

COLLEGE BOUND

Helpful tips for getting into college and the smartest ways to pay for it.

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What I Did Over My Summer Vacation

By Paul Partridge

Editor's Note from Ian: Over the summer, Paul Partridge from our office visited colleges from South Carolina to Indiana to Washington, D.C. I asked him to share his observations.

When I attended college 30 years ago, my freshman year at Notre Dame cost my parents \$5,500. That included room, board and tuition. Today, top colleges cost 10 times as much. As I went on college visits with my daughter, one of the things I wanted to find out was: Just what does that extra 50 grand a year get you? Here's what I found out.

1) A really neat gym membership – Colleges used to brag about their library facilities. Today, no college tour is complete without a visit to the school's state-of-the-art recreational facility. A cross between adventure park and country club, these facilities come complete with Olympic size pool...track...monster weight room...basketball, racquetball, squash, tennis, and volleyball courts galore... aerobics facilities...saunas... Jacuzzis...recumbent bikes – even a lazy

river ran through one Midwest facility. And you can't have a rec center today without a rock-climbing wall. When did



Impressive Olympic-caliber recreational facilities are de rigueur on college campuses these days.

America's youth develop this obsession with climbing walls? Are we preparing for war with Switzerland? Or do we want to work for Carnival Cruise Lines?

2) Incredible edibles – After a dozen states and 5,000 miles in our minivan, I can't name one visited college that didn't boast about its food choices or claim to serve "award-winning" fare. 30 years ago, the only certificates handed out to college dining halls were by the Board of Health. Today, you find themed dining, sushi bars, and designer sundae stations – not to mention popular take-out eateries such as Starbucks, Subway, KFC, Burger King, Red Mango and more. Undergrads at High Point University are treated to an elegant 4-star steak house as part of their weekly meal plan. In addition to the 5-course meal, diners get pointers on proper social and dining etiquette. Reservations required.

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Spotlight On Lehigh University



Location: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Undergraduates: 4700

Male/Female: 57/43

Entrance Difficulty: Most difficult

SAT Math Avg: 678

SAT Reading Avg: 626

ACT Composite: 29

Cost of Attendance: \$40,660 (both in state and out of state)

Popular Programs: Architecture, Applied Science, Bioengineering, Biology, Finance, Behavioral Neuroscience and Economics

Fun Facts:

- Established in 1865 by Asa Packer. Lehigh University is ranked 12th in the nation by The Wall Street Journal for Return on Investment (ROI)
- Lehigh is a private, four-year school in an urban setting with half the campus preserved as open space
- Faculty have included winners of the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, Fulbright Fellowship, and membership in the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences
- Percent of students who live in college-owned housing is 69 percent
- Student faculty ratio is 10:1
- Colors: white and brown
- Mascot: the Mountain Hawk
- Freshmen and sophomores are required to live on campus
- The average freshmen retention rate is 93.5 percent

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3) More majors – Today’s modern universities offer hundreds of possible bachelor degrees, from bioengineering to biological physics to supply chain management. And no self-respecting student is content with just a single major. Every student guide we met was pursuing a double major, and some tacked on minors as well. It’s like standing in line at Starbucks, only instead of, “I’ll have a half-cafe, half-decaf mocha latte cappuccino with skim milk and Splenda,” it’s: “I’m a double major: computer engineering and management information systems with a minor in Tibetan women’s studies.” Despite the

campus as a quiet oasis where one can sit quietly and contemplate life’s big questions? Forget it. You cannot visit any college campus today without being treated to the dulcet tones of jackhammers, nail guns and welding torches. It’s said that half the construction cranes in America are on college campuses. Likely an understatement. Colleges continue to raise tuition claiming poverty. Yet somehow they find millions upon millions to build student centers with theaters and bowling alleys, and recreation facilities with rock-climbing walls. The students on tour gasp “Ooh” and “Ahh.” My thought: Can we



Paul and his daughter Grace taking a break in the back of the minivan.

mind-boggling array of majors available, one statistic remains telling: 2 out of 3 students will change their major at least once. Interestingly, some colleges have taken to charging more for some majors than others (coincidentally, the most popular ones). As to the major formerly known as “undecided?” It’s now referred to as “university studies.” I suppose it’s easier to get Mom and Dad to fork over a check for “university studies” as opposed to “undecided.”

4) Construction Cranes – The college

opt out of some of the fancy stuff and get a reduced tuition?

5) Wireless – While colleges spend millions on new construction, the hardhats never seem to make it to the dormitories. Occasionally you run into a university with swankier accommodations (for a price). But for the most part, college dorm rooms look the same today as they did in the 1980’s. Same bunk beds, same desks, same closets. Anthropologists have carbon dated dorm mattresses to the 17th

century, when college was invented by Al Gore. The only noticeable upgrade is the addition of cable TV and wireless Internet access.

6) Washing machines that have a higher SAT score than you do – Remember keeping a secret stash of quarters so you could do laundry? Those days are history. College students who run out of clean underwear today can go online and dialog with the washing machines in the dorm basement. Before trudging downstairs you can see which machines are free. You pay by swiping your student ID, and then get a text when your wash is clean.

7) Wanderlust – These days, the first thing colleges do when you pay them \$55,000 is to try talking you into studying somewhere else. Some schools brag of talking 40% of their students into studying somewhere else. Programs range from 6 weeks to a full year. You no longer go abroad to become proficient in a language. Now you can concentrate on a single academic discipline such as business or engineering, or you can focus on service.

8) Honors programs – There's been a growing proliferation of Honors Programs in recent years, as universities compete for the best and brightest. Honors programs entice students with preferred housing, smaller classes, first dibs on popular classes, and occasionally, tuition discounts. Miami University in Ohio is unique in that its honors students are selected not solely based on academic numbers. They have found their on-campus leaders are not necessarily those with perfect SAT scores, so they invite B and C students who exhibit other success traits.

9) Merit Aid – There are a growing number of schools willing to promise merit aid up front, regardless of your income. In other words, these awards

are guaranteed, whether your income is \$30,000 a year or \$3 million. The amount you get is based on your student's academic record – usually a combination of GPA and SAT/ACT scores. For example, at the University of Dayton, a good GPA and a half decent SAT score is worth \$15,000+ a year. They also will give you \$1,000 a year for your textbooks.



Today colleges encourage studying abroad. At some schools, 40%+ of students will spend time overseas.

Importantly, *merit aid* is separate and apart from *need aid* (from your FAFSA application). So if you qualify for need aid, it comes on top of and in addition to the merit aid.

10) Twisted College Humor – The best part about college is still – and always – the students. You can't beat college spirit, cleverness, camaraderie and humor. At one midwestern university, all the off-campus houses have names. The name of the house at the corner of College and Sycamore Drive: Sycacollege. At that same school, the name of the sky diving club is The College Drop-outs.

News You Can Use

Unusual College Mascots

The 2012-2013 college year is just beginning, and that means college sports will again consume the attention of fans, parents and students coast to coast. You can't think about college sports without also thinking a little about school mascots.

Mascots are all part of the college tradition, and there are mascots that are so well known to the general public that you don't even have to mention the school that they're attached to: the Fighting Irish; the Hokies; the Buckeyes; the Gators, etc.

There are also school mascots that aren't as well known, or are well known simply because they're a tad odd or outrageous. Just consider the bizarre, funny or whimsical mascots for these schools.

University of California, Santa Cruz – The Banana Slugs

University of Arkansas at Monticello – The Boll Weevils

North Carolina School of the Arts – The Fighting Pickles (this mascot was chosen in 1972 after a school contest picked the winner)

Washburn – The Ichabods (Not Ichabod Crane, but named for the 19th century deacon who endowed the school.)

Sweet Briar – The Vixens (named for the fox, not the femme fatale)

Delta State University - The Fighting Okra



Ask the Professor

Q: Is early decision a good idea if your child knows exactly where he wants to go to school?

A: The Pros: Applying for early decision might give you a slight acceptance advantage. If that's your only concern it might be a viable option. Cons: it might hurt you on the money side. Think about it: When you buy a new car do you walk into the dealership and say, "I'll take it, whatever the sticker price says"?

That's exactly what you do when you choose early decision. You're contractually obligated to accept whatever financial aid package they give you (or not give you). You have no negotiating power, and zero options.

Did You Know?



Data from Princeton Review of High School Students

- ✓ 86% said financial aid would be "extremely" or "very" necessary to pay for college. 61% saying "extremely."
- ✓ Parents want their children to pick a college closer to home. Students want to leave their home state. 51% of parents said they would like to see their child attend a college less than 250 miles from home. Meanwhile, 67% of students said they would like to attend a college more than 250 miles from home.
- ✓ More parents than ever - 75% -- reported that the state of the economy is affecting decisions about applying to college.

College Match Game



Which college did Katie Couric attend?

- A) Georgetown
- B) NYU
- C) University of Maryland
- D) University of Virginia

Answer: Katie Couric graduated from the University of Virginia in 1979 with a BA in English.



Upcoming FREE workshops

September 13 -- 7:30 pm at the Parsippany-Troy Hills Public Library

September 19 -- 7:30 pm at the Morristown Public Library

October 3 -- 7:00 pm at the Millburn Public Library

Reserve your seat online at www.ccpsnj.com or by calling (973) 467-0101. There is no cost to attend.



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