

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Why Go to College?

**THE SOURCE:** "How Many College Graduates Does the U.S. Labor Force Really Need?" by Paul E. Barton, in *Change*, Jan.-Feb. 2008.

FEW BUT THE FOOLHARDY WOULD dispute the value of a college education. In addition to enjoying the intrinsic benefits of four years of education beyond high school, college graduates simply make more money—a lot more.

But Paul E. Barton, a senior associate at the Educational Testing Service, asks not whether higher education is good for you or me—it is—but whether more college graduates are necessary to American prosperity. That answer is far less clear. The

occupations that are expanding most, he writes, don't require a degree. The fields that *do* aren't adding large numbers of new jobs.

Take the government's estimates of the needs of the 10 fastest-growing occupations between 2004 and 2014. These occupations range from home health aide (No. 1) to computer engineer in applications (No. 5) and in systems software (No. 8). Only 39 percent of the jobs in the 10 occupations require a college education. That's 615,000 jobs. The total number of U.S. jobs is expected to increase by nearly 19 million.

The outlook is different when researchers study the 30 occupations with the greatest projected job growth in absolute terms, rather than percentage terms. These occupations, led by salesperson and registered nurse, are expected to need about 8.8

million new workers. But only 30 percent of these positions will require a college degree.

Overall, a mere 29 percent of all jobs required postsecondary education in 2004, and that proportion is expected to rise only to 31 percent by 2014. Such modest growth actually outpaces the norm. Between 1984 and 2000, a period when highly technical occupations became more numerous, the rise in the *number* of jobs in these occupations was so small that the average level of education needed for all jobs stayed exactly the same.

There is no question that higher education enriches society, but the real benefit is to the individual. Barton quotes the late political scientist Stephen K. Bailey: "I get an education so that later in life when I knock on me, somebody answers."

## SOCIETY

## Apology Mania

**THE SOURCE:** "Apologies All Around" by Gorman Beauchamp, in *The American Scholar*, Autumn 2007.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS apologized to Galileo, the Jews, Jan Hus (for burning him at the stake), and Istanbul (for sacking it in the Fourth Crusade, when it was known as Constantinople). It's weighing requests for similar action in the torture death of Knights Templar grandmaster Jacques de Molay in 1314. But what about the scattered heirs of the citizens of Jerusalem, massacred by

victorious Crusaders in 1009? Or poor Cecco d'Ascoli, burned at the stake in 1327 not by ordinary kindling, but by the flames of his own encyclopedias? Where does it stop? asks Gorman Beauchamp, a professor of humanities at the University of Michigan. It's not just the Catholic Church, he notes. A mania for apologies is sweeping the world.

Apologies offered for actions taken before the apologizers were born seem "vacuous and more than a little exhibitionistic," he writes. Actual victims—slave laborers in Nazi Ger-

many, Japanese Americans interned after Pearl Harbor, "comfort women" forced into prostitution by the Japanese—deserve an official apology and more. But apologies to the long-dead are "gestural feints toward now-empty victim categories."

The slavery reparations movement exemplifies the American version of the international apology craze. Who should pay restitution for slavery, and who should be paid? Should the nation exempt the millions of immigrants and their descendants who arrived in America after slavery was abolished? If slave descendants are compensated, why not compensate the heirs of the earliest cotton mill workers, 70 percent of whom died of brown lung disease? And if slavery is to be the subject of