplus.org](http://collegeplus.org)) is helped hundreds of students earn a bachelor's degree in an average of two years for under \$15,000 by utilizing CLEP (College Level Examination Program) tests, DANTES exams (very similar to CLEP), and online courses through an array of regionally accredited colleges.

Students are also encouraged, though not required, to pursue internships related to their area of study. They thereby gain hands-on experience as well as the opportunity to create a portfolio about their work and skills in order to receive college credit for them. A degree consultant on the CollegePlus! staff also helps students decide on a major and creates a personalized degree plan and timing sheet that, though flexible, assists students with staying on schedule and knowing which tests and courses they will be required to take. In addition, CollegePlus! pairs students with skilled coaches who carefully guide them through the degree-earning process while providing mentoring and accountability along with other valuable information including very instructive study tips and study guides for each individual test.

### My Mom's Perspective

To get a mom's take on CollegePlus! and homeschooling through college, I asked my own mother, Sylvia, to comment on how she felt when I started my college studies at home. College can seem overwhelming to so many parents but distance learning really put my mom at ease once we got all the facts we needed. Here's what she had to say:

There was no doubt in my mind that the Lord had led Cristina to distance learning so when Cristina enrolled in CollegePlus!, I was enthusiastic and excited about the possibilities, and I was thankful that Cristina would be continuing her higher education while living at home. I was a bit concerned, though, that I'd "never get to see her" because she would be studying so much. However, I do see her more than I thought I would and it has also been a season when I have learned to respect her time and her own schedule to a greater degree.

Furthermore, if she were away at a college everyday, she would not be here to keep up her relationship with us either. My mindset has been, and is, that she is a young lady who at age 18 has her own interests and responsibilities in addition to her life with the rest of the family. She is always willing to help me in any way I need because she has a servant's heart, but I have learned to not take advantage of that. For many reasons, I am extremely grateful that Cristina has been able to pursue a college degree from home. I love having her here for this season, and it has given us the opportunity to grow even closer as mother and daughter and as best of friends!

Regarding the degree itself that Cristina would be studying for, I did have some concern as to its validity. Having the best accreditation means a lot to graduate schools and potential employers these days. However, after talking with hearing a CollegePlus! representative speak at our state homeschool convention and after doing research on my own, I was able to see that the regional accreditation offered by the college Cristina will graduate from is the most accepted at graduate schools and companies in the US and around the world.

Since CollegePlus! students typically graduate from several different regionally accredited colleges, they have the same opportunity as any other student to pursue a master's degree at the university of their choice or be hired by any employer that requires a degree, if they are thus inclined.

### Distance Learning Without CollegePlus!

For those students who feel confident on blazing their own trail, they can complete their accredited degree without the help of a CollegePlus! coach. Many parents, however, recognize the need for CollegePlus! guidance and accountability for their students.

Whichever route you choose for your children, homeschooling through college is a welcome alternative to the burdensome and potentially detrimental system most students are forced into when completing their college degree. There's a better way—explore all your options and choose the best path for not only this generation but the next as well. If you'd like some extra guidance and accountability, you can get more information about CollegePlus! at this link: [www.collegeplus.org/rubies](http://www.collegeplus.org/rubies).

*reprinted with the author's permission*

-----  
*Editor's note: CollegePlus! began in the US. Since it is still in the pioneering stages in Canada, some families have experienced a few glitches while other families have used it with no issues. Parents are encouraged to research this option thoroughly to see if it suits their family needs.*