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## Milwaukee Universities Cost More Than Harvard

The data on the White House Score Card is eye-opening.

By [Steve Schuster](#) - Mar 28th, 2013 03:26 pm

The new White House Score Card gives **comparative information on the costs and success of colleges** which should be helpful for students and their parents. At first glance, the information is shocking. It shows that a college education in Milwaukee can cost a great deal more than at Harvard University, long rated the nation's top university.

According to the data, the average cost for one year of an undergraduate program at Marquette University runs about \$28,746, which is \$10,000 per year more than Harvard which charges \$18,277. Also more expensive than Harvard is Milwaukee School of Engineering (\$24,546), the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (\$24,285) and even the privately owned University of Phoenix-Milwaukee (\$22,231).

Where does that number come from?

*Net price is what undergraduate students pay after grants and scholarships (financial aid you don't have to pay back) are subtracted from the institution's cost of attendance.*

And what do you get for that money? The Harvard graduation rate is 97.4 percent, Marquette's is 81.4 percent, MIAD's is 57.1%, MSOE's is 56.8 percent, and the University of Phoenix-Milwaukee's is an abysmal 9.6 percent.

Also notable is the loan default rate. The score card shows that 26.4 percent of University of Phoenix-Milwaukee students default on their loans, compared to 6.3 percent at MIAD, 5 percent at MSOE, 1.9 percent at MU and 1 percent at Harvard. Privately owned universities like Phoenix tend to serve more low-income students and are heavily dependent on loans, but have been criticized for their graduation and loan default rates.

But **Ryan Rauzon**, a spokesman for the University of Phoenix, contends the data is skewed. In an interview with Urban Milwaukee, he said "the data relies upon U.S. Department of Education data

which only incorporates students who come to school without any credit hours. However, most of our students, roughly 75 to 80 percent, attend with transferring college credits.”

Marquette officials, however, were complimentary of the White House Score Card. “The comparisons from institutions serve as a positive tool for families looking into colleges and universities,” said MU spokesperson **Andy Brodzeller**.

He did not contest the accuracy of the data and stood by the value of a Marquette education despite it costing more than an Ivy League education. Noting that scholarships and grants are available, Brodzeller said “we are committed to making a Marquette education affordable for any family.”

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s website, Rauzon’s argument on behalf of the University of Phoenix may have some validity when comparing non-traditional schools. The formula used to compare tuition rates examines what is charged to “first-time, full-time undergraduate students receiving student aid at an institution of higher education after deducting such aid,” the website states.

Therefore schools like University of Phoenix who welcome many transfer students may not have the same basis of comparison as say Marquette or even Harvard. U.S. Department of Education officials declined to comment.

Rauzon said the University of Phoenix publishes its own set of data factoring in those who have served in the military or civilians who attend school with existing college credit. “The federal government graduation rates do not even acknowledge those individuals,” Rauzon said.

It should be noted that the data used in the White House Score Card is furnished to the U.S. Department of Education as a part of a federally mandated reporting requirement for both public and private schools receiving federal funds.

Not surprisingly, the cost to attend University of Wisconsin system schools are far less than private schools despite hefty tuition hikes approved by the UW Board of Regents. For example, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee saw a tuition increase of 16 percent between 2007 and 2009. However, compared to private schools, the cost of tuition is relatively low for in-state, undergraduate students, \$11,926. UWM’s tuition costs about 50 percent less than the University of Phoenix and nearly 60 percent less than Marquette, which also raised student tuition by 10.1 percent during the same time frame.

For those interested, the White House Score Card provides information on a long list of colleges in Wisconsin.

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