

2014's Best & Worst College Cities & Towns in America



by [Richie Bernardo](#)



High school seniors face a tall laundry list when prepping for college: From taking standardized tests and gathering letters of recommendation to submitting college applications and applying for financial aid, the final months before the big decision can be hectic. And to help students winnow their school choices, a visit to their prospective campuses can offer a taste of the college experience.

When touring universities and colleges, it's important to examine not only an institution's intellectual environment but also the city or town the student will call home for several years. Academic success depends on more than just the quality of a program. Also important is an area that is safe, affordable and conducive to personal development through a diversity of cultural and professional experiences.

For in-state students planning to live on campus at a public four-year institution, [tuition and fees](#) alone will eat about 39 percent of their total budget, according to the College Board. Factor in room and board, books and supplies, transportation and other expenses. That leaves students — or their parents — with a very thin wallet at the end of the semester, which is all the more reason to make affordability a top priority.

With college application deadlines approaching and campus visits in the offing, WalletHub ranked 280 U.S. cities and towns to find the ones that promise the best or worst combination of academic, social and economic atmospheres. We did so by analyzing 23 key metrics such as the quality of higher education, crime rates and the cost of living. Our findings, as well as expert commentary and a detailed methodology, can be found below.

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Overall Rankings

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Overall Rank	City	“Wallet Wellness” Rank	“Youth-Oriented Environment” Rank	“Opportunities” Rank
1	Oxford, OH	23	16	1
2	State College, PA	40	2	99
3	Chapel Hill, NC	81	13	10
4	Corvallis, OR	50	23	4
5	College Station, TX	30	42	10
6	Laramie, WY	13	46	22
7	San Luis Obispo, CA	167	11	12
8	Stillwater, OK	15	44	50
9	Bozeman, MT	66	8	71
10	East Lansing, MI	31	15	100