METHODOLOGY

America's Best **Community Colleges** 2027



statista October 2026

TIME

Inclusion in America’s Best Community Colleges is based on the analysis of an institution's outcomes for students

List’s cornerstones

Relevance of List

Community colleges offer an affordable, flexible, and accessible pathway to higher education that can lead to **career advancement, degree completion, or immediate workforce entry** - all while saving significant money and providing personalized support.

About **1,100 community colleges** exist in the U.S. Some focus on transfer degrees for students who later pursue a bachelor’s degree at a college or university, while others emphasize career-focused programs. Many combine both approaches, and some even offer bachelor’s degrees. What they all have in common is an **offering targeted at a more price-sensitive audience**.

Executive Summary

- **Title of list:** America’s Best Community Colleges
- **Media partner:** TIME
- **Edition:** 1st
- **Number of awardees:** 250
- **Methodology:** KPIs
- **Criteria used for inclusion:** based on an extensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) analysis, focusing on five dimensions: Student Success Rate, Graduates’ Earnings, Return on Investment, Diversity, Campus Resources





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America's Best Community Colleges were identified based on five key pillars

Methodology overview

Eligibility	Key Pillars	
• Offers two-year degree programs • Associate's college • Public institution • Located in the 50 states or Washington, D.C. • Enrolls more than 100 students • Financially solvent • Officially accredited	**Student Success Rate:** graduation plus transfer rate compared to the estimation [1] and the absolute graduation plus transfer rate	Student Outcome
	Graduates' Earnings: median income 6, 8, and 10 years post-enrollment compared to the estimation [2] and the absolute median income	
	Return on Investment: value added to the average graduate's salary when compared to income of the average high school graduate, expressed relative to the cost of attendance	
	Diversity: Simpson diversity index of student body and faculty ethnicity, plus share of students with disability	Learning Environment
	Campus Resources: Student-faculty ratio and core expenditure per student	

[1] Estimation using a beta regression model with control of socio-demographic factors
[2] Estimation using a linear regression model with control of socio-demographic factors

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The final score is derived from weighting different outcomes produced by the colleges for their students

Scoring model

- Data on the colleges' performance was collected through publicly available sources like IPEDS and College Scorecard. The data was reviewed on its validity to project student outcomes.
- Based on the results, a score for all five dimensions was calculated for each college.
- The final score was calculated as follows: 30% x Student Success Rate + 30% x Graduates' Earnings + 20% x Return on Investment + 10% x Diversity + 10% x Campus Resources = final score
- All colleges were benchmarked against one another using the final score.
- The top-performing colleges were included in the final list and are listed alphabetically within each state.

The 250 institutions with the highest score were awarded as TIME's *America's Best Community Colleges*.

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Disclaimer

The selection of the colleges and the definition of the evaluation criteria were based on independent journalistic criteria of TIME and Statista. The evaluation was carried out by the statistics and market research company Statista. TIME and Statista make no claim to the completeness of the colleges examined.

The list only includes colleges that qualify according to the criteria described in this document. A position in the list is a positive recognition based on research of publicly available data sources at the time.

In addition, events after September 17, 2026, were not considered in the analysis. As such, the results of this list should not be used as the sole source of information for future deliberations. The information provided through this list should rather be considered in conjunction with other available information about a college.

The quality of colleges that are not included in the list is not disputed.

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