

## Colleges That Give Merit Aid to the Most Students

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If you're trying to maximize your chances of receiving merit aid, you'll need to look for colleges that are the most generous with their financial aid money which includes scholarships.

You can use [College Navigator](https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/) <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> to look up data on individual schools. The Common Data Set is available if a college decides to publish their specific information:

[College Affordability and Transparency Center](http://collegecost.ed.gov/)

**Browse lists of institutions with the highest and lowest tuition & fees and net price.**

<http://collegecost.ed.gov/>

**Tips from Road2College.com:** You can Google a college name + the term “common data set” to find data from a specific college, if they have chosen to release their information online, which many schools have. Unfortunately, most families just aren't aware that this type of data exists, don't understand what the information means, and may not feel comfortable gathering the data from multiple sources. College search websites use information from different sources and what the source is may not always be clear.

But the bigger problem is that search websites don't allow users to search and filter on whatever data a user would like. Instead, searching is usually limited to data elements less closely related to financial information – like size of college, location, major, admissions selectivity, sports, etc. Search results also make it difficult to easily compare many colleges at once, like being able to glance down a spreadsheet or sort within multiple criteria. The data described above is just a sampling of what you can research and analyze to help develop a list of colleges. Schools should be not just academic and social fits, but also financial fits as well.

## From U.S. News and World Report

[www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/colleges-that-give-merit-aid-to-the-most-students](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/the-short-list-college/articles/colleges-that-give-merit-aid-to-the-most-students)

**At least 41 percent of full-time students at each of these schools received merit scholarships in fall 2017.**

*“The U.S. News Short List, separate from our overall rankings, is a regular series that magnifies individual data points in hopes of providing students and parents a way to find which undergraduate or graduate programs excel or have room to grow in specific areas.*”

Many [colleges and universities](#) offer discounts and scholarships to students who don't have a demonstrated financial need in the form of merit aid. These awards are often granted to students based on a specific talent or academic ability. For instance, National Merit Finalists or National Hispanic Scholars may receive special scholarship opportunities at participating institutions. At each of the 12 ranked colleges where merit scholarships were awarded to the most students, at least 41 percent of full-time students in fall 2017 received such awards, according to data submitted to U.S. News by schools in an annual survey. These colleges gave merit aid at a much higher rate than the average among the 1,107 ranked schools that reported these data: 14 percent.

The school that awarded the most merit aid – Trinity University in Texas – gave out awards to nearly half of its 2,359 undergraduates in fall 2017. Among the 12 ranked institutions that dished out the most in merit aid, the majority are [National Liberal Arts Colleges](#) – schools that emphasize undergraduate education and award at least half of their degrees in the liberal arts fields of study.

Some higher education experts say merit aid may reduce financial resources for needy students. Several highly ranked [National Universities](#) – schools that offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral programs – do not award merit scholarships. A few examples include [Brown University](#) in Rhode Island, [Yale University](#) in Connecticut and [Stanford University](#) in California; these schools also offer [no-loan financial aid policies](#) for students who qualify for need.

There are also several schools that reserve merit aid awards for exceptional circumstances. Among the ranked schools that submitted these data, slightly more than 200 colleges and universities awarded 5 percent or less in merit aid to full-time students.

Below is a list of the 12 ranked colleges where the highest percentage of full-time students in fall 2017 received merit aid. Unranked schools, which did not meet certain criteria required by U.S. News to be numerically ranked, were not considered for this report.”

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<b>SCHOOL (STATE)</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS AWARDED MERIT AID IN 2017-2018</b>	<b>U.S. NEWS RANK AND CATEGORY</b>
<b>Trinity University (TX)</b>	49%	2, Regional Universities (West)
<b>Furman University (SC)</b>	48%	51 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>Samford University (AL)</b>	47%	4, Regional Universities (South)
<b>University of Puget Sound (WA)</b>	47%	72 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges

<b>Cooper Union (NY)</b>	46%	1, Regional Colleges (North)
<b>Hillsdale College (MI)</b>	44%	76 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>Rhodes College (TN)</b>	44%	51 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>College of Wooster (OH)</b>	42%	67, National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>Gonzaga University (WA)</b>	42%	4, Regional Universities (West)
<b>Birmingham-Southern College (AL)</b>	41%	131 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>Denison University (OH)</b>	41%	43 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges
<b>Oberlin College (OH)</b>	41%	30 (tie), National Liberal Arts Colleges

U.S. News surveyed more than 1,800 colleges and universities for our 2018 survey of undergraduate programs. Schools self-reported myriad data regarding their academic programs and the makeup of their student body, among other areas, making U.S. News' data the most accurate and detailed collection of college facts and figures of its kind. While U.S. News uses much of this survey data to rank schools for our annual Best Colleges rankings, the data can also be useful when examined on a smaller scale. U.S. News will now produce lists of data, separate from the overall rankings, meant to provide students and parents a means to find which schools excel, or have room to grow, in specific areas that are important to them. While the data come from the schools themselves, these lists are not related to, and have no influence over, U.S. News' rankings of [Best Colleges](#), [Best Graduate Schools](#) or [Best Online Programs](#). The financial aid data above are correct as of Nov. 20, 2018.

**\*\*GRANT CC NOTE:** The [Western Undergraduate Exchange](#) is a tuition reduction program administered by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). It is not a need-based tuition program, which means that many students can take advantage of a more affordable out-of-state education. WUE (pronounced woo-wee!) allows out-of-state students residing in Oregon to receive a significant tuition discount; they often pay no more than 150% of the in-state tuition rate, compared to a regular out-of-state tuition rate that can be 300% of the in-state rate. For example, California residents pay around \$5,742 for tuition at California State University. WUE students pay \$8,613 for tuition, while other out-of-state students pay \$17,622 for tuition. Each participating school is allowed to administer the WUE tuition reduction according to their own rules. Please ask Ms. Kokes for more information regarding the WUE programs and colleges.\*\*

## 10 Public Schools That Award Merit Aid to Most Out-of-State Students

U.S. News & World Report | [@usnews](#) December 10, 2018,

Many prospective college students apply to a public school with the hope that it will cost less than a private one. But applicants who are interested in public schools outside of their home state should understand that they will likely be charged higher tuition rates than in-state students.

Out-of-state students are also generally less likely to receive [merit scholarships](#), meaning non-need-based aid, than in-state candidates; so in addition to facing a higher sticker price, they also are less likely to receive a big break on [tuition costs](#).

The reason why [public schools](#) show a preference for in-state students is that these institutions are funded, in part, by tax dollars and subsidies from the state, so the primary mission of these schools is to educate state residents.

There were 154 ranked public schools in the [National Universities](#) category of the [Best Colleges](#) rankings that reported data on merit aid to U.S. News in an annual survey. National Universities are schools that offer a variety of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral programs. In fall 2017, the average proportion of out-of-state undergraduates who received merit aid at these schools was 31.6 percent. However, that average amounted to 79 percent among the 10 public schools that offered non-need-based scholarships to the highest percentage of out-of-state students. These 10 schools also tended to dole out more scholarship dollars to out-of-state students, with an average merit aid award of \$13,265. That's over \$2,800 more than the average amount of merit aid given to out-of-state students at all other ranked public schools: around \$10,450.

Below is a list of the 10 public National Universities that offered out-of-state applicants the best odds of winning merit scholarships. Unranked schools, which did not meet certain criteria required by U.S. News to be numerically ranked, were not considered for this report.

School (state)	U.S. News rank	Percentage of out-of-state students receiving merit aid	Average merit aid award to out-of-state students
<a href="#">Bowling Green State University (OH)</a>	215 (tie)	91%	\$10,619
<a href="#">University of Hawaii–Manoa</a>	157 (tie)	87%	\$18,856
<a href="#">Utah State University</a>	205 (tie)	84%	\$14,554
<a href="#">Mississippi State University</a>	177 (tie)	83%	\$14,510
<a href="#">University of Toledo (OH)</a>	230-301	79%	\$11,660
<a href="#">Ball State University (IN)</a>	171 (tie)	75%	\$13,652

<a href="#">Colorado School of Mines</a>	80 (tie)	74%	\$13,670
<a href="#">Michigan Technological University</a>	136 (tie)	73%	\$12,339
<a href="#">Kent State University (OH)</a>	191 (tie)	72%	\$10,049
<a href="#">Louisiana Tech University</a>	230-3 01	72%	\$12,742

Other things to consider when doing your research:

**Look for how many freshmen, without financial need, receive merit aid?** This means there are students that do not have financial need (as determined by the college only), who are receiving financial aid in the form of merit scholarships. This data comes from the Common Data Set, which reports what percent of freshmen, which don't demonstrate financial need (meaning their expected family contribution is equal to or higher than tuition) still receive merit aid from the school. Most likely, these students were in the top 25% (or higher) academically of the admitted class. That doesn't mean your student has to have straight As and a 34 ACT. It just means relative to the school's admission quartiles, your student is in the top quartile.

**What is the average amount of merit aid granted?** This data again comes from the Common Data Set, where schools report the average dollar amount of merit aid that is offered to freshmen. This ranges anywhere from \$1000 to full tuition, but a fair number of schools offer between \$10,000 – \$20,000.

**How many non-freshman undergraduates receive merit aid and how much?** Just because a college offers merit aid to freshmen, doesn't mean they will continue to offer it to sophomores thru seniors. This is important to research since you don't want to choose a school based on the freshman year offer, only to find out merit aid isn't offered in subsequent years or it's significantly decreased. **WILL IT MATCH INFLATION-BASED TUITION INCREASES OVER THE FOUR YEARS IN ATTENDANCE?**

Of course, a lot of the data above, represents averages, meaning you may end up with substantially more or less than the given numbers.

Ultimately you won't know how much merit aid you will get until you apply. However, you can increase your chances for receiving merit money if you take the time to "*follow the money*" BEFORE you apply to any school. All families need to discuss financial aid and affordability before those acceptance letters arrive. Good luck!

