

It's fairly well known that college students tend to have more success when they enjoy a comfortable learning environment. The scope of that discussion tends to focus on the culture and characteristics of the school itself, which are undoubtedly important, but there's another big factor in college life that often gets overlooked.

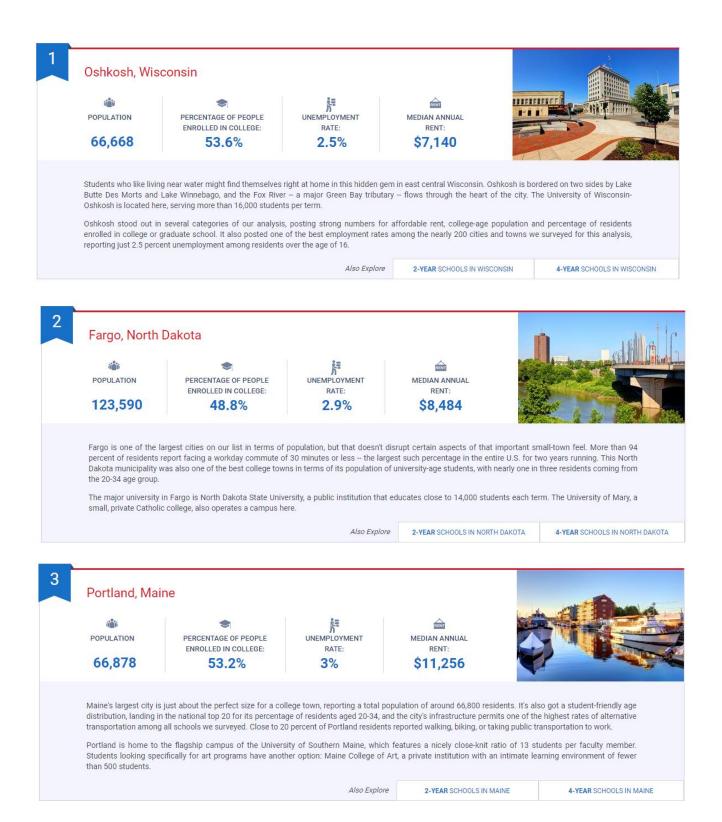
Whether it's a big urban center, a small rural town or somewhere in between, the city where your school is located can have a lot of influence on your overall experience as a student. Imagine this: you love the feel of a particular college campus, but its home city has a population that skews toward retirement age or a high rate of violent crime. Those features would factor into your decision to apply, right?

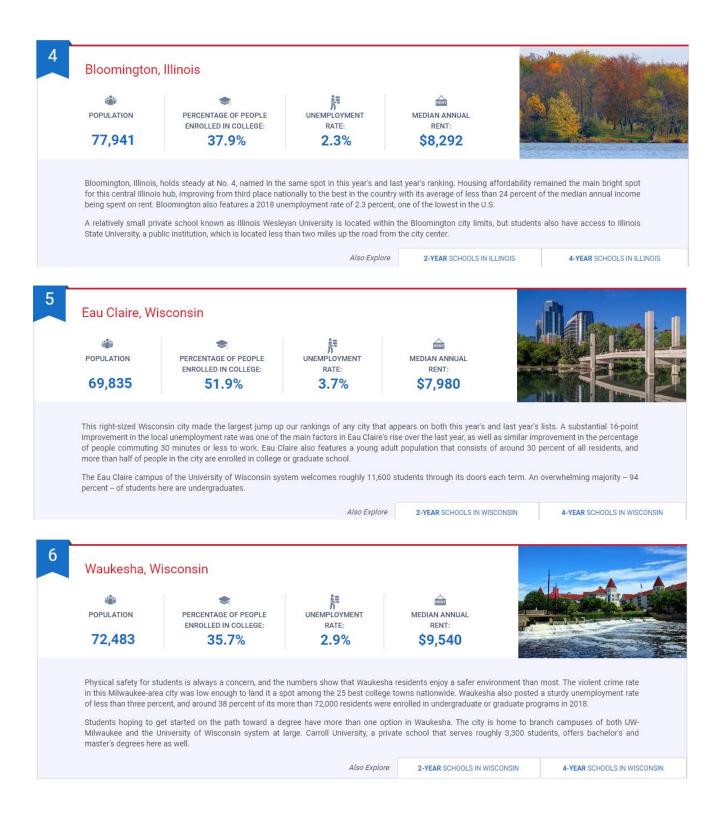
Cities that topped our list of the best college towns in the U.S. all showed strong positive indicators in categories that matter to students. Some had high percentages of college- or university-enrolled residents, providing a large peer group for new students, while others boasted affordable average housing costs or low overall unemployment rates.

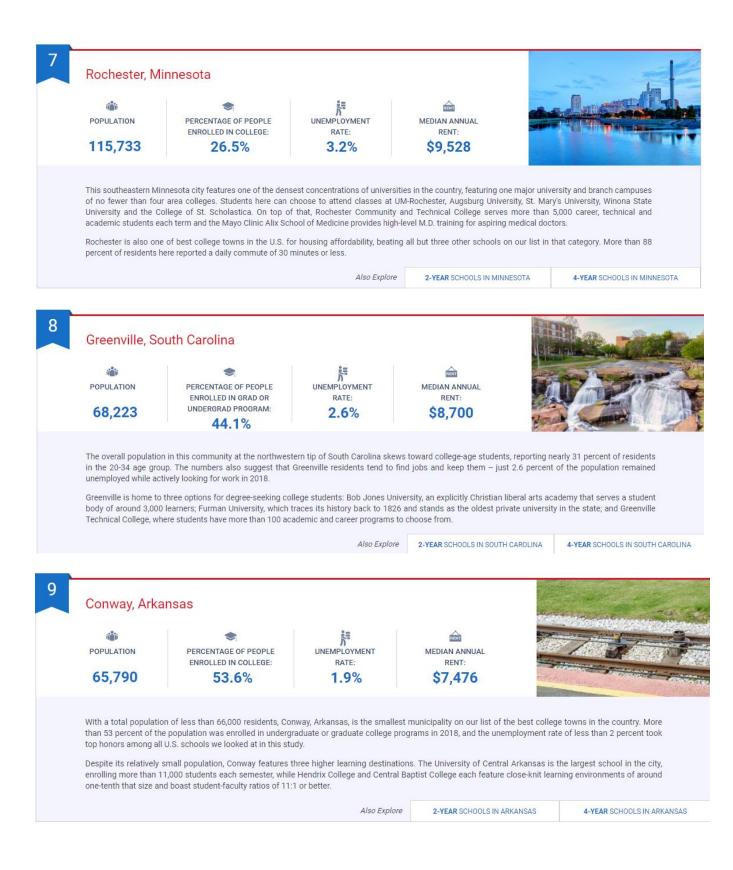
You'll notice that some regions of the U.S. have denser concentrations of top college towns than others. Eastern Wisconsin, for example, is home to four of our top 20 cities, thanks in no small part to the generally affordable rent available in that area. We're also featuring a handful of cities that also made last year's list of the best college towns in the country -- we'll point out where they've held steady and where they've improved.

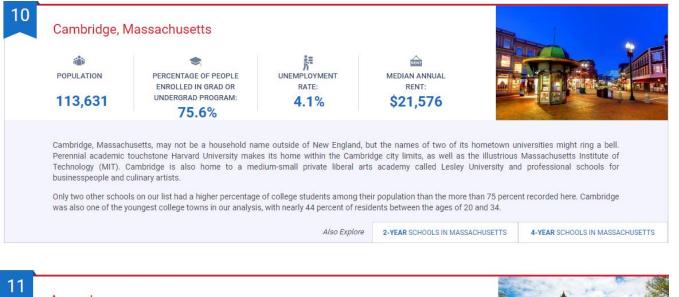
You can learn more about how we calculated the scores for each city by checking out our methodology below. Whether you're looking for the right place to go to school or you're just curious about where college students may flock to next, here's our list of best college towns in the U.S.

The 20 Best College Towns in the U.S.











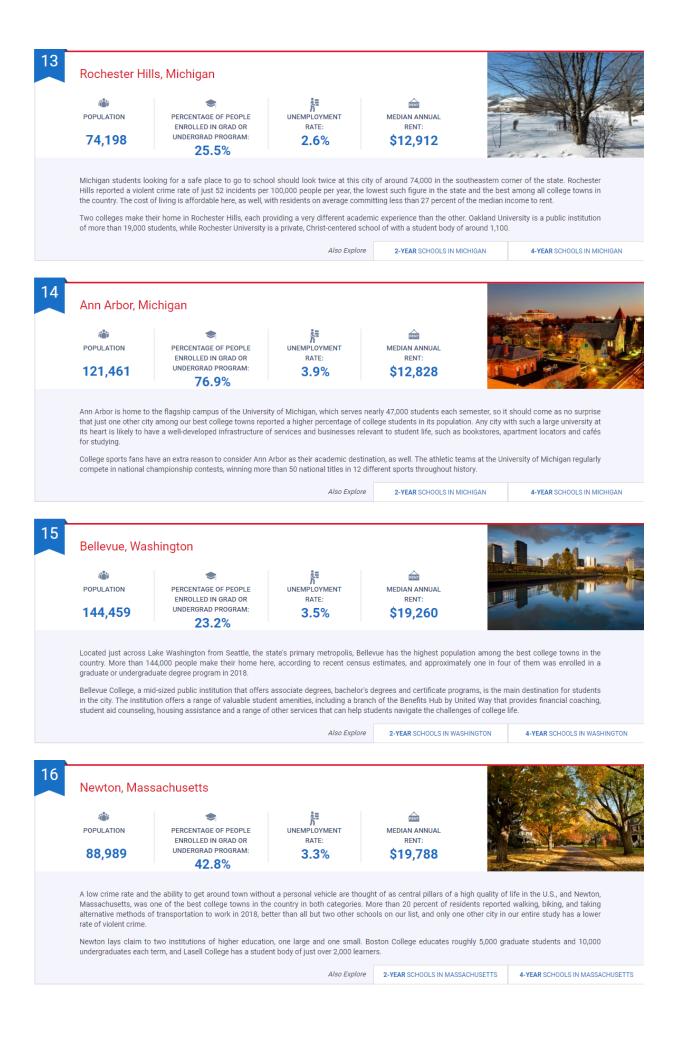
Iowa State University, the institution that serves as the heart of the higher education scene in Ames, is the largest college by enrollment in the Hawkeye State. Nearly 35,000 students attend classes at Iowa State each semester.

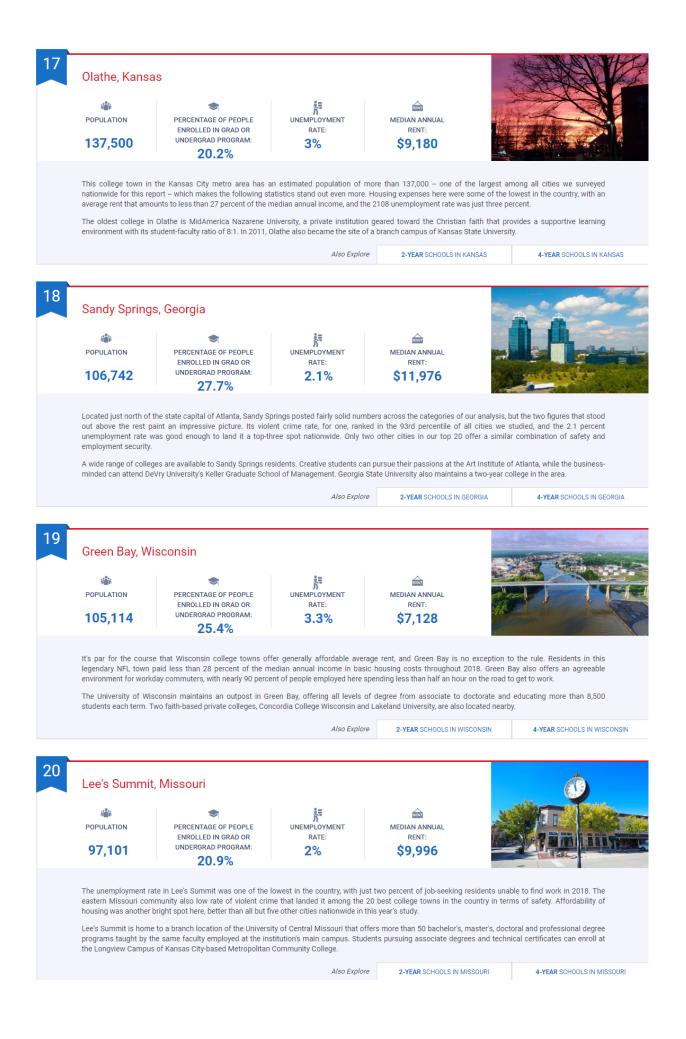


the cost of rent came in at a respectable 29 percent of the median annual income. The lone institution of higher education in Appleton is Lawrence University, an intimate liberal arts university with a student body of fewer than 1,500 learners

and a top-tier ratio of 8 students for each faculty member. Those who prefer a public university environment can find the Fox Cities branch campus of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh just across the river in Menasha.

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For a deeper look into other cities with schools to further your college goals, explore <u>schools by</u> <u>state</u> or <u>schools by program</u>.

Methodology

We ranked U.S. cities that have populations under 150,000 and are home to at least one 4-year college or university, based on 2016 data from the U.S. Census and the National Center for Education Statistics. Colleges whose courses were offered exclusively online were excluded from the list. Each of the resulting 195 cities was ranked on a 10-point scale on the following seven factors:

- 1. Percentage of the population aged 20-34, American Community Survey, 2017
- 2. Percentage of Population Enrolled in College or Graduate School, American Community Survey, 2017
- 3. **Median annual rent as a percentage of median annual earnings**, American Community Survey, 2017
- 4. City unemployment rate, American Community Survey, 2017
- 5. Percentage of commuters whose average travel time is less than 30 minutes, American Community Survey, 2017
- 6. **Percent of workers who bike, walk, or use public transportation**, American Community Survey, 2017
- 7. Crime Rate, Uniform Crime Reporting, 2017





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