



TuitionCents

Webinar Series

Hidden Gems: Colleges That Deliver Big Returns on Investment

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THE COLLEGE
STRATEGY
EVALUATION



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INVESTIGATION



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CONFIDENTIAL
UNDERSTANDING



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PRESENTED BY



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HOUSEKEEPING

Hidden Gems: Colleges That Deliver Big Returns on Investment



One Hour Workshop/
Webinar



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Workshop



WEBINAR AGENDA



- 1 Understanding ROI Beyond the Financials
- 2 Cost vs. Value
- 3 Key Characteristics of High-Value Colleges
- 4 Examples of Potential Hidden Gems
- 5 Private vs. Public Scenario
- 6 Research Tools + General Search Tips



Understanding Return on Investment (ROI)

- College is one of the largest financial decisions a family will make. Will this investment pay off?
- ROI refers to the long-term value of a college degree relative to its cost

Key factors to consider:

- Graduation and retention rates
- Job placement rates
- Starting salaries and long-term earnings
- Net cost!

Redefining ROI: Financials Don't Tell the Whole Story



Earning outcomes are important, but college value encompasses many things. Looking beyond the numbers can lead you to some hidden gems.



The problem with traditional ROI metrics

Too much focus on immediate earnings

Failure to account for career satisfaction, fulfillment, and life well-being

Penalize schools who produce grad school students and capable leaders in low-paying fields

Liberal arts students catch up or even overtake other grads after 10 years



Cost vs. Value: *Balancing Traditional ROI With Engagement Factors*



- Well-known institutions often carry a high price tag
 - School selectivity does not always correlate with better career outcomes
 - Absolutely no correlation with college selectivity and future job satisfaction/well being
 - Value should be measured by financial return and student experience, not just brand recognition
 - What is college for? Value = Process + Outcome
 - Loren Pope: Think beyond the end result.
 - Dale and Kreuger Study: Students who got into a selective school, but attended a less selective school earned the same as their counterparts.
 - Instead of prestige, focus on school strengths and program outcomes/fit
-

Key Characteristics of High-Value Colleges

Strong academic
and career
advising

Focus on
undergraduate
teaching and
mentoring

High graduation
and grad school +
job placement
rates

Affordable
tuition/generous
aid packages

Engaged alumni
network

Smaller class sizes
and individualized
learning

High retention
rates

ENGAGEMENT
outside the
classroom + ability
to develop
average students

The "Big Six" College Experiences

These experiences are highly correlated with life well-being and work fulfillment

1. Take courses with professors that make learning exciting
2. Work with professors who care about students personally
3. Have a mentor who encourages personal goals
4. Work on a project across multiple semesters
5. Complete an internship that applies classroom learning
6. Be active in extracurricular activities

Why You Should Ignore “Rankings”



- Imagine trying to rate all the major sports teams on one scale. How do you convert all the differences to one standard of measurement? Lakers vs Red Sox vs Eagles vs Canucks?
- No measure for individual student growth
- No correlation with ranking and future job satisfaction
- Tip: Ask prospective college to see their NSSE or other internal tracking results.
 - NSSE: A survey of freshmen and seniors on whether they participate in certain activities linked to learning
 - CLA: Measured a student's growth over time. Less common now.

Colleges with Strong ROI Often Overlooked in Rankings: Academic Value Developers

Institutions excelling at transformative education and mentoring

*Schools known for developing “average” students
- High engagement, research opportunities, good graduate outcomes*

Carleton College*

Centre College

College of Wooster

Denison University*

Dickinson College

Grinnell College*

Hendrix College

Hope College

Kenyon College

Knox College

Lawrence University

Luther College

Macalester College*

McDaniel College

Mount Holyoke

Muhlenberg College

Oberlin College*

Occidental College

Reed College

Rhodes College

St. Olaf College

St. Lawrence University

Trinity University (TX)

Washington College

Whitman College

Colleges with Strong ROI Often Overlooked in Rankings: Career Launchers

Schools that specialize in integrating classroom learning with career planning and work experience

Bentley University

Kettering University

Bradley University

Olin College of Engineering

Clarkson University

Saint Louis University

DePauw University

Santa Clara University

Drexel University

University of Cincinnati

Elon University

University of Dayton

Endicott College

University of Richmond

Furman University

Washington & Lee University



Colleges with Strong ROI Often Overlooked in Rankings: Skill-Building Specialists

Institutions developing transferable skills through innovative curricula

Agnes Scott College (women-only)

Hillsdale College

Allegheny College

Juniata College

Austin College

Kalamazoo College

Bard College

Saint Mary's College of California

Beloit College

St. John's College (Annapolis & Santa Fe)

Clark University

Southwestern University

Goucher College

Colleges Often Overlooked in Rankings: Financial Values

Schools delivering a quality or even exceptional education with low average net costs. These schools tend to be unique (Berea is a work-college) or focused on a hard-skill degree (tech institutes, maritime academies).

- Berea College
 - College of New Jersey
 - College of the Ozarks
 - Cooper Union College
 - CUNY Baruch
 - CUNY Hunter
 - New College of Florida
 - Siena College
 - St. Mary's College of Maryland
- SUNY Binghamton
 - SUNY Geneseo
 - Truman State University
 - University of Minnesota-Morris
 - University of Texas at Dallas
 - University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Maritime Academies: *Maine, Massachusetts, California, SUNY*

Technical institutes: *Colorado School of Mines, Illinois Tech, Missouri Tech, Montana Tech, NJIT, Stevens Institute, New Mexico Tech*

California and New York publics have some great values

Well-Known but Good Value State Colleges

- Arizona State University
 - Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
 - Florida State University
 - James Madison University
 - Miami University (Ohio)
 - Michigan State University
 - NC State University
 - Purdue University
 - San Diego State
 - Texas Tech University
 - University of Alabama
- University of Florida
 - University of Kentucky
 - University of Maine
 - University of South Carolina
 - University of Utah
 - University of Washington
 - Virginia Tech

California, Florida, New York, Texas, Virginia and more all have tons of great value state schools – just research by program.

If pickings are slim in your home state, look at tuition reciprocity programs.

Other Potential Gems

Depending on the Student

- Barton College
- Carroll College
- Case Western Reserve
- Claremont Consortium Schools
- Coe College
- College of the Atlantic
- Creighton University
- Drake University
- Gettysburg College
- Evergreen State College
- Furman University
- Gonzaga University
- Grove City College
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Hamilton College
- Hampshire College
- Illinois Wesleyan
- Ithaca College
- Lake Forest College
- Le Moyne College

- Linfield University
- Loyola Chicago
- Lycoming College
- Manhattan College
- Marist College
- Marquette University
- Moravian College
- NESCAC Schools
- Pace University
- Patriot League Schools
- Rollins College
- Saint Joseph's University
- St. Michael's College
- Stonehill College
- Susquehanna University
- University of Redlands
- University of Scranton
- University of Tulsa
- Ursinus College
- Wagner College
- Whitworth University
- York College

Private vs Public Cost Scenario



Which of these is the better option for your student?



Gift Aid – need-based and merit



What does the student need? Is the cost-difference worth it?



General Search Tips

Ignore sticker price at first. Look for free money and focus on net cost.

Start search with good-fit state schools, then move to private and OOS that may give you money.

General rule: Only focus on name-brand private schools if you qualify for a lot of need.

Consider honors programs, dual-degree pathways, and co-op programs.

Look for schools that support holistic student growth.

Look for the following at each school:

- What is the average student debt at graduation?
- What percentage of graduates are employed or in graduate school within six months?
- Retention rate
- Student satisfaction surveys



Research Tools

- For **outcomes and ROI:**
 - College Scorecard
 - FREOPP ROI rankings
 - NCES College Navigator
- For **net price:**
 - College Money Report
 - Net Price Calculators
- For **merit-generous schools:**
 - Common Data Set
 - Jeff Selingo's Buyers and Sellers



Schedule a Free Consultation Now.

FINAL THOUGHTS

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f Private FB Group: Little-Known Secrets of Paying for College



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College Aid Pro™ Reports for Sample Student

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