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Bullish on college

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Quad 136



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[Previous](#) [Next](#)

Bullish on College

In an interesting discussion of economic mobility on [Marketplace Money](#) earlier this month, interviewer Lizzie O'Leary asks *Richard Reeves*, a fellow in Economic Studies and policy director for the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution, how to help children get ahead economically and protect their economic future.

Reeves replied:

One of the things that does emerge quite strongly from the research is the importance of a college degree. If you're a parent whose child is smart and you're kind of worried they're not going to make it, well, do everything in your power to get them away to college. We know that lots of really smart youngsters with great high school scores are not applying to the right colleges, they are kind of lowballing themselves, and there are efforts now to try and match talent to those college places. **And so there are a number of things we can do [to help economic mobility], but if you were to say one thing, it would be make sure the kid graduates college. It is probably the single most important thing you can do to try and insure them for the future.** (Emphasis added.)

The whole discussion of social mobility is interesting (it is the first 7 minutes of the show), but the comments on college stood out to me. The statement by Reeves is completely uncontroversial among economists and probably among most of the educated public, but it is still too little understood by the general public and many high school students. There are many, many good reasons to get a bachelor's degree or even a two-year degree, but if one focuses purely on the economic incentives to get a post-secondary degree, the case is incontrovertible: a middle and upper middle class life begins with a college education, and this is becoming more true every year.

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).