

2012–2013

# College Destinations Index

**Economics  
for Everyone***"An objective, comprehensive list."*

— CollegeNews

## Choose Your Destination

College isn't just about classroom learning. The people students meet, the places they go, and the jobs they may hold are essential supplements to formal education. AIER's 2012 College Destinations Index measures the informal learning environment. And it does so objectively by looking at statistics covering 12 key criteria. These criteria fall into one of three larger categories that powerfully impact the student experience: Academic Environment, Quality of Life, and Professional Opportunity.

To create the CDI, researchers at the American Institute for Economic Research gather data for all 527

Metropolitan/Micropolitan Statistical Areas in the U.S. They exclude localities with fewer than 15,000 students and any location missing data for more than two key criteria. The resulting Index is further broken down into four classes based on area size.

This brochure lists the top 75 College Destinations for 2012-2013. These include the top 15 among the Major Metros and the top 20 locations among Mid-size Metros, Small Cities, and College Towns. To see more great research from AIER visit...

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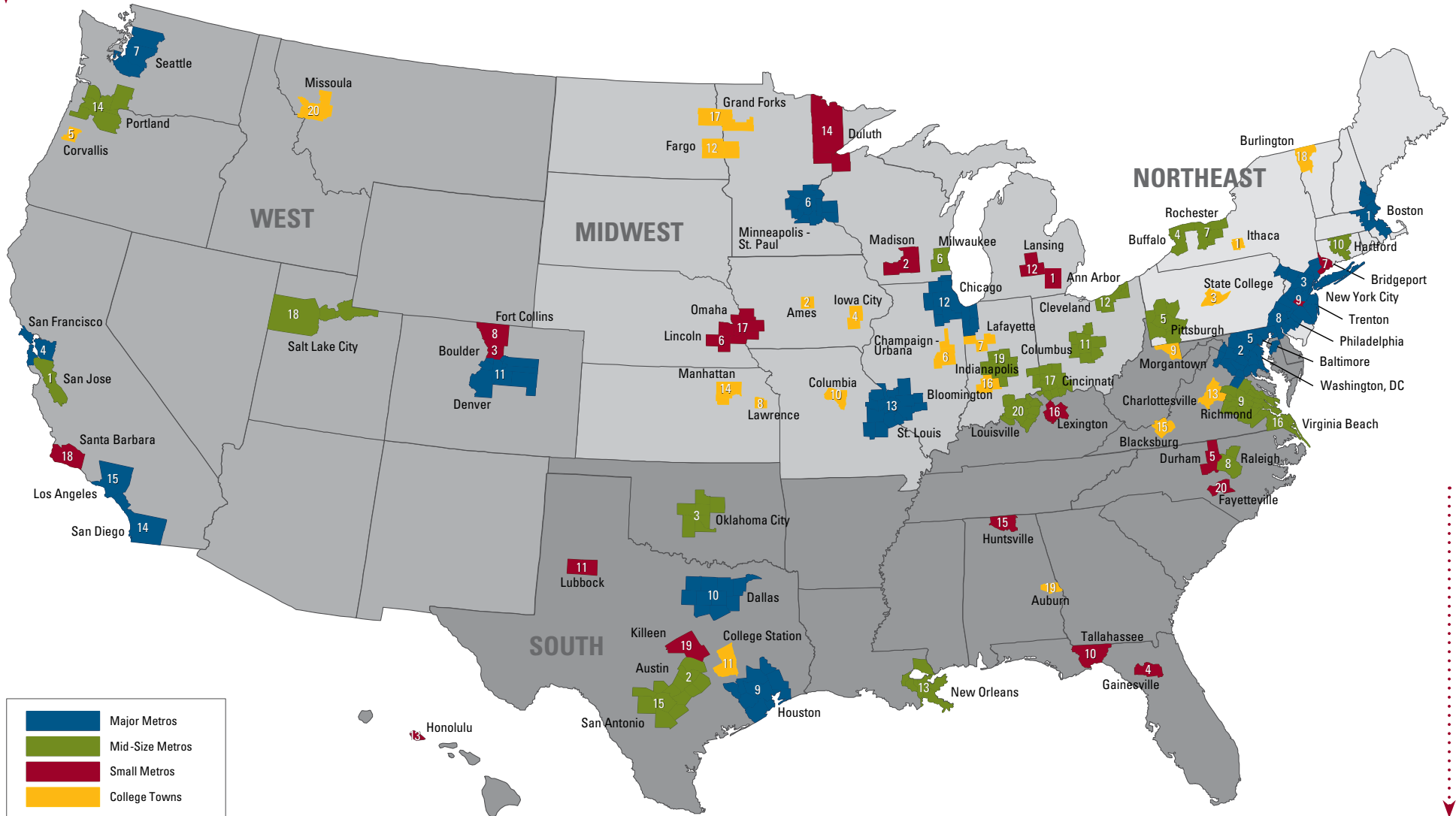
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# 75 Best Cities for College Students

AIER | College Destinations Index **2012**



# AIER | College Destinations Index 2012

**Major Metros**  
populations greater than 2.5 million

| Rank | Major Metros         | Population | Academic Environment  |                   |                   |                   | Quality of Life |                    |                |                | Professional Opportunity |                          |                   |                     |
|------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|      |                      |            | Student Concentration | Student Diversity | Research Capacity | Degree Attainment | Arts & Leisure  | City Accessibility | Creative Class | Cost of Living | Earning Potential        | Entrepreneurial Activity | Unemployment Rate | Brain Gain or Drain |
| 1    | Boston               | 4,560,689  | 92.3                  | 8.1%              | \$485             | 43.0%             | 96.0            | 18.7%              | 46.3%          | \$1,349        | \$53,713                 | -55.3                    | 5.3%              | 1.006               |
| 2    | Washington, DC       | 5,610,082  | 84.8                  | 4.3%              | \$179             | 46.8%             | 45.1            | 19.0%              | 50.7%          | \$1,461        | \$56,442                 | -21.1                    | 5.1%              | 1.022               |
| 3    | New York City        | 18,919,983 | 73.0                  | 6.1%              | \$179             | 36.0%             | 27.2            | 38.7%              | 40.0%          | \$1,403        | \$52,375                 | -43.8                    | 8.4%              | 0.992               |
| 4    | San Francisco        | 4,345,320  | 86.0                  | 5.6%              | \$399             | 43.4%             | 28.7            | 21.7%              | 45.3%          | \$1,833        | \$59,696                 | -48.8                    | 8.1%              | 0.995               |
| 5    | Baltimore            | 2,714,183  | 86.2                  | 4.4%              | \$936             | 35.1%             | 69.0            | 9.8%               | 43.7%          | \$1,263        | \$47,962                 | -65.4                    | 6.9%              | 1.014               |
| 6    | Minneapolis-St. Paul | 3,286,195  | 77.8                  | 3.4%              | \$242             | 37.9%             | 46.2            | 8.8%               | 42.0%          | \$924          | \$45,750                 | -60.5                    | 5.1%              | 1.006               |
| 7    | Seattle              | 3,449,059  | 71.8                  | 5.2%              | \$298             | 37.0%             | 57.1            | 13.8%              | 42.7%          | \$1,176        | \$48,976                 | -82.6                    | 6.9%              | 0.995               |
| 8    | Philadelphia         | 5,971,483  | 80.4                  | 3.8%              | \$232             | 33.1%             | 31.9            | 14.4%              | 41.4%          | \$1,077        | \$45,565                 | -46.9                    | 7.8%              | 1.017               |
| 9    | Houston              | 5,977,092  | 63.3                  | 5.0%              | \$287             | 28.4%             | 37.0            | 5.7%               | 35.6%          | \$931          | \$43,568                 | 1.4                      | 6.5%              | 1.051               |
| 10   | Dallas               | 6,402,922  | 68.0                  | 3.9%              | \$105             | 31.1%             | 46.4            | 4.1%               | 37.0%          | \$891          | \$39,514                 | -13.7                    | 6.5%              | 1.026               |
| 11   | Denver               | 2,560,529  | 67.3                  | 2.6%              | \$176             | 38.2%             | 37.6            | 7.9%               | 40.7%          | \$1,007        | \$45,982                 | -57.8                    | 7.9%              | 1.017               |
| 12   | Chicago              | 9,474,211  | 74.3                  | 3.1%              | \$172             | 34.0%             | 34.6            | 16.0%              | 37.4%          | \$1,016        | \$43,727                 | -63.3                    | 8.9%              | 1.004               |
| 13   | St. Louis            | 2,815,168  | 75.5                  | 2.8%              | \$280             | 29.9%             | 35.9            | 5.5%               | 37.0%          | \$794          | \$40,342                 | -50.0                    | 7.4%              | 1.008               |
| 14   | San Diego            | 3,105,989  | 98.1                  | 2.4%              | \$338             | 33.7%             | 14.5            | 7.9%               | 39.7%          | \$1,406        | \$45,630                 | -56.4                    | 8.7%              | 0.989               |
| 15   | Los Angeles          | 12,849,383 | 87.9                  | 3.8%              | \$184             | 31.0%             | 24.3            | 10.8%              | 36.2%          | \$1,465        | \$42,818                 | -59.9                    | 10.1%             | 1.019               |

**Mid-size Metros**  
1.0 to 2.5 million residents

| Rank | Mid-size Metros  | Population                      | Academic Environment   |   |  |   | Quality of Life   |  |   |   | Professional Opportunity                               |  |   |   |
|------|--|---------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
|      |  |                                 | Student Concentration  | Student Diversity   | Research Capacity  | Degree Attainment   | Arts & Leisure  | City Accessibility   | Creative Class  | Cost of Living  | Earning Potential                                      | Entrepreneurial Activity   | Unemployment Rate   | Brain Gain or Drain   |
| 1    | San Jose, CA   | 1,843,255                       | 86.3   | 7.0%  | \$478  | 45.3%   | 23.1  | 7.1%   | 49.8%   | \$1,702   | \$55,404   | -52.5  | 8.4%  | 1.053   |
| 2    | Austin, TX   | 1,728,307                       | 96.6   | 4.1%  | \$359  | 39.4%   | 34.4  | 6.6%   | 43.2%   | \$963   | \$35,522   | 1.4  | 5.5%  | 1.004   |
| 3    | Oklahoma City  | 1,257,845                       | 85.5   | 4.0%  | \$178  | 27.6%   | 21.8  | 3.3%   | 35.1%   | \$701   | \$37,909   | -5.9   | 4.0%  | 1.047   |
| 4    | Buffalo  | 1,135,198                       | 81.2   | 8.4%  | \$312  | 28.3%   | 34.6  | 8.2%   | 36.0%   | \$647   | \$37,511   | -25.5  | 8.3%  | 0.999   |
| 5    | Pittsburgh   | 2,356,381                       | 73.7   | 4.2%  | \$451  | 29.1%   | 15.3  | 10.5%  | 37.3%   | \$700   | \$42,216   | -31.5  | 6.3%  | 1.028   |
| 6    | Milwaukee  | 1,557,244                       | 80.7   | 2.0%  | \$181  | 31.7%   | 86.4  | 7.2%   | 37.5%   | \$866   | \$41,696   | -50.9  | 7.4%  | 1.009   |
| 7    | Rochester  | 1,054,445                       | 87.8   | 4.7%  | \$433  | 33.0%   | 27.0  | 6.8%   | 39.6%   | \$804   | \$39,192   | -32.2  | 7.7%  | 1.049   |
| 8    | Raleigh, NC  | 1,137,552                       | 84.2   | 5.0%  | \$320  | 41.0%   | 31.8  | 3.4%   | 46.0%   | \$867   | \$37,849   | -71.0  | 7.4%  | 0.975   |
| 9    | Richmond, VA   | 1,261,317                       | 73.3   | 2.3%  | \$166  | 31.7%   | 52.6  | 4.2%   | 39.9%   | \$958   | \$41,242   | -57.2  | 6.0%  | 1.041   |
| 10   | Hartford   | 1,212,956                       | 83.2   | 3.1%  | \$206  | 34.6%   | 18.3  | 7.4%   | 41.6%   | \$1,113   | \$49,667   | -47.3  | 7.4%  | 1.013   |
| 11   | Columbus, OH   | 1,840,631                       | 82.9   | 4.4%  | \$411  | 32.5%   | 8.6   | 5.1%   | 38.6%   | \$779   | \$38,242   | -26.5  | 6.4%  | 0.969   |
| 12   | Cleveland  | 2,075,758                       | 67.4   | 3.1%  | \$219  | 27.7%   | 37.6  | 6.9%   | 36.5%   | \$720   | \$39,348   | -81.2  | 6.7%  | 1.026   |
| 13   | New Orleans  | 1,173,327                       | 68.4   | 3.3%  | \$237  | 26.8%   | 25.0  | 8.4%   | 35.0%   | \$994   | \$39,849   | -9.5   | 6.4%  | 0.997   |
| 14   | Portland, OR   | 2,232,496                       | 74.2   | 2.7%  | \$170  | 33.0%   | 37.5  | 12.7%  | 39.3%   | \$905   | \$38,728   | -88.6  | 7.8%  | 0.966   |
| 15   | San Antonio  | 2,157,897                       | 73.1   | 1.6%  | \$123  | 25.4%   | 24.7  | 5.7%   | 34.4%   | \$842   | \$34,500   | -7.7   | 6.2%  | 1.075   |
| 16   | Virginia Beach   | 1,675,343                       | 85.3   | 1.2%  | \$132  | 28.5%   | 28.2  | 6.5%   | 37.1%   | \$965   | \$39,674   | -52.2  | 6.1%  | 1.059   |
| 17   | Cincinnati   | 2,133,203                       | 73.4   | 2.6%  | \$206  | 29.3%   | 40.0  | 4.6%   | 37.1%   | \$752   | \$38,168   | -55.9  | 7.1%  | 0.986   |
| 18   | Salt Lake City   | 1,128,988                       | 78.4   | 2.5%  | \$336  | 29.0%   | 51.2  | 7.0%   | 34.8%   | \$826   | \$36,986   | -90.9  | 5.7%  | 0.973   |
| 19   | Indianapolis   | 1,759,229                       | 63.8   | 2.1%  | \$169  | 30.7%   | 43.5  | 3.5%   | 37.5%   | \$761   | \$38,339   | -55.8  | 7.3%  | 0.983   |
| 20   | Louisville, KY   | 1,287,271                       | 58.5   | 1.0%  | \$147  | 25.8%   | 37.0  | 4.3%   | 34.0%   | \$694   | #N/A   | -33.9  | #N/A  | 1.049   |
|      | Metropolitan Statistical Areas with greater than 15,000 college students | Population (U.S. Census - 2010) | Number of college students per 1,000 population (U.S. census - 2010) | Percent of student body that are non-residents (IPEDS - 2010) | Academic R&D expenditure per capita (National Science Foundation - 2010) | Percent of 25-34 population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census - 2010) | Establishments per 100,000 population in arts, entertainment and recreation (U.S. Economic Census - 2008) | Percent of workers 16+ who commute via public transportation, bike, or walk (U.S. Census - 2010) | Percent of workforce in the creative class (U.S. Census - 2010) | Average 2-bedroom rent (U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development - 2011) | Income per capita (Bureau of Economic Analysis - 2009) | Net increase in total # of businesses per 100,000 population (U.S. Small Business Administration - 2009) | Unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics - 2012 average) | Year-over-year ratio of population with B.A. degree living in the area (U.S. Census - 2010) |

**Small Cities**  
250,000 to 1.0 million residents

| Rank | Small Metros      | Population | Academic Environment  |                   |                   |                   | Quality of Life |                    |                |                | Professional Opportunity |                          |                   |                     |
|------|-------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|      |                   |            | Student Concentration | Student Diversity | Research Capacity | Degree Attainment | Arts & Leisure  | City Accessibility | Creative Class | Cost of Living | Earning Potential        | Entrepreneurial Activity | Unemployment Rate | Brain Gain or Drain |
| 1    | Ann Arbor, MI     | 345,290    | 195.5                 | 7.9%              | \$3,471           | 50.4%             | 35.8            | 12.2%              | 51.3%          | \$882          | \$38,032                 | -50.4                    | 5.0%              | 1.054               |
| 2    | Madison, WI       | 569,923    | 109.4                 | 5.2%              | \$1,806           | 43.3%             | 48.3            | 13.1%              | 45.4%          | \$877          | \$42,946                 | -39.1                    | 4.7%              | 1.068               |
| 3    | Boulder, CO       | 295,166    | 133.8                 | 3.9%              | \$1,184           | 57.5%             | 62.2            | 14.1%              | 53.7%          | \$1,102        | \$47,489                 | -81.3                    | 5.9%              | 0.978               |
| 4    | Gainesville, FL   | 266,321    | 221.3                 | 6.2%              | \$2,559           | 37.6%             | 28.7            | 11.2%              | 43.2%          | \$824          | \$34,122                 | -40.2                    | 6.3%              | 1.132               |
| 5    | Durham, NC        | 505,933    | 126.0                 | 6.3%              | \$3,450           | 42.9%             | 39.3            | 9.4%               | 48.0%          | \$841          | \$40,116                 | -22.9                    | 7.1%              | 1.010               |
| 6    | Lincoln, NE       | 303,151    | 127.0                 | 4.0%              | \$631             | 33.7%             | 48.7            | 5.6%               | 39.7%          | \$661          | \$36,993                 | -34.3                    | 3.3%              | 1.024               |
| 7    | Bridgeport, CT    | 918,714    | 63.9                  | 4.7%              | \$10              | 44.0%             | 47.1            | 11.8%              | 42.4%          | \$1,291        | \$73,720                 | -87.1                    | 7.0%              | 1.034               |
| 8    | Fort Collins, CO  | 300,637    | 128.9                 | 3.8%              | \$1,008           | 45.8%             | 36.0            | 6.5%               | 45.3%          | \$849          | \$37,368                 | -88.8                    | 6.4%              | 1.133               |
| 9    | Trenton, NJ       | 366,789    | 88.7                  | 4.9%              | \$666             | 38.5%             | 35.3            | 14.9%              | 43.1%          | \$1,224        | \$53,523                 | -60.8                    | 7.5%              | 1.008               |
| 10   | Tallahassee, FL   | 368,117    | 182.4                 | 2.1%              | \$791             | 34.2%             | 59.7            | 5.2%               | 44.4%          | \$933          | \$33,268                 | -41.3                    | 6.7%              | 1.081               |
| 11   | Lubbock, TX       | 288,462    | 154.2                 | 5.9%              | \$640             | 28.0%             | 32.5            | 3.4%               | 32.5%          | \$728          | \$32,166                 | -18.0                    | 5.0%              | 1.140               |
| 12   | Lansing, MI       | 464,076    | 164.1                 | 7.8%              | \$930             | 30.0%             | 49.4            | 8.3%               | 37.5%          | \$741          | \$33,666                 | -59.9                    | 6.4%              | 0.981               |
| 13   | Honolulu, HI      | 955,775    | 83.1                  | 7.1%              | \$333             | 31.9%             | 23.8            | 17.6%              | 34.9%          | \$1,702        | \$45,486                 | -21.8                    | 5.3%              | 1.052               |
| 14   | Duluth, MN        | 280,035    | 93.1                  | 1.9%              | \$97              | 24.9%             | 103.9           | 6.2%               | 34.0%          | \$639          | \$34,387                 | -57.1                    | 6.5%              | 1.106               |
| 15   | Huntsville, AL    | 419,181    | 84.3                  | 2.0%              | \$253             | 34.4%             | 32.7            | 2.9%               | 44.0%          | \$665          | \$38,090                 | -11.7                    | 5.7%              | 1.051               |
| 16   | Lexington, KY     | 473,547    | 106.9                 | 2.3%              | \$760             | 31.2%             | 85.4            | 4.6%               | 39.0%          | \$707          | \$35,696                 | -31.3                    | 6.2%              | 0.931               |
| 17   | Omaha, NE         | 868,238    | 83.5                  | 2.5%              | \$201             | 33.0%             | 20.4            | 3.2%               | 37.4%          | \$747          | \$42,412                 | -14.4                    | 4.1%              | 1.030               |
| 18   | Santa Barbara, CA | 424,712    | 125.3                 | 3.7%              | \$531             | 29.7%             | 56.9            | 14.5%              | 34.0%          | \$1,225        | \$46,619                 | -61.7                    | 7.7%              | 1.036               |
| 19   | Killeen, TX       | 408,366    | 81.4                  | 0.3%              | #N/A              | 19.9%             | 68.2            | 5.3%               | 32.8%          | \$749          | \$38,757                 | -13.5                    | 7.1%              | 1.188               |
| 20   | Fayetteville, NC  | 367,733    | 106.8                 | 0.6%              | \$32              | 23.7%             | 37.5            | 6.0%               | 32.0%          | \$690          | \$40,917                 | -4.9                     | 9.3%              | 1.236               |

**College Towns**  
under 250,000 residents

| Rank | College Towns  | Population                      | Academic Environment   |   |  |   | Quality of Life   |  |   |   | Professional Opportunity                               |  |   |   |
|------|--|---------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
|      |  |                                 | Student Concentration  | Student Diversity   | Research Capacity  | Degree Attainment   | Arts & Leisure  | City Accessibility   | Creative Class  | Cost of Living  | Earning Potential                                      | Entrepreneurial Activity   | Unemployment Rate   | Brain Gain or Drain   |
| 1    | Ithaca, NY   | 101,620                         | 296.3  | 12.0%   | \$7,388  | 53.4%   | 50.1  | 27.6%  | 56.0%   | \$950   | \$33,632   | -9.8   | 5.7%  | 1.148   |
| 2    | Ames, IA   | 89,575                          | 285.4  | 12.0%   | \$2,792  | 48.4%   | 46.6  | 15.0%  | 47.6%   | \$740   | \$35,246   | -23.4  | 3.8%  | 1.171   |
| 3    | State College, PA  | 154,127                         | 271.6  | 9.8%  | \$4,999  | 40.9%   | 55.7  | 15.7%  | 44.7%   | \$847   | \$33,730   | 5.2  | 5.1%  | 1.128   |
| 4    | Iowa City, IA  | 152,918                         | 205.5  | 9.0%  | \$2,904  | 45.6%   | 10.8  | 18.1%  | 42.5%   | \$746   | \$37,985   | -14.4  | 3.7%  | 1.047   |
| 5    | Corvallis, OR  | 85,575                          | 224.3  | 7.0%  | \$2,531  | 48.0%   | 43.8  | 23.7%  | 48.5%   | \$811   | \$37,030   | -44.4  | 5.7%  | 1.019   |
| 6    | Champaign-Urbana, IL   | 234,445                         | 227.4  | 14.2%   | \$2,197  | 37.7%   | 27.0  | 15.0%  | 42.5%   | \$713   | \$34,859   | -22.6  | 7.0%  | 1.124   |
| 7    | Lafayette, IN  | 202,782                         | 210.2  | 13.2%   | \$2,707  | 30.4%   | 147.0   | 8.9%   | 36.7%   | \$793   | \$30,268   | -47.8  | 6.4%  | 1.004   |
| 8    | Lawrence, KS   | 111,130                         | 255.5  | 6.8%  | \$2,420  | 49.9%   | 24.6  | 11.4%  | 44.6%   | \$536   | \$31,253   | -40.5  | 5.2%  | 0.995   |
| 9    | Morgantown, WV   | 130,288                         | 205.7  | 4.9%  | \$1,189  | 29.6%   | 50.7  | 8.1%   | 37.2%   | \$586   | \$34,412   | 26.9   | 4.9%  | 1.223   |
| 10   | Columbia, MO   | 172,319                         | 212.1  | 3.3%  | \$1,384  | 49.0%   | 31.9  | 6.3%   | 45.2%   | \$666   | \$36,241   | -46.4  | 4.5%  | 1.176   |
| 11   | College Station, TX  | 230,141                         | 253.8  | 8.9%  | \$3,356  | 32.1%   | 30.3  | 9.5%   | 38.3%   | \$843   | \$27,818   | -15.6  | 5.3%  | 1.114   |
| 12   | Fargo, ND  | 209,144                         | 134.4  | 6.5%  | \$604  | 35.6%   | 23.9  | 6.4%   | 36.8%   | \$612   | \$39,159   | -16.7  | 3.3%  | 1.131   |
| 13   | Charlottesville, VA  | 199,776                         | 146.9  | 6.7%  | \$1,383  | 42.2%   | 39.7  | 7.5%   | 47.5%   | \$931   | \$42,857   | -67.6  | 4.4%  | 1.093   |
| 14   | Manhattan, KS  | 127,880                         | 187.4  | 7.8%  | \$1,256  | 34.2%   | 20.3  | 8.4%   | 37.6%   | \$618   | \$40,345   | #N/A   | 5.0%  | 1.093   |
| 15   | Blacksburg, VA   | 161,768                         | 253.4  | 5.7%  | \$2,466  | 30.0%   | 41.7  | 6.4%   | 39.2%   | \$702   | \$28,197   | -37.1  | 5.5%  | 1.118   |
| 16   | Bloomington, IN  | 192,696                         | 229.9  | 9.6%  | \$921  | 32.7%   | 38.3  | 11.6%  | 38.5%   | #N/A  | \$30,796   | -51.9  | 6.9%  | 1.117   |
| 17   | Grand Forks, ND  | 99,586                          | 153.9  | 5.8%  | \$769  | 28.8%   | 33.2  | 9.9%   | 36.2%   | \$644   | \$35,328   | -37.2  | 4.2%  | 1.090   |
| 18   | Burlington, VT   | 211,035                         | 108.9  | 1.8%  | \$615  | 40.2%   | 36.0  | 10.7%  | 41.7%   | \$1,197   | \$41,247   | -73.4  | 3.7%  | 1.112   |
| 19   | Auburn, AL   | 140,780                         | 195.7  | 4.0%  | \$1,031  | 31.2%   | 28.0  | 6.5%   | 36.7%   | \$647   | \$27,259   | -17.0  | 5.6%  | 1.089   |
| 20   | Missoula, MT   | 109,494                         | 140.6  | 3.0%  | \$580  | 40.7%   | 35.3  | 12.1%  | 36.3%   | \$775   | \$34,712   | -93.2  | 6.3%  | 1.171   |
|      | Metropolitan Statistical Areas with greater than 15,000 college students | Population (U.S. Census - 2010) | Number of college students per 1,000 population (U.S. census - 2010) | Percent of student body that are non-residents (IPEDS - 2010) | Academic R&D expenditure per capita (National Science Foundation - 2010) | Percent of 25-34 population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census - 2010) | Establishments per 100,000 population in arts, entertainment and recreation (U.S. Economic Census - 2008) | Percent of workers 16+ who commute via public transportation, bike, or walk (U.S. Census - 2010) | Percent of workforce in the creative class (U.S. Census - 2010) | Average 2-bedroom rent (U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development - 2011) | Income per capita (Bureau of Economic Analysis - 2009) | Net increase in total # of businesses per 100,000 population (U.S. Small Business Administration - 2009) | Unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics - 2012 average) | Year-over-year ratio of population with B.A. degree living in the area (U.S. Census - 2010) |