

Large Leap

The leap from high school to college is a large one. Many students enter post-secondary education expecting the experience to be the same as the one they had while at secondary school. These students are wrong to make this assumption, and they very quickly realize just how different college is. College costs more, presents more academic challenges, and offers a more social environment than high school.

First, in terms of cost, college is more expensive than high school because of tuition, living expenses, and books. Anyone who wishes to attend college must pay fees, whereas it is free to attend high school. College tuition can start at roughly \$1,500 per term and can wind up costing as much as \$2,000. The government funds high schools, so high school students do not have to pay for their education. In addition to tuition, college students must also worry about the residence or rental costs for living close to the college's campus. In Toronto, rental costs for a basement apartment can range from \$400 to \$600 per month (not including utilities), and residence fees at most colleges work out to roughly \$2,000 per term. In contrast, high school students have no living expenses because the majority of high school students live at home with their parents for free. College is also more expensive than high school when it comes to the cost of learning materials, such as textbooks. In college, students must buy textbooks for each course they take. These books are not cheap, and they often wind up costing students several hundreds of dollars once students have purchased the books for all their classes. High school students never have to worry about buying their textbooks because high schools always keep a set of books, which students use and then return at the end of the year. Not only do college students have to pay more money than high school students for their education, the college students also have much more work to do once their bills have been paid.

Second, the workload in college is more challenging than the workload in high school. College students are faced with the task of having to complete an average of three to five assignments

per week, whereas high school students average only one to three assignments per week. There are more assignments in college, and they are also more challenging and can take up to eight hours to complete successfully. In contrast, high school students do not have to commit as much time and effort to their assignments and can often finish all of their homework in the same amount of time it takes a college student to complete a single assignment. In addition to the extra time that college students put into their work, students experience extra pressure because their final grades are based on each assignment. In high school, however, an assignment is worth only 5% to 20% of a student's final grade. In college, an assignment is worth 25% or as much as 50% of a student's final grade. College students are consistently placed under more academic pressure than high school students.

Third, in college, there are more activities, sports, and clubs for students to participate in than in high school. College students have both the benefits of being able to join varsity sports teams as well as being able to use any athletic facilities the college has to offer, such as gyms, pools, and weight rooms. In contrast, most high schools often offer non-varsity sports teams, but very few high schools boast athletic facilities similar to those of a college. Colleges also host social events that are unavailable in high schools. Examples of these events are orientation week and pub nights. Furthermore, colleges offer more clubs than high schools do. High schools may have some clubs or groups that students can join; however, because high schools are smaller with fewer students, the variety of clubs is limited. Colleges are guaranteed to have a club for everyone because the population base is so large. Athletic facilities, social events, clubs and special interest groups show the college environment to be much more social than the high school environment. On the basis of financial, academic, and social aspects, college is more costly, more academically challenging, and more socially stimulating than high school. These differences need to be taken into account by those students who are entering college from high

school. If new post-secondary students are conscious of these differences, they will be more adequately prepared for the challenges that college can present.