



PERSONAL FINANCE

# Is college really worth it? Here are the schools with the best return on investment

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## KEY POINTS

- With college costs climbing, more students and their families are looking for schools that offer the best value.
- However, determining the return on your investment is somewhat subjective, one expert says

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Even before the pandemic, families were starting to question the value of a college degree.

Now, high schoolers are putting more emphasis on schools that will offer the best returns.

“What is going to be the return on investment?” said Robert Franek, editor in chief of The Princeton Review. “It is the question that students and their parents are asking more now, certainly over the last year and a half.”

To that end, The Princeton Review analyzed more than 650 colleges and universities to determine the schools with the most value, considering cost,

including tuition and room and board, as well as financial aid, academic offerings, career placement services, graduation rates, alumni salary and overall student debt.

The University of California, Berkeley earned the top spot among public colleges, while Princeton University ranked No. 1 for private colleges.

Both schools are standouts for their academics, career services and financial aid, the report found.

At Berkeley, the average scholarship or grant awarded to undergrads with need last year was \$23,700, lowering the cost to just \$7,700 from the sticker price of \$31,400. Berkeley graduates with a B.A. also go on to earn \$72,600, on average, early in their careers.

At Princeton, the average grant was \$53,500 last year, bringing the cost of attendance down to \$12,300 from its \$65,800 sticker price. Graduates with a B.A. earn \$77,300 early on.

However, “it’s not 100% dollars and cents,” said Eric Greenberg, president of Greenberg Educational Group, a New York-based consulting firm.

“With tuition going up a lot faster than inflation, parents are very likely to partially think about the money a student may earn but also how happy the student will be.”

“There are certain things that can’t be measured,” Greenberg added.

Emotional wellbeing should also factor into considerations about the return on the investment along with the cost, academic offerings, job placement and other preprofessional services, he said.

“There’s no doubt that a person’s happiness will have a huge impact on their personal and professional life.”