

College For Less

BY AISHA I. JEFFERSON

With the cost of a year of higher ed now surpassing many workers' average annual salary, students face the challenge of finding schools that are affordable.

And the tuition and fee increases are likely to continue. "Colleges are struggling to accomplish their mission in the face of cutbacks after cutbacks. There does not seem to be any change that's going to help them out any time soon," says Jane Bennett Clark, associate editor at Kiplinger, which publishes annual reports on affordable public and private colleges.

But there is good news: Some schools still offer good bargains, with substantial aid to defray costs further. Here are eight public and private colleges that are considered great deals and are below the national average wage index of about \$42,000.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

(total costs include tuition, room, board and fees):

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

The total cost for a student who lives in the school's state is about \$17,000, and with financial aid, the price drops down to about \$7,000. For students moving from out of state, the cost is \$35,614.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

This school carries a price tag of less than \$15,000 without any financial aid for in-state students, and \$36,961 for out-of-state tuition.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

At about \$21,000, this school has a higher sticker price than the others, but with financial aid, tuition is just under \$6,000. Out-of-state tuition is higher, too: \$43,593.

FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Earlier this year, The Princeton Review listed this Tallahassee-based HBCU as one of the "Best in the Southeast" colleges. In-state tuition for this institution costs \$5,161, while out-of-state students pay \$17,102.

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

(total costs include tuition, room, board and fees):

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Students attending this private Southern institution are in for a deal: \$32,738. Forbes listed Samford among the nation's top colleges, while The Princeton Review recognized it on its "2012 Best 376 Colleges" list.

DRAKE UNIVERSITY

This Midwestern university has been listed on various best-value lists over the years. It carries a \$37,692 sticker price. U.S. News & World Report ranked it No. 3 as a Best Value among Midwest regional schools.

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

The total cost to attend this Midwestern school is \$40,996. U.S. News & World Report ranked Valparaiso No. 4 as a Best Value among Midwest regional schools.

MANHATTAN COLLEGE

Located in the affluent Bronx neighborhood of Riverdale, this college comes with a \$41,450 price tag. Students attending this school usually graduate with \$18,816 in student loan debt.

SOURCE: Kiplinger's "Best Values in Private Colleges 2010-11" and "Best Values in Public Colleges 2011" via Kiplinger's Jane Bennett Clark; The Princeton Review and U.S. News & World Report.