

AIER

# College Destinations Index

2012

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Contact: Jennifer Berkowitz

(828) 687-2633/ [Jennifer@PRoactiveSolutionsInc.net](mailto:Jennifer@PRoactiveSolutionsInc.net)

## Buffalo - Niagara Falls MSA Jumps 5 Spots to 4th Best College Destination

### 2012 AIER COLLEGE DESTINATIONS INDEX RANKS 75 BEST U.S. CITIES AND TOWNS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

*Destinations Ranked According to Academic Environment, Quality of Life, and Professional Opportunities*

**GREAT BARRINGTON, MA**—The “college experience” is about more than simply attending a top-notch university. The city or town where the school is located also is important, the American Institute for Economic Research (AIER) suggests in its 2012 “[AIER College Destinations Index](#)” (AIER CDI).

The AIER CDI includes the top 75 towns and cities in the United States for college students, based on a larger evaluation of the 227 U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) with student populations of 15,000 or more.

For the 2012-2013 school year, the **Buffalo - Niagara Falls MSA** jumped 5 spots to claim the **#4** position in the AIER ranking of the best mid-size metro areas for college students.

The top 20 destinations ranked in the mid-size metro population category are included below:

Buffalo - Niagara Falls MSA topped the charts based on its performance across 12 areas:

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Top 20 Mid-Size Metros by MSA

Rank	Mid-size Metros (1.0 to 2.5 million residents)
1	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara-CA
2	Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos-TX
3	Oklahoma City-OK
4	Buffalo-Niagara Falls-NY
5	Pittsburgh-PA
6	Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis-WI
7	Rochester-NY
8	Raleigh-Cary-NC
9	Richmond-VA
10	Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford-CT
11	Columbus-OH
12	Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor-OH
13	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner-LA
14	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro-OR-WA
15	San Antonio-New Braunfels-TX
16	Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News-VA-NC
17	Cincinnati-Middletown-OH-KY-IN
18	Salt Lake City-UT
19	Indianapolis-Carmel-IN
20	Louisville/Jefferson County-KY-IN

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**Buffalo by the numbers**

Academic Environment		Quality of Life		Professional Opportunity	
Student Concentration	<b>7</b>	Arts & Leisure	<b>3</b>	Earning Potential	<b>9</b>
Student Diversity	<b>1</b>	City Accessibility	<b>2</b>	Entrepreneurial Activity	<b>3</b>
Research Capacity	<b>6</b>	Creative Class	<b>9</b>	Unemployment Rate	<b>9</b>
Degree Attainment	<b>9</b>	Cost of Living	<b>1</b>	Brain Gain or Drain	<b>9</b>

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**Buffalo - Niagara Falls is 4th best mid-size metro for college students according to @AIER College Destinations Index <http://bit.ly/AIERCDIm>**



**Buffalo - Niagara Falls moves up 5 spots to place #4 in the rankings of best mid-size metro areas for college students, according to the 2012 AIER College Destinations Index <http://bit.ly/AIERCDIm>**

*\* High and low resolution image files available by request*

“At a time when approximately half of current college graduates are unemployed or underemployed, the pros and cons of a particular college destination should be an important factor in making a college selection,” said Julie Zhu, the AIER research analyst who oversaw compilation of the Index.

The top 75 college destinations – grouped by total residential populations – are listed below:



Rank	Major Metros (populations > than 2.5 million)	Rank	Mid-size Metros (1.0 to 2.5 million residents)	Rank	Small Metros (250,000 to 1.0 million residents)	Rank	College Towns (under 250,000 residents)
1	Boston, MA	1	San Jose, CA	1	Ann Arbor, MI	1	Ithaca, NY
2	Washington, DC	2	Austin, TX	2	Madison, WI	2	Ames, IA
3	New York City, NY	3	Oklahoma City, OK	3	Boulder, CO	3	State College, PA
4	San Francisco, CA	4	Buffalo, NY	4	Gainesville, FL	4	Iowa City, IA
5	Baltimore, MD	5	Pittsburgh, PA	5	Durham, NC	5	Corvallis, OR
6	Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	6	Milwaukee, WI	6	Lincoln, NE	6	Champaign-Urbana, IL
7	Seattle, WA	7	Rochester, NY	7	Bridgeport, CT	7	Lafayette, IN
8	Philadelphia, PA	8	Raleigh, NC	8	Fort Collins, CO	8	Lawrence, KS
9	Houston, TX	9	Richmond, VA	9	Trenton, NJ	9	Morgantown, WV
10	Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX	10	Hartford, CT	10	Tallahassee, FL	10	Columbia, MO
11	Denver, CO	11	Columbus, OH	11	Lubbock, TX	11	College Station, TX
12	Chicago, IL	12	Cleveland, OH	12	Lansing, MI	12	Fargo, ND
13	St. Louis, MO	13	New Orleans, LA	13	Honolulu, HI	13	Charlottesville, VA
14	San Diego, CA	14	Portland, OR	14	Duluth, MN	14	Manhattan, KS
15	Los Angeles, CA	15	San Antonio, CA	15	Huntsville, AL	15	Blacksburg, VA
		16	Virginia Beach, VA	16	Lexington, KY	16	Bloomington, IN
		17	Cincinnati, OH	17	Omaha, NE	17	Grand Forks, ND
		18	Salt Lake City, UT	18	Santa Barbara, CA	18	Burlington, VT
		19	Indianapolis, IN	19	Killeen, TX	19	Auburn, AL
		20	Louisville, KY	20	Fayetteville, NC	20	Missoula, MT



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*\*High and low resolution image files available by request.*

In creating the Index, a dozen factors are evaluated using the most current data available from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Science Foundation, and Small Business Administration to provide a snapshot of each community's overall academic and cultural environment, quality of life and employment opportunities in the area:

**Academic Environment:**

**Student Concentration:** number of college students per 1,000 population  
**Student Diversity:** percentage of student body that are non-U.S. residents  
**Degree Attainment:** percent of the 25-to-34-year-old population with bachelor's degree or higher

**Quality of Life:**

**Cost of Living:** based upon average rent for a two-bedroom apartment  
**Arts and Leisure:** number of cultural and entertainment venues per 100,000 population  
**City Accessibility:** percentage of workers over age 16 who commute on foot or by public transportation or bicycle

**Creative Class:** percentage of workforce in the arts, education, knowledge industries, science, engineering, management, other fields

**Professional Opportunities:**

**Earning Potential:** income per capita

**Entrepreneurial Activity:** net annual increase in total number of business establishments per 100,000 population

**Unemployment Rate:** percent of labor force without jobs but actively seeking jobs within the last four weeks

**Brain Gain/Drain:** year-over-year ratio of population with B.A. degrees living in the area

According to Steven Cunningham, AIER Director of Research and Education, “The characteristics that make up a great college destination often make a location ideal for business, retirement and tourism. A top AIER College Destinations Index ranking should be just as important to the town or city as it is to the schools located there and the families and students attending or considering them.”

Complimentary electronic copies of the complete AIER College Destinations Index analysis and companion brochure are available from AIER’s website, [www.aier.org/cdi](http://www.aier.org/cdi). Print brochures are available at no cost by emailing [info@aier.org](mailto:info@aier.org).

High and low resolution image files of the AIER CDI logo also are available by request.

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*Founded in 1933, the nonprofit [American Institute for Economic Research](http://www.aier.org) (AIER) conducts independent, scientific, economic research to educate individuals, thereby advancing their personal interests and those of the nation.*

*The American Institute for Economic Research began publishing the AIER College Destinations Index in 2008, taking over from Collegia, a regional planning organization in Wellesley, Mass., which had published the index since 2003. The AIER CDI was last published during the 2010-2011 academic year.*

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