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A good college town? The ranking recognizes Fargo as one of the best in the nation. The finding is impressive because it's not about party school status or athletic team prowess. Rather, it concentrates on factors such as student numbers, the cost of living, the unemployment rate, research capacity and degree attainment. Fargo scored well in all categories, and came out on top for entrepreneurial activity – a category defined by the net increase in the number of business establishments per capita.

Also, Fargo ranked high for the cheapest cost of living as applied to apartment rents. That's a major factor for students on limited budgets.

Another measure that makes Fargo attractive for students is the potential for work after graduation. The report said Fargo was the third-highest among the 20 cities for earning potential. In other words, that degree is worth something in the Fargo metro area.

The institute's report is important because it's an objective analysis conducted by surveyors who are not connected to Fargo. The findings fall where they may, uninfluenced by local cheerleaders.

Fargo-Moorhead has been polishing its reputation as a center of higher education for years. The three residential schools have been in the metro area for generations, but the cities themselves have changed and grown during that time in ways amenable to college students, teachers and researchers. The relatively strong economy has provided the job base for students who need to work and for graduates who seek jobs when they've completed their education.

Moreover, Fargo in particular has embraced a downtown presence for North Dakota State University, which has changed for the better the way many students view their college experience.

All of the above translates into a student-friendly metropolitan area that continues to attract young people.

Forum editorials represent the opinion of Forum management and the newspaper's Editorial Board.