



State Comparisons of Resident Undergraduate Tuition and Fees

The State University System has low tuition and fees for resident undergraduates compared to public universities nationally. But just how low is tuition in Florida compared to other states? The answer varies slightly between the two commonly-cited surveys of tuition and fees, although both agree that Florida is among the least expensive states. The variations result from the different methodologies and groups of institutions included in the two surveys. Both surveys include mandatory fees as well as tuition in determining a college's "tuition and fees" charges.

The AASCU/NASULGC Survey

In 2003-2004, Florida ranked 49th among the 50 states in average tuition and fees for resident undergraduates (down from 47th in 2002-03), according to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities/National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges annual report on tuition and fees. (See http://www.aascu.org/student_charges_04/.)

This report is the most comprehensive annual state-level tuition and fee study. It uses data from the vast majority of public colleges and universities in the nation, including ten out of Florida's eleven institutions (only New College is not included). Tuition and fees are averaged using "weighted" calculations based on the number of students enrolled, so that tuition and fees at a large university count more in the average than those at a small college. This means the study provides an average of what students pay rather than what institutions charge.

The 2004-05 state-level results are not yet available. For the 2004-05 academic year, however, the University of Nevada Las Vegas, the largest institution in the only state that ranked lower than Florida in the AASCU survey, had a much larger tuition increase than did Florida's universities. As a result, Florida will probably be the lowest-tuition state in the next AASCU report.

The Washington Survey

The other commonly-cited survey of state-level tuition and fees is conducted by the State of Washington's Higher Education Coordinating Board. (See <http://www.hecb.wa.gov/docs/reports/WATuitionFee1-22-04.pdf>.) This survey divides public institutions into "flagship" universities and "comprehensive" colleges and universities. In the "flagship" category, only one university in each state is included (the University of Florida, for example). In the 2003-04 edition of this survey, Florida ranked 49th out of 50 states in "flagship" university tuition and fees. (Florida was also 49th in 2002-03.)

The "comprehensive" category in the Washington survey includes many of the remaining universities in each state, but is not as broad as the AASCU survey. Six of Florida's eleven institutions, for example, were included

in the 2003-04 report, in which Florida ranked 38th out of 46 states in tuition and fees at “comprehensive” universities (down from 36th in 2002-03). There are fewer than 50 states in this category because some small states do not have “comprehensive” universities in the survey.

The Washington survey is not weighted by enrollment, so that the tuition and fees charged at a college with 1,000 students count just as much in a state’s average as those at a university with 40,000 students.

Because of the weighting issue, the AASCU survey is probably a better measure of what students pay, while the Washington survey is a better measure of what different types of universities charge.

Other Surveys

In addition to these two surveys, other organizations sometimes conduct studies that provide slightly different “takes” on the issue. USA Today recently surveyed 2004-05 tuition and fees at 67 large public universities. (See http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2004-09-07-college-tuition_x.htm.)

In the USA Today report, the two Florida universities surveyed, Florida State and University of Florida, ranked 66th and 67th respectively in resident undergraduate tuition and fees.

Where Can I Learn More?

In addition to the links to the surveys provided above, the association of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), surveyed states on a variety of tuition policy issues in 2002-03. The SHEEO survey found that states use a range of different methods to set undergraduate tuition and fees, with some basing the level on peer institutions or states and others charging a percentage of the instructional costs. Many other questions about how states set tuition policy are also addressed. That survey is available at

<http://www.sheeo.org/finance/tuitionfee.pdf>

General information on affordability on a state-by-state basis is provided by the National Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis. These comparisons take into account financial aid and family income levels. Florida’s public universities are more affordable than the national average for families in every income group. See

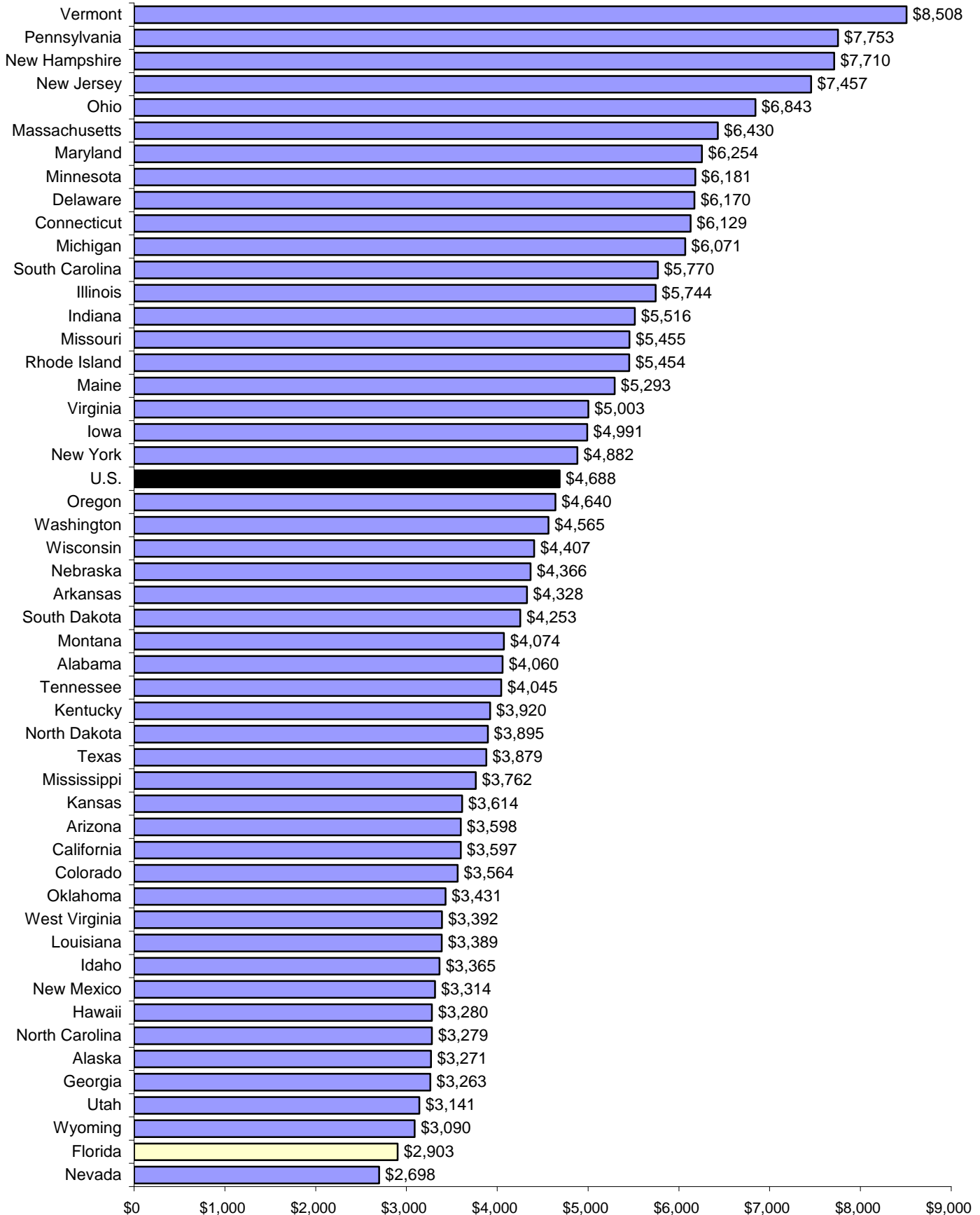
<http://www.higheredinfo.org>

The College Board, whose data AASCU uses in its tuition report, produces its own analysis of trends in college pricing (although it does not have a state-level comparison). Florida’s resident undergraduate tuition and its rate of increase are below the national and regional averages shown in this report. See

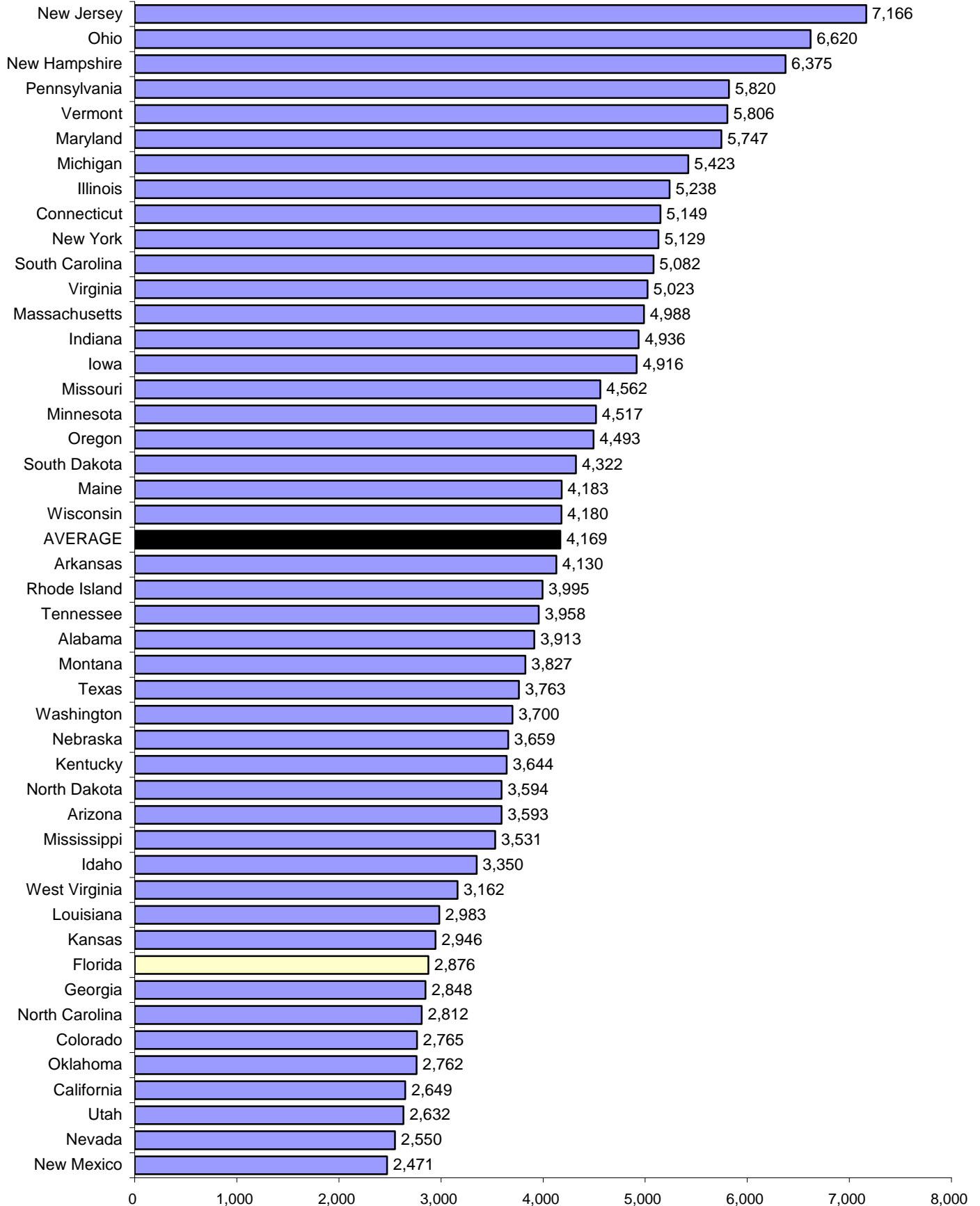
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost03/cb_trends_pricing_2003.pdf

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2003-04 AVERAGE RESIDENT UNDERGRADUATE TUITION AND FEES, ALL PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, AASCU/NASULGC REPORT



2003-04 AVERAGE RESIDENT UNDERGRADUATE TUITION AND FEES, "COMPREHENSIVE" UNIVERSITIES, WASHINGTON HECB REPORT



2004-05 RESIDENT UNDERGRADUATE TUITION AND FEES, STATE FLAGSHIP INSTITUTIONS, USA TODAY SURVEY

