

Q Search

AIER Names 75 Best College Towns and Cities for 2012-2013

The "college experience" is about more than simply attending a top-notch university. The city or town where the school is located also is important, the American Institute for Economic Research (AIER) suggests in its 2012-2013 "AIER College Destinations Index" (AIER CDI).

The AIER CDI includes the top 75 towns and cities in the United States for college students, based on a larger evaluation of the 227 U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) with student populations of 15,000 or more.

In creating the Index, a dozen factors are evaluated using the most current data available from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Science Foundation, and Small Business Administration to provide a snapshot of each community's overall academic and cultural environment, quality of life and employment opportunities in the area.



"At a time when approximately half of current college graduates are unemployed or underemployed, the pros and cons of a particular college destination should be an important factor in making a college selection," said Julie Zhu, the AIER research analyst who oversaw compilation of the Index.

The top 75 college destinations – grouped by total residential populations – are listed below:

AIER College Destinations Index ²⁰¹²			
by Metropolitan Statistical Area			
Rank	Major Metros (population > 1.5 million)	Rank	Mid-size Metros (1.0 to 1.5 million residents)
1	Boston, MA	1	San Jose, CA
2	Washington, DC	2	Austin, TX
3	New York City, NY	3	Oklahoma City, OK
4	San Francisco, CA	4	Buffalo, NY
5	Baltimore, MD	5	Pittsburgh, PA
6	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	6	Milwaukee, WI
7	Seattle, WA	7	Rochester, NY
8	Philadelphia, PA	8	Raleigh, NC
9	Houston, TX	9	Richmond, VA
10	Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX	10	Hartford, CT
11	Denver, CO	11	Columbus, OH
12	Chicago, IL	12	Cleveland, OH
13	St. Louis, MO	13	New Orleans, LA
14	San Diego, CA	14	Portland, OR
15	Los Angeles, CA	15	San Antonio, TX
		16	Virginia Beach, VA
		17	Cincinnati, OH
		18	Salt Lake City, UT
		19	Indianapolis, IN
		20	Louisville, KY
Rank	Small Metros (500K to 1 million residents)	Rank	College Towns (under 500K residents)
1	Ann Arbor, MI	1	Ithaca, NY
2	Madison, WI	2	Ames, IA
3	Boulder, CO	3	State College, PA
4	Gainesville, FL	4	Iowa City, IA
5	Durham, NC	5	Corvallis, OR
6	Lincoln, NE	6	Champaign-Urbana, IL
7	Bridgeport, CT	7	Lafayette, IN
8	Fort Collins, CO	8	Lawrence, KS
9	Trenton, NJ	9	Morgantown, WV
10	Tallahassee, FL	10	Columbia, MO
11	Lubbock, TX	11	College Station, TX
12	Lansing, MI	12	Fargo, ND
13	Honolulu, HI	13	Charlottesville, VA
14	Duluth, MN	14	Manhattan, KS
15	Huntsville, AL	15	Blacksburg, VA
16	Lexington, KY	16	Bloomington, IN
17	Omaha, NE	17	Grand Forks, ND
18	Santa Barbara, CA	18	Burlington, VT
19	Killeen, TX	19	Auburn, AL
20	Fayetteville, NC	20	Missoula, MT

[/sites/default/files/images/cdiimages/CDImsatables-2.jpg](http://sites/default/files/images/cdiimages/CDImsatables-2.jpg)

These cities topped the AIER College Destinations Index based on the destination's performance across the following 12 areas:

- Student Concentration: number of college students per 1,000 population
- Student Diversity: percentage of student body that are non-U.S. residents
- Research Capacity: academic R&D expenditures per capita
- Degree Attainment: percent of the 25-to-34-year-old population with bachelor's degree or higher
- Cost of Living: based upon average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment
- Arts and Leisure: number of cultural and entertainment venues per 100,000 population
- City Accessibility: percentage of workers over age 16 who commute on foot or by public transportation or bicycle
- Creative Class: percentage of workforce in the arts, education, knowledge industries, science and

- engineering, management and other fields
- Earning Potential: income per capita
- Entrepreneurial Activity: net annual increase in total number of business establishments per 100,000 population
- Brain Gain/Drain: year-over-year ratio of population with B.A. degree (it is only population with B.A degree, not all the college level) living in the area
- Unemployment rate

According to Steven Cunningham, AIER Director of Research and Education, "The characteristics that make up a great college destination often make a location ideal for business, retirement and tourism. A top AIER College Destinations Index ranking should be just as important to the town or city as it is to the schools located there and the families and students attending or considering them."

Complimentary electronic copies of the complete 2012-2013 AIER College Destinations Index analysis and companion brochure are available at www.aier.org/cdi (<http://www.aier.org/cdi>).

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