

Most Expensive Colleges for 2011-2012

Thursday, 06 October 2011

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  if (d.getElementById(id)) {return;}  
  js = d.createElement(s); js.id = id;  
  js.src = "//connect.facebook.net/en_US/all.js#xfbml=1";  
  fjs.parentNode.insertBefore(js, fjs);  
}(document, 'script', 'facebook-jssdk'));
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Welcome to the 5th annual ranking of most expensive colleges compiled by Campus Grotto. While the names on this list haven't changed much over the years, the numbers sure have. When we first started ranking colleges by cost back in 2007, only one school (GWU) had a total cost of over \$50K, now 111 do. Back then, not a single school had tuition over \$40K, now 80 have passed that mark. There are now nineteen universities charging over \$55,000 (just one last year), and that's not even including the cost of textbooks.

Sarah Lawrence College is once again named the most expensive college by total cost for the 2011-2012 school year, marking the 4th year in a row the school has topped the ranking. Is it worth the money? Who knows, but the college does boast one of the lowest student-teacher ratios in the country and all students receive one-on-one weekly guidance from faculty.

Sarah Lawrence: Home of the nation's most expensive college.

It's important to note that these numbers are the 'sticker prices' for each institution for the 2011-2012 school year. Just because these schools have high tuition does not mean you will actually be paying that amount. Many schools will provide a financial aid package that meets 100% of a student's financial need (Cost of Attendance - Estimated Family Contribution). While going to college is still expensive, many of the colleges here offer great financial aid packages. To get a better idea of what you will actually be paying at each school, be sure to use the net price calculator that every college is required to have on their website starting October 29th (Thanks to the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008). Hopefully these calculators will give students (and their parents) a better idea of what they will actually be paying before applying.

Knowing colleges provide great financial aid packages, we hope to take these total cost numbers and apply the average grant each school gives to figure the typical out-of-pocket expense for these schools. The Department of Education recently 'ranked' a list of expensive schools by net price. While interesting, the tuition figures were a bit outdated as they were taken from the 2009-2010 school year. By us being able to provide the net price for the 2011-2012 school year, we will have this data out nearly two years ahead of the Dept. of Ed. Look for this in the coming weeks. Check back or sign up to receive our latest articles by email to be notified when this is available.

You will see all of the schools on this list are private colleges. Public schools are more affordable, but it should be noted they are rising in price faster than private schools. For the first time schools once considered affordable, like Cal Berkeley and UCLA, are nearly making the top 100 most expensive list with their nonresident tuition (listed at 115 and 120, respectively). (No wonder they are protesting over tuition increases.)

We start by taking a look at tuition.

Highest Tuition 2011-2012

College Tuition

1. Middlebury College \$45,935
2. Sarah Lawrence College \$44,220
3. The George Washington University \$44,103
4. Vassar College \$44,050
5. Connecticut College \$43,990
6. Bucknell University \$43,628
7. Wesleyan University \$43,404
8. St. John's College \$43,256
9. University of Richmond \$43,170
10. Carnegie Mellon University \$43,160

More: See the Top 100

When required fees are added onto tuition, the rankings change slightly, mainly because some schools (Columbia, Penn, Harvard) have fees that total a couple thousand dollars.

Highest Tuition and Fees 2011-2012

College Tuition + Fees

1. Middlebury College \$46,315
2. Columbia University \$45,290
3. Sarah Lawrence College \$45,212
4. Vassar College \$44,705
5. The George Washington University \$44,148
6. Trinity College (CT) \$44,070
7. Connecticut College \$43,990
8. Bucknell University \$43,866
9. Carnegie Mellon University \$43,812
10. Wesleyan University \$43,674

More: See the Top 100

Room and board is another cost that is often overlooked. Many colleges in the urban areas of New York, Boston, and the California coast have room and board expenses that run \$13,000-\$14,000 per year. Our favorite example is with NYU, who ranks 91st in tuition, but when factoring in room and board they become the 2nd most expensive college. Here we add the cost of a typical double room plus meal plan charged by each college to get the total cost to attend the college.

Most Expensive Colleges 2011-2012

College Total Cost

1. Sarah Lawrence College \$59,170
2. New York University \$56,787
3. Columbia University \$56,310
4. Harvey Mudd College \$55,998
5. Eugene Lang College (The New School) \$55,890
6. Claremont McKenna College \$55,865
7. Wesleyan University \$55,706
8. Bard College \$55,617
9. Barnard College \$55,566
10. Trinity College (CT) \$55,450
11. University of Chicago \$55,416
12. University of Southern California \$55,384
13. Dartmouth College \$55,365
14. Drexel University \$55,335
15. Bates College \$55,300
16. Johns Hopkins University \$55,242

17. Vassar College \$55,135
18. Bard College at Simon's Rock \$55,110
19. Haverford College \$55,050
20. Pitzer College \$54,988
21. Fordham University - Lincoln Center \$54,972
22. Connecticut College \$54,970
23. Bennington College \$54,960
24. Occidental College \$54,950
25. Carnegie Mellon University \$54,922

More: See the Top 100

Total Cost = Tuition + Room & Board + Required Fees

Data compiled by CampusGrotto.com

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(function(d, s, id) {  
  var js, fjs = d.getElementsByTagName(s)[0];  
  if (d.getElementById(id)) {return;}  
  js = d.createElement(s); js.id = id;  
  js.src = "//connect.facebook.net/en_US/all.js#xfbml=1";  
  fjs.parentNode.insertBefore(js, fjs);  
})(document, 'script', 'facebook-jssdk');
```

Other Notable Colleges:

- While Harvard is 82nd in total cost, it ranks 146 in tuition.
- Princeton ranks 114th total cost and 125th in Tuition.
- UC Berkeley ranks 115th in total cost.
- UCLA ranks 120th in total cost.

Notes:

Total Cost = Tuition + Room and Board + Required Fees

The fees included in the total cost only include fees that are required for all undergraduates. These fees typically include items like the Student Activity Fee, a Facilities Fee, and a Technology fee. You won't see any fees by major, orientation fees for incoming students, or medical insurance fees included in these costs. Many other fees can be optional and can vary per student and per major. A Student Health Insurance Fee, for example, is obviously not going to be required for a student already on their parents' insurance plan. Some colleges have their yearly budget for students listed slightly higher than what you see here. This is because some colleges also add in estimated costs of books, personal expenses, and transportation costs.

Tuition numbers were taken directly from each college's website during the last week of September of 2011.

This list only takes into account colleges that offer bachelor's (BA) degrees, so you will not see schools like Landmark College (costs over \$55K) who only offer students an Associate of Arts (AA) degree.

Also See:

Most Expensive Dorms for 2011-2012.

Notable Press

The Washington Post

The Huffington Post

The Wall Street Journal

Fox News

National Review

Consumerist

Yale Daily News

The Dartmouth

ABC5 WCVB-TV Boston

ABC7 KABC-TV Los Angeles

Corrections:

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We originally announced there were twenty colleges charging over \$55K. A \$198 orientation fee was included in the total cost of Carnegie Mellon. Since this list only includes fees that are required of all undergraduates, we adjusted the total cost of CMU (which dropped them below the \$55K mark). There are nineteen colleges charging over \$55K for 2011-2012 when totaling tuition, room/board, and fees required of all undergrads.

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Harvey Mudd notified us that the published student body fee on their website was overstated by \$270. The total cost for Harvey Mudd College is \$55,998, not \$56,268 as previously published. They are still the 4th most expensive.