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The 24 colleges with the best return on investment

Madison Hoff Aug 24, 2020, 1:57 PM



CUNY City College is one of the colleges with a good return on investment. Gabriela Bhaskar/Reuters

Some colleges have students already moving into residential buildings as the new semester approaches, as The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill did before switching to a remote model.

Colleges have to decide whether they will reopen or teach virtually for the fall semester as the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread in the US.

Business Insider decided to look at which four-year, bachelor-degree-granting colleges have the best return on investment, based on available data from the Department of Education.

Many of the colleges that made the top of our list are CUNY schools.

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As some [colleges](#) open their campuses back up for the fall or prepare to teach students remotely, Business Insider decided to look at which give students the best return on investment, based on post-grad salary and tuition figures.

To do this, we used the most recent available data from the [Department of Education's Scorecard](#) that has figures like cost of tuition, enrollment, and student debt. We created a ratio of median earnings from 10 years after first attending college to the average cost of attendance.

Earnings data is from federally aided students and cost is from "full-time, first-time, degree-/certificate-seeking undergraduates who receive Title IV aid," according to Department of Education's notes on the available data. We only included schools that are mainly considered four-year, bachelor degree colleges and have at least 1,000 undergraduate students enrolled.

It is important to note that this is a simple ratio that doesn't take into account other factors that might influence return on investment from college, such as the type of degree a student earned or whether they are receiving financial aid.

Educational news site [Inside Higher Ed](#) notes that colleges that have the best return on investment after 10 years may not be the same as those after 40 years, based on Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce's own return on investment [report](#). Researchers found public universities had a better return over 10 years than private nonprofit universities, although these private schools had a better return over 40 years. Similarly, a lot of public universities made the top of our list.

The following are the 24 colleges with the best return on investment, expressed as a percentage based on our calculated ratios of 10-year earnings to average costs. We multiplied our costs by four to get an estimate of a typical four-year cost. Online-only colleges, maritime colleges, and some specialized colleges are excluded from our analysis. We also included the most recent figures of undergraduate student enrollment from the Department of Education.

23 (tie). University of Houston-Downtown has a return on investment of 68.0%.



Andrew Vaughan/Shutterstock

Location: Houston, Texas

Median earnings after 10 years: \$45,000

Average cost of attendance: \$16,547

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 12,572

23 (tie). Dalton State College has a return on investment of 68.0%.





sshepard/Getty Images

Location: Dalton, Georgia

Median earnings after 10 years: \$32,300

Average cost of attendance: \$11,875

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 4,715

22. California State University-Stanislaus has a return on investment of 69.0%.



[California State University Stanislaus website](#)

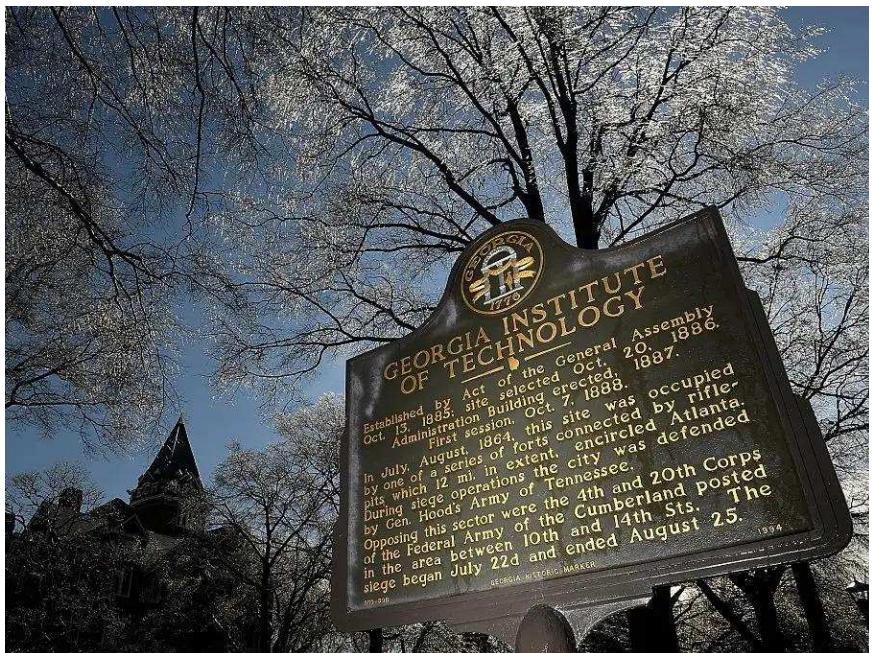
Location: Turlock, California

Median earnings after 10 years: \$45,400

Average cost of attendance: \$16,442

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 9,272

21. Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus has a return on investment of 69.4%.



Mike Comer/Getty Images

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Median earnings after 10 years: \$79,100

Average cost of attendance: \$28,501

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 15,201

20. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has a return on investment of 69.7%.



Jay LaPrete/NCAA Photos via Getty Images

Location: La Crosse, Wisconsin

Median earnings after 10 years: \$48,000

Average cost of attendance: \$17,213

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 9,517

19. College of Staten Island CUNY has a return on investment of 69.8%.



College of Staten Island website

Location: Staten Island, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$41,500

Average cost of attendance: \$14,857

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 11,815

18. California State University-Bakersfield has a return on investment of 71.5%.



Mike Duffy/NCAA Photos via Getty Images

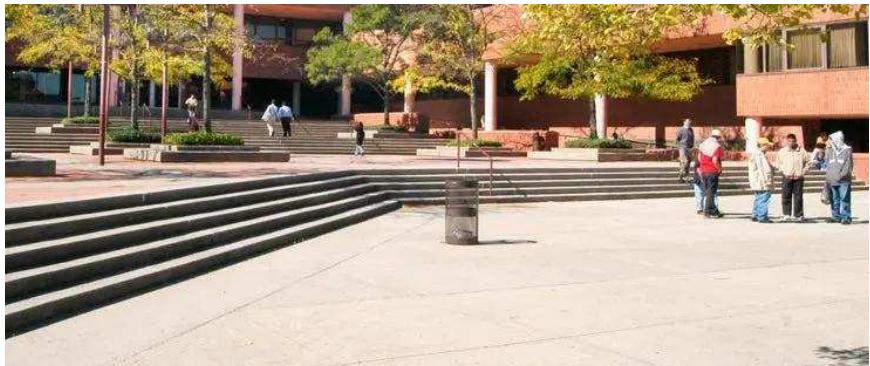
Location: Bakersfield, California

Median earnings after 10 years: \$47,800

Average cost of attendance: \$16,714

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 9,142

17. CUNY York College has a return on investment of 71.8%.



York College website

Location: Jamaica, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$40,800

Average cost of attendance: \$14,204

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 7,126

16. CUNY Lehman College has a return on investment of 75.0%.





Erik McGregor/LightRocket via Getty Images

Location: Bronx, New York**Median earnings after 10 years:** \$43,100**Average cost of attendance:** \$14,359**Number of undergraduate students enrolled:** 11,559

15. Augusta University has a return on investment of 75.5%.



Ron Harris/AP

Location: Augusta, Georgia**Median earnings after 10 years:** \$62,300**Average cost of attendance:** \$20,618**Number of undergraduate students enrolled:** 5,146

14. California State University-Dominguez Hills has a return on investment of 77.2%.



Dr. Angela Davis speaks to students and community members in the packed gymnasium at CSU Dominguez Hills in Carson on Monday, Feb. 11, 2019. Scott Varley/MediaNews Group/Daily Breeze via Getty Images

Location: Carson, California**Median earnings after 10 years:** \$44,700

Average cost of attendance: \$14,469

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 13,871

13. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has a return on investment of 77.4%.



Sam Craft/AP

Location: Edinburg, Texas

Median earnings after 10 years: \$41,900

Average cost of attendance: \$13,534

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 24,596

12. California State University-Los Angeles has a return on investment of 77.8%.



jeremyiswild/Getty Images

Location: Los Angeles, California

Median earnings after 10 years: \$46,100

Average cost of attendance: \$14,823

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 24,163

11. CUNY Brooklyn College has a return on investment of 78.4%.



<https://www.businessinsider.com/colleges-with-the-best-return-on-investment-2020-6/#8-missouri-university-of-science-and-technology-has-a-return-on-investment-of-78-4> 14/24



Bebeto Matthews/AP

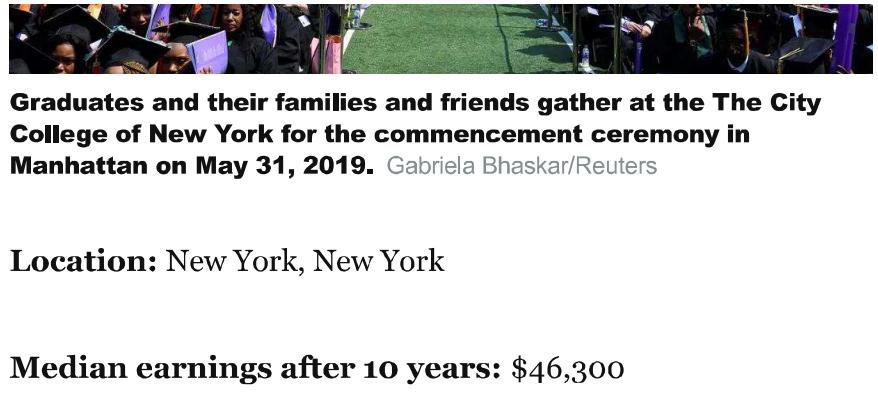
Location: Brooklyn, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$43,900

Average cost of attendance: \$13,991

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 13,954

10. CUNY City College has a return on investment of 80.2%.



Graduates and their families and friends gather at the The City College of New York for the commencement ceremony in Manhattan on May 31, 2019. Gabriela Bhaskar/Reuters

Location: New York, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$46,300

Average cost of attendance: \$14,430

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 12,503

9. Farmingdale State College has a return on investment of 80.3%.



SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson speaks at Farmingdale State College in Farmingdale on September 4, 2018. Jessica Rotkiewicz/Newsday RM via Getty Images

Location: Farmingdale, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$51,700

Average cost of attendance: \$16,091

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 9,394

8. Missouri University of Science and Technology has a return on investment of 80.9%.



Students from the Missouri University of Science and Technology carry the body of their solar car to the start line during the last day of the North American Solar Car Challenge in Medicine Hat, July 22, 2008. Todd Korol/Reuters

Location: Rolla, Missouri

Median earnings after 10 years: \$71,200

Average cost of attendance: \$22,012

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 6,785

6 (tie). Texas A & M International University has a return on investment of 82.3%



[Texas A&M International University website](#)

Location: Laredo, Texas

Median earnings after 10 years: \$45,800

Average cost of attendance: \$13,914

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 6,962

6 (tie). Brigham Young University-Provo has a return on investment of 82.3%



George Frey/Reuters

Location: Provo, Utah

Median earnings after 10 years: \$59,700

Average cost of attendance: \$18,136

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 31,441

5. CUNY Hunter College has a return on investment of 84.3%.



Roy Rochlin/Getty Images

Location: New York, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$47,200

Average cost of attendance: \$13,998

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 16,205

4. CUNY Queens College has a return on investment of 84.4%.





Aung San Suu Kyi (L), chairperson and general secretary of Myanmar's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party, receives a standing ovation from U.S. Representative Joseph Crowley and audience members before her speech at Queens College in New York September 22, 2012. Andrew Burton/Reuters

Location: Queens, New York

Median earnings after 10 years: \$48,200

Average cost of attendance: \$14,281

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 15,645

3. Utah Valley University has a return on investment of 84.7%.



Utah Valley University

Location: Orem, Utah

Median earnings after 10 years: \$43,800

Average cost of attendance: \$12,921

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 28,278

2. Brigham Young University-Idaho has a return on investment of 87.3%.



Rexburg, Idaho, where Brigham Young University-Idaho is located. Mark Miller Photos/Getty Images

Median earnings after 10 years: \$57,200

Location: Rexburg, Idaho

Average cost of attendance: \$14,046

Median earnings after 10 years: \$42,700

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 14,629

Average cost of attendance: \$12,223

Number of undergraduate students enrolled: 37,636

1. CUNY Bernard M. Baruch College has a return on investment of 101.8%.



Beyond My Ken/Wikimedia

Location: New York, New York