Think a four-year college education is the only way to go? For many WITC students and grads, getting a start at a technical college was the right fit for them. Is it right for you? Let three WITC grads break it down for you.

**Reality Check 1: Are you ready for college?**

Make no mistake; an education at a technical college is just as challenging and rigorous as other colleges and universities. One of the big differences you’ll find at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College is the helpfulness and friendliness of the staff. In fact, one of the reasons WITC was ranked No. 7 in the nation was because of the instructors’ dedication to student success.

“At first, I did struggle. The first semester was a real eye-opener,” says J.P. Damico, a 2002 graduate of the Computer Networking Technology associate degree program.

“WITC’s CNT program is not easy. I really needed to manage my time well in order to succeed. The program guides you along a path, but it is up to you to stay on task and keep up with all of the information,” says Damico. Damico applied for the CNT program with the intention of transferring to Milwaukee School of Engineering. “I wanted to get a four-year degree in IT, and I felt that doing two years at WITC and finishing up at MSOE would be a great fit for me.”

Independence and time management was also a lesson that Brendon Shields picked up during his experience at WITC. A 2001 graduate of the Machine Tool Operation technical diploma, Shields entered WITC as a high school senior through the Youth Options program.

“I wasn’t sure where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do, and WITC helped me to narrow that down,” Shields says. Although some transfer agreements exist for the MTO program, Shields chose to pursue civil engineering and was able to transfer some of his credits for his bachelor’s degree.

Of course, not all WITC students who transfer intend to do so when they apply or even graduate from WITC. Case in point: Bambi Pattermann, an Administrative Assistant graduate from the class of 1988. After her two sons started school, she came to WITC with the sole intention of earning a degree for a better job. It wasn’t until more than a decade had passed that she decided to continue her education for a bachelor’s and eventually a master’s degree.
Pattermann earned her bachelor’s in management and leadership from Northland College in 2002, with 47 credits transferring. But Pattermann brought more with her to the liberal arts college than credits.

“The piece that WITC gave me was confidence,” Pattermann says. “I started at Northland knowing that I am disciplined. I can do this.”

**Reality Check 2:**
**Are you ready for a career?**

With a graduate placement rate of 93 percent, it’s clear WITC prepares its grads for careers. That’s the reason Pattermann enrolled at WITC. “I was looking for quality employment – a better paying job. I had never even considered at the time that I would go to college any longer than that,” Pattermann says.

It was during the second year of courses that Pattermann landed a secretarial job at Ondossagon School. Worried that she wouldn’t be able to schedule both work and college, Pattermann’s fears were quickly laid to rest. “Everyone worked with me so we could arrange a schedule,” Pattermann says. “I really appreciated the flexibility.”

Not only did WITC provide the flexibility to make the job a reality, the college also provided Pattermann with the skills and training she needed to be successful in her career. “The quality of what we learned was wonderful. When I got out there in the workforce, I knew how to do my job and how to do it correctly,” Pattermann says.

Eventually, the Ondossagon School closed its doors and Pattermann returned to WITC – this time as an employee. She began her career as part of the Student Services support staff and is now the Continuing Education dean of WITC-Ashland.

Although Shields and Damico immediately transferred their credits to another institution after graduating from WITC, both were confident the skills they learned at WITC made them immediately employable. “I always had that degree,” Shields says of his Machine Tool Operation diploma. “No matter what I decided to do after WITC, I knew I had learned a good skill and could get a job in the field.”

Damico, too, recognizes the value of his education. “Going into the IT field, I felt that I should start from the ground up. WITC offered exactly what I was looking for,” he says.

**Reality Check 3:**
**Are you ready for the tuition bills?**

One thing Damico wasn’t looking for – high tuition bills and exhaustive loan payments. College education is the most important investment one can make, but that doesn’t mean you have to break the bank.

The average cost to attend WITC full time is $3,056. Compare that to $6,185 for a four-year education at a public university or $23,712 to attend a private, four-year college, as reported by the College Web site. While there is a savings to be had by attending WITC first, it is still more than most people have in their piggy banks. That’s why the Financial Aid staff at WITC takes their role in finding the best way to finance your college education very seriously.

According to Financial Aid advisor Kelly Dunn, more than 75 percent of WITC students are awarded some form of financial aid. That’s more than $9 million in scholarships, loans, grants and work study, making your first step toward your educational goals an affordable one.

Are you ready for a reality check? WITC’s admission staff can help you. Logon to witc.edu or call one of WITC’s admissions advisors at 800.243.9482.

—Shawnda Schelinder is a marketing and public relations associate at WITC-Ashland.