

# DETROIT NATIVE SUN

Identifying the most affordable colleges The US needs more afterschool programs, study finds

## for real-world students



(StatePoint) College rankings headlines are often dominated by the same names: Ivy Leagues, elite research uni-

versities and schools that admit only a fraction of applicants. But that leaves out most students, say experts.

"The average GPA across all U.S. high schools is 3.0, according to the College Board. For these everyday students, and for families earning an average income between \$50,000-\$150,000 - the journey to higher education should be about finding a college they can both attend and afford with confidence," says William Staib, co-founder and president of College Raptor, Citizens planning platform.

That's why this year, College Raptor is reframing the conversation with its 2026 list of the 25 Most Affordable Great Colleges for "B" Students. The list highlights institutions that provide both quality and affordability for the students and families who represent the national average, giving a real, unbiased look at the accessible pathways to higher education often left out of traditional rankings.

To draw up the list, Raptor leveraged insights from hundreds of colleges, mil-

other publicly available data to evaluate academics, student success, faculty quality, campus resources and financial health. Every institution on the list is considered a match or safety for "B" students, with an average acceptance rate of 74%. Graduates of these institutions with B academics and \$50,000-150,000 financial profiles would pay on average less than 9% of their income towards student debt. That's more than 20% less than other four-year colleges that are most likely to accept "B" students. Each school ranks in the top half of accredited institutions nationwide.

To truly assess the value a school provides, parents and college-bound students should not only think about the next four years ahead, but well into the future. They can use the list to calculate their return on investment, as schools are ranked by loan payment, tying affordability directly to earning potential. This metric represents the estimated percentage of a student's expected starting monthly income that would be required to repay their projected student loans within 10 years. This resource can be accessed online by visiting collegeraptor.com.

"For students with a solid 'B' grade average and families in middle-income brackets, expanding the definition of 'dream school' to include attainable options that align with family income, grades and additional factors can help more students arrive at college with confidence," says Staib.



(StatePoint) Ninety-five percent of parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program are satisfied with that program, and there is overwhelming support for more government funding for afterschool, according to a new study. But unmet demand for these programs is high in all 50 states, and majorities of middle- and low-income families who want afterschool programs are being shut out.

The parents of 29.6 million children, more than half the school-age students in the United States, want afterschool programs for their children - but just 7 million children are currently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend afterschool programs if they were available. That means three in four of the children (77%) whose parents want to enroll them in an afterschool program are being left behind. Cost, availability, and accessibility are the barriers families cannot overcome.

Those are among the findings of "America After 3PM 2025," a report released in October by the Afterschool Alliance. The survey of 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children finds a wide, and widening, opportunity gap, with children in low- and middle-income families more likely to be without the afterschool programs their parents want for them than children in high-income families. Families in the highest income bracket now spend approximately nine times as much on out-of-school time activities as families in the lowest income bracket, up sharply from five years ago.

"Afterschool programs give students a safe place to go after the school day ends, boost their academic achievement, help address the youth mental health and chronic absenteeism crises, provide alternatives to screen time, give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised, and more," said Afterschool Alliance executive director Jodi Grant. "But there aren't nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need."

More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide opportunities for children to learn life skills like interacting with peers and responsible decision making, and help them develop teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership skills. Eighty-four percent say afterschool programs allow working parents to keep their jobs or work more hours. To learn more about the study, visit afterschoolalliance.org.

"Our country will be stronger and more successful when all children can take advantage of what afterschool programs offer - but, sadly, this study shows we're nowhere near reaching that goal," Grant added.



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