Ryan's Question: How many people do you meet that say that college was the best four years of their life?

Amberly's Answer: If I'll be one hundred percent honest, not a lot — in terms of people closer to my age, at least. A lot of the time, whenever I hear the words “college was the best four years of my life,” it’s from people our parents’ age. Those are the people who tend to talk to me the most about college.

I’m not sure a whole lot of my fellow students see it as the “best four years of their life.” This is for a variety of reasons. There are many people I know who want to shorten it to three years and graduate early. By doing so, they won’t have to pay tuition for another year, while also moving on to the next big, expensive step — whether that be graduate school or medical school or something else entirely. There are others who aren’t sure if they’ll be shortening four years to three, but who still see college as a stepping stone for whatever they want to do next rather than the zenith of their entire life. These days, it takes more than a simple bachelor’s degree to get a steady, well-paying job, like it was a few decades ago. There’s more to life’s journey now. It has more twists and turns.

In a way, I like this philosophy more. The idea of the pinnacle of your life — the best four years, beginning when you are eighteen and have literally no clue about what you want to do — seems rather grim to me. Why can’t the best four years be at some point after college, such as your thirties? Why can’t it come later?

In the end, the position I’ve taken myself is something in the middle. College can be a really fun set of four years. You can seize the chance to explore yourself and your
interests, sharpen your skills, have fun while you’re at it. Then when you graduate, you’re ready to take on the world, now with everything you’ve soaked in inspiring brightness and vivacity.

That’s the ideal, anyway. The reason why so many fellow students I know look at college as a grim means to an end, who want to graduate in three years to avoid paying another year’s worth of tuition, have very good reasons for doing so.

College is **INCREDIibly Expensive** these days. While, once upon a time, a student working a minimum wage job in 1978 could pay for a full year’s worth of tuition, without loans, this is no longer true thanks to the incredible inflation of college tuition. Keep in mind that this goes for tuition alone, not including the costs of books, room and board, and additional fees.

The federal government does have measures to help low-income families with these skyrocketing costs (e.g., Pell Grants and programs like TRIO and GEAR UP). However, under the new budget President Trump is proposing, the funding for these measures would be significantly slashed, preventing the outreach these programs will have for **many disadvantaged students** who need and rely on these programs to get an education and into college like everyone else does.

This is significant because the programs like TRIO and GEAR UP not only help families with college tuition, but also assist students with SAT Prep and FAFSA — all of which are also incredibly expensive — at no cost to the students, so their family’s money can go to other necessities.

So, this Amberly’s Answers got surprisingly political, but I think this goes to show that politics is very much entangled in people’s everyday lives, whether they acknowledge it or not. And more critical than my blog post itself, is the point that whether the best four years of your life take place during college or not, money should not stop anyone from having the chance to get those four years. Except, somehow, it does. And with this current administration, it doesn’t look like that’s going to change anytime soon.

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Amberly’s Answers

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