

COLLEGE CORNER

How To Find The Best Value In Higher Education

(NAPSA)—There's no doubt that college can be expensive and it's only natural to wonder whether a four-year degree is really worth the money. The truth is that some schools with private price tags can indeed pay the greatest returns.

"There are lots of benefits to attending a top school like Lehigh, beyond an excellent academic experience. Those additional benefits include a supportive alumni network and a robust career services office," said J. Leon Washington, dean of admissions and financial aid at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa.

"These benefits pay off, resulting in higher job placement numbers, successful admissions into the top graduate and professional schools, and higher starting salaries for graduates. In fact, Lehigh was in the top 15 on a list of best values in higher education, according to a study conducted by PayScale for Bloomberg BusinessWeek," he added.

To make sure that you're getting the best return on investment for your tuition dollars, it may pay to keep these tips in mind when conducting your college search:

- Brush up on your statistics. Check how many students graduate in four years and ask for the school's job placement numbers so you can see their outcomes. How many students get jobs within six months of graduation? What are their average starting salaries?

- Evaluate the school's career services. Choose a school that offers support such as career counseling, practice interviews and résumé critiquing. Keep an eye on how many job fairs and networking events the college offers on campus. Take a look at the school's job board and make sure it lists jobs in the industry



An attractive campus is just part of the package when it comes to picking a college. Consider how attractive the school's graduates are to employers and graduate schools, too.

and region in which you plan to work.

- Explore internship opportunities. Seek schools that promote internships as a way to learn outside the classroom. Internships provide valuable professional experience and often lead to job offers.

- Look for a strong alumni network. Successful alumni who are connected to the school can help students and recent graduates. The alumni are often eager to share their advice and experiences and they may even be more willing to facilitate internships or hire graduates of their own alma mater.

- Check out graduate school choices. For some students, education doesn't end with a bachelor's degree. If you're planning to pursue a graduate degree, look at the school's graduate school placement statistics. Make sure students are going to the type of grad schools that you'd like to attend.

With a little legwork and these tips, you can find a college that offers a degree with great value. College might seem like a big investment, but it's an investment that can pay returns for decades to come.