## Audience

Ideally 7th – 9th grade students, but can also be used for older students

## Time

30 – 45 minutes

## Materials needed

* 1 small blank box/student (purchase at craft stores or have students fold their own): [origami-fun.com/support-files/origami-box-print.pdf](http://www.origami-fun.com/support-files/origami-box-print.pdf)
* Sharpie markers
* Small scraps of paper

## Purpose

This activity helps students identify both the benefits of going to college as well as the fears, obstacles and barriers they may face.

A facilitator leads students through the activity. It is most effective if the facilitator is comfortable sharing some of their own college journey as they encourage students to complete each step.

The facilitator script is below, with helpful suggestions and hints in *italics*.

# Core themes

On the lid of your box write: **WHY COLLEGE?**

Surveys indicate that most people believe that college is important to get a good job and to make more money. However, college can also help students meet new people, build self-confidence and be more involved citizens. Four core themes emerge when college students and alumni share why they chose to pursue postsecondary education. These themes are:

* Opportunity - explore, cultivate, and pursue your dreams
* Connections - build lifelong relationships through similar interests or experiences
* Quality of Life - access to better careers, healthy relationships, and diverse experiences
* Tradition - initiates a college-going culture within your family, communities & close relationships

Next, write one of the core themes on each side of the box.

* Side one: Opportunity
* Side two: Connections
* Side three: Quality of Life
* Side four: Tradition

# Identify fears, obstacles & objections

Using the paper on your table write down your **fears** surrounding college and place it in the box. *Students may write as many fears as they have, using a separate piece of paper for each. If the facilitator is comfortable doing so, they can share one of their own fears about college. Some facilitators think it is most powerful to ask students to crumple their papers before putting them in the box.*

Then, using a separate piece of paper write your **obstacles** that may stand in the way of you going to college and place it in the box.

Lastly, using a separate piece of paper write your **objections** (or the objections others have projected onto you) about college/college going process and place it in the box.

Now that we have identified and acknowledged your fears, obstacles, and objections surrounding college we will now shift our focus on the positive aspects of making a choice for college.

*Acknowledge that these fears are real and okay. Then use the imagery of “putting a lid on the box” to encourage them to accept that they are there, that they may not go away, but that they can be put to the side. at times to focus on the positive reasons for going to college.*

# Make it personal

Using the pen on your table, write what each of the core themes mean to you.

Examples:

* Opportunity: explore my dream, travel, internships, flourish
* Connections: make lifelong friends, play sports in college, develop relationships to help me network
* Quality of Life: make more money/higher earning potential, buy a house, get married
* Tradition: inspire others to go to college, end poverty in my family

Lastly, write your name on the bottom of your box.

# Conclusion & take away

Each student will experience the college process differently.  Although there may be legitimate fears, obstacles, and objections, there are also an exceeding amount of positives reasons to hope and that can make the dream of college a reality.  We encourage you to focus on the positives.

*Adapted from Warner Pacific College’s Office of Admissions*

*Source: New America,* [*College Decisions Survey*](http://www.edcentral.org/collegedecisions/)