

# Notes and Sources

## THE ANNUAL SURVEY OF COLLEGES

Prices for the public two-year, public four-year, and private nonprofit four-year sectors in this report are based on data reported to College Board in its Annual Survey of Colleges. Data for 2019-20 are from an online questionnaire distributed in October 2018, with data collected and reviewed through August 2019. Tuition and fee figures are based on charges to full-time first-year undergraduate students over the course of a nine-month academic year of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours.

## ENROLLMENT-WEIGHTED AND UNWEIGHTED DATA

This report provides enrollment-weighted average prices. Charges of institutions with larger full-time enrollments are weighted more heavily than those of institutions with smaller enrollments.

Enrollment-weighted and unweighted averages describe different phenomena. The weighted averages may be more helpful to students and families in anticipating future education expenses. Some researchers, policy analysts, and academic administrators find unweighted averages useful in studying longitudinal trends and evaluating a particular institution's practices against a larger set. Thus, we compute both weighted and unweighted averages. Tables reporting unweighted tuition data can be found online at [research.collegeboard.org/trends](http://research.collegeboard.org/trends).

Weighted averages for each price are based on relevant populations:

- In-state tuition and fees are weighted by full-time undergraduate enrollment.
- Out-of-state tuition and fees are calculated by adding the nonresident premium, weighted by full-time out-of-state enrollment, to average in-state tuition and fees. Data are not available on out-of-state students receiving a waiver of the full tuition premium or a portion of it.
- Resident room and board charges are weighted by the number of undergraduates living in campus housing at each institution.
- Estimated other student budget components are weighted as follows:
  - ◆ Books and supplies are weighted by full-time undergraduate enrollment.
  - ◆ Resident transportation and other expenses are weighted by the number of undergraduates living in campus housing.
  - ◆ Commuter room and board, transportation, and other expenses are weighted by the number of commuting undergraduates at each institution.

## REVISIONS OF BASE-YEAR VALUES

The prices for 2018-19 used in this analysis differ somewhat from the 2018-19 averages reported last year because of revised price data and updated enrollment weighting. Prices for all years through 2017-18 are weighted by same-year full-time enrollments. 2018-19 and 2019-20 prices are weighted by fall 2017 full-time undergraduate enrollments.

## LONGITUDINAL DATA

In online Table 2, tuition averages for years prior to 1987-88 are from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The two data sets, IPEDS and College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges, track very closely, but IPEDS averages are weighted by full-time equivalent enrollments, while the Annual Survey of Colleges prices are weighted by full-time enrollments. In addition, IPEDS tuition and fee data may be based on 24 semester hours while the Annual Survey of Colleges data are based on 30 semester hours. Annual historical data are available online at [research.collegeboard.org/trends](http://research.collegeboard.org/trends).

## NET PRICE CALCULATIONS

The calculations of average net price for full-time undergraduates in Figures 8, 9, and 10, as well as the calculations in online Table 7, are a best approximation and are based on the aggregate amounts of each type of aid reported in *Trends in Student Aid 2019* and on the allocation of each type of aid across institution types and between part-time and full-time students reported in 1993, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) data and IPEDS Student Financial Aid data. Because financial aid data for 2019-20 are not yet available, amounts for that year are estimated based on past years. Total charges for public two-year students include an estimate of housing and food expenses for students not living with their parents, based on commuter room and board expenses reported by institutions when available and derived from public four-year room and board charges for earlier years in the analysis. The net price estimates reported here are not exactly comparable to those that appeared in 2018 because some figures have been updated.

## INFLATION ADJUSTMENT

We use the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) to adjust for inflation. We use the CPI-U in July of the year in which the academic year begins. See [www.bls.gov/data/](http://www.bls.gov/data/) for changes in the CPI-U over time. Online Table A1 provides CPI data used to adjust for inflation.

## CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION 2015: BASIC CLASSIFICATION

"Doctoral universities" include institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the update year (excluding doctoral degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practice, such as the J.D., M.D., Pharm.D., DPT, etc.); "master's colleges and universities" include institutions that award at least 50 master's and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees; "bachelor's colleges" include institutions where bachelor's degrees represent at least 50% of all degrees but where fewer than 50 master's or 20 doctoral degrees were awarded during the update year. All of the categories above exclude "special focus institutions" and "tribal colleges."

# Trends in College Pricing 2019

*Trends in College Pricing* was authored by Jennifer Ma, senior policy research scientist at College Board; Sandy Baum, nonresident senior fellow at the Urban Institute; Matea Pender, policy research scientist at College Board; and CJ Libassi, senior policy research analyst at College Board.

## Contact Information for the Authors

trends@collegeboard.org  
sandybaum73@gmail.com

*Trends in College Pricing* and its companion report, *Trends in Student Aid*, are supplemented by a website that makes detailed data available for reference and downloading. The PDF versions of these reports, along with PowerPoint slides of all the graphs, are available on the web: [research.collegeboard.org/trends](http://research.collegeboard.org/trends).

Hard copies may be requested by contacting trends@collegeboard.org.

Tables, graphs, and data in this report or excerpts thereof may be reproduced or cited, for noncommercial purposes only, provided that the following attribution is included:

Source: Ma, Jennifer, Sandy Baum, Matea Pender, and CJ Libassi (2019),

*Trends in College Pricing* 2019, New York: College Board.

© 2019 College Board.

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anthony LaRosa and Edward Lu provided critical support for this publication. We also benefited from comments from Dean Bentley, Jessica Howell, Michael Hurwitz, and Melanie Storey. Sandy Alexander provided expert graphic design work. The publication would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of many individuals at College Board, including Connie Betterton, Auditi Chakravarty, Jennifer Hwang, Jennifer Ip, Karen Lanning, George Lalis, Robert Majoros, Kevin Morris, Jose Rios, Ashley Robinson-Spann, Jennifer San Miguel, Michael Slevin, Kayla Tompkins, and the Annual Survey of Colleges team.

We thank Jason Delisle for updated analysis on education tax benefits and all of those who contributed to the data collection for this publication, including institutional research department staff and campus administrators who provided us with invaluable data through the Annual Survey of Colleges.

## DEFINING TERMS

“Costs” refer to the expenditures associated with delivering instruction, including physical plant and salaries.

“Prices” are the expenses that students and parents face.

“Published price” is the price institutions charge for tuition and fees as well as room and board, in the case of students residing on campus. A full student expense budget also includes books, supplies, transportation, and other basic living costs.

“Net price” is what the student and/or family must cover after grant aid and when possible, savings from tax credits and deductions, are subtracted.

“General subsidies” make it possible for institutions to charge less than the actual costs of instruction. State, federal, and local appropriations, as well as private philanthropy, reduce the prices faced by all students—whether or not they receive financial aid.