

What is an “education”?

You can get an education in anything by just trying to do it... that’s how you get an education in soccer, trombone, karate, running, driving, riding a bike, selling hamburgers, cleaning floors, teaching, medicine, science, or history. Nobody can “give” you an education the way they might give you a birthday present; you can only get it by doing that skill repeatedly and trying to get better at it.

Why am I paying money for college?

All information exists separate from college... and therefore, you can get an education in any subject without going to college. The advantage of college is that it is designed to provide you with relevant, systematic ways to practice your skills in various subjects. Human nature is such that even if we have some long term goal (like becoming a teacher), we naturally slack off *today* because the goal is so far away. So, the assignments, projects, and exams (each with deadlines) are designed to help you fight against your procrastinatory human nature so that you can obtain real skills before you’re 75 years old.

Again, why am I paying money for college?

Because colleges try to guarantee (i.e., to your future employers or to graduate schools) that you have been provided with sufficient opportunities to learn, they can then *certify* to others that you’ve actually done some work that was worth doing.

So, what counts as “sufficient opportunities”?

In New York, at least three agencies coordinate the answer to this question. One is [NYSED](#), which is a part of the New York state government. Specifically, the state regulates the *minimum* amount of work students are expected to do before any college in New York may give them a college degree. Related to this is [SUNY](#) itself, of which Geneseo is a part. Another is called the “[Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#)”. This group accredits SUNY Geneseo. Accreditation is the process by which colleges prove that they are providing you with enough opportunities to do work in each academic field (the process of finding evidence takes thousands of hours and happens every few years). Each college must show that they are giving you enough opportunities to actually count as “college”, or risk losing their accreditation. In some states, if a school loses its accreditation, it’s just not a “real” college anymore... it’s more like a tutoring center. But in New York, it’s actually a crime for a school to call itself a college if it doesn’t have accreditation. The third agency is SUNY [Geneseo](#) itself. Your contract with Geneseo, called the “Bulletin”, outlines the minimum amount of work students must do to earn college credit.

OK, so what is this legal minimum amount of work?

If you read through any of the four links above, you already learned that all of the above agencies (and in fact, almost every college in the USA) uses the same rules. For every “Credit” that you earn, you must be provided with at least 3 hours of work each week (1 in class, and 2 out of class). Since semesters are defined as 15 weeks, you must be given the opportunity to do at least 45 hours of relevant work each semester for each credit. So, for a “typical” *three* credit class, you are expected to work for at least 135 total hours. Attending class, taking tests, doing assignments and projects, and attending office hours all count. For a 15 week semester, this 135 hours comes out to an average of 9 hours each week per class. That means that each 3 credit class is not legally supposed to count towards a college degree unless you are spending at least 6 hours each week on assignments (etc.) in addition to spending 3 hours in class each week. Of course, you are *permitted* to learn even more! You should also note that all these agencies define an “hour” as being 50 minutes, rather than 60 minutes.

For a “typical” 15 credit load, this comes out to 45 hours of total academic work (assignments and classes) *each week*... comparable to what is normally asked of you in a “real” job. That’s why being a “full time” student is “full time”.

What should I do if my college isn’t giving me enough opportunities?

Professors can be disciplined for providing insufficient educational opportunities to their students. If you aren’t getting enough homework to do, you can complain to NYSED or Middle States that you are being cheated of your tuition dollars. I’m not sure what their follow-up would look like, but I suspect that you won’t get a refund, because the college *is* currently accredited. However, if *many* students complain that they aren’t being given enough work to do, NYSED or Middle States would eventually rescind the college’s accreditation. But before you complain, read the next section about “evidence”.

What should I do if my college is giving me opportunities for education that are *above* the minimum?

The rules stated above reflect minima, not maxima! And when you get 2 gallons of gas for the price of 1, you’re happy! Generally, professors can’t be disciplined for giving you too many opportunities. But if you think your class is being given 18 hours of work each week instead of the expected 9, you should complain to the Dean. Take along your evidence, otherwise this will just be a worthless opinion. Take copies of your assignments (and their due dates), the work you actually did, the grades you got, information from other students (especially the highest ranked students) about how many hours they are working each week, etc. Organize everything to show a convincing *pattern*.

Links documenting the 135 hours of work per semester per 3-credit class requirement:

NYSED: <http://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/education-law-rules-and-regulations> [see section 50.1, subsection (o)].

SUNY: https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=168 [see Policy I, last part of 1st sentence].

Middle States Accreditation: <https://msche.box.com/shared/static/o965z7wbir3leva2ci18sbm9ha73903z.pdf> [see definition IV C].

SUNY Geneseo: <https://bulletin.geneseo.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=97#credit-toward-a-degree> [see section called “Unit of Credit”].

Note that the SUNY rules merely say that 150 minutes per week per credit is “*typical*”, but both NYSED and Geneseo state that at least 150 minutes per week is “*required*”. Furthermore, Middle States says that the work done by each student shall “not be less than” 150 minutes, and then redundantly also states that 150 minutes is the minimum permitted work.