



## The “Cost” of Student Housing: Price, Experience, & Community

### Huh?

---

Most students have the impression that off-campus living is cheaper than life in the residence halls. We checked out 27 different schools to see who's charging what, and what their students are getting (or losing) by moving off campus. It turns out that the costs of on-campus and off-campus housing are much closer than you think. We break up the schools into two segments, and investigate what's going on in each group.



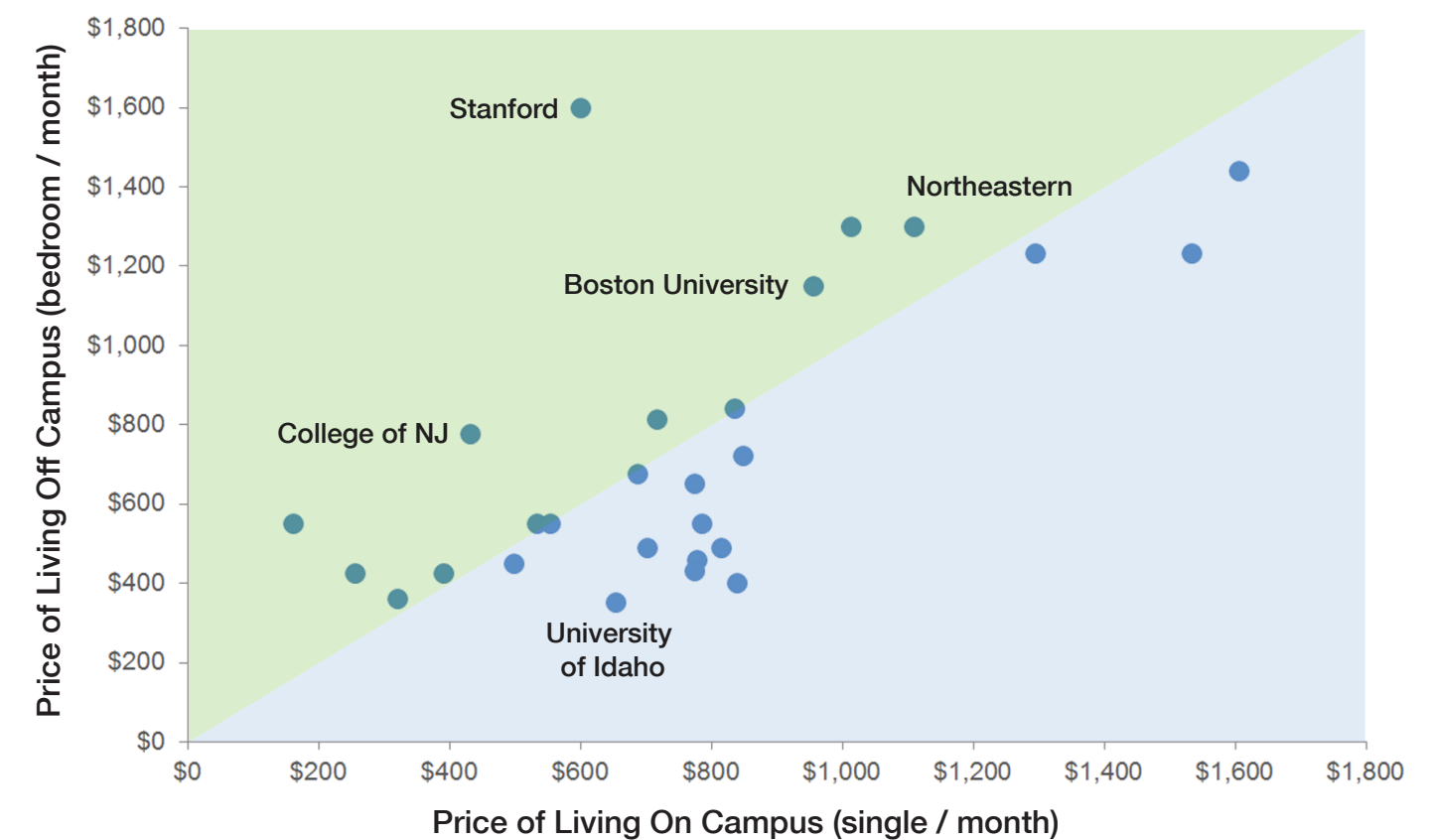
# The Data

When considering where to live, many students harbor preconceived notions about the price of on-campus and off-campus living. In order to examine the true costs for these choices, we investigated 27 institutions across the United States. We compared published figures for on-campus living expenses with averages for local off-campus listings.

At roughly half of the schools, on-campus living was more expensive, but the data had a lot of variance. Rates ranged from a 70% discount to an extra 110% above off-campus rates. The mean cost of living on-campus was roughly 11% higher than off-campus.

The graph below shows the on-campus and off-campus housing rates (per month) for all 27 schools. Each dot represents a school, and the graph is segmented into two halves. The green half contains all schools where living on-campus was cheaper than living off-campus, while the blue half contains schools where off-campus housing was more affordable. Notably, most universities lie close to the separating line, indicating similar rates.

The Price of On-Campus vs. Off-Campus Living



## Snapshots

### Boston University

Housing Costs  
Off Campus: \$1,150  
On Campus: \$956 (-17%)

### Northeastern

Housing Costs  
Off Campus: \$1,300  
On Campus: \$1,013 (-22%)

### University of Idaho

Housing Costs  
Off Campus: \$350  
On Campus: \$654 (+87%)



# In the Green

---

Many universities strive to provide reasonably priced housing options to students. As seen in the previous figure, approximately half the schools we considered offer on-campus housing at lower rates than nearby apartments. When deciding room and board rates, administrators consider many factors, including budgets, campus community, and competitive rates with off-campus housing.

A primary concern for housing departments is budgeting. This includes operational expenses such as staffing and utilities, as well as construction projects such as new buildings and renovations. According to John Weiske of the University of Minnesota, Duluth (+8%), construction expenditures are integral for fostering student interest in on-campus housing. “We look at quality of facilities, quality of programs, well-maintained facilities, and remodeling projects to sell our program.”

Another major concern for universities is the development of a strong campus community. Many universities cite national studies that ascribe on-campus living to student success rates. By offering students an experience that fosters success at a reasonable cost, these universities are able to promote on-campus living for the student body.

**“ Living on campus substantially increases the student’s chances of persisting and of aspiring to a graduate or professional degree. Residents are more likely than commuters to achieve in such extracurricular areas as leadership and athletics and to express satisfaction with their undergraduate experience, particularly in areas of student friendships, faculty-student relations, institutional reputation, and social life. ”**

Alexander Astin  
Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education (1999)

In order to cultivate student achievement, many universities implement a residency requirement for underclassmen. This can help students in the transition from high school to college, and ensure the benefits of on-campus living. However, several officials can also appreciate the value of off-campus living.

**“ Many of our juniors and seniors live off-campus and we see that as a beneficial process for student development so that they are able to take on a little more responsibility. Then when they graduate and enter their professional career, it’s not such a shock. ”**

John Weiske  
Housing Director, University of Minnesota, Duluth

In this way, providing students with opportunities to gain valuable real-world experience is essential to their success as individuals.

# Blue Skies

---

Roughly half of the universities we investigated charge more to live in the dorms than nearby off-campus landlords. These schools deal with many of the same considerations as those that charge less, including operating costs, utility expenses, and construction costs. They also tend to focus on extra programs, and are able to offer a housing experience that cannot be found off-campus.

While almost every university strives to create a campus community for their students, they approach it in different ways. Many of the schools we investigated in the blue section of the graph are dedicated to offering their students a very specialized living experience. At the University of Idaho (+87%), this includes living and learning communities in the dormitories. These communities include residence halls that are substance-free, women-only, or major-specific. In fact, many universities within this category offer their students some type of living and learning community program. Montana State University (+110%), for example, provides 24-hour computer labs in most of their residence halls.

The University of Northern Florida (+43%) offers students the opportunity to see academic tutors right in their residence halls. On-campus students can then receive more academic assistance than if they were living off-campus or at home. In fact, the University of Northern Florida has just announced that all first-year students must now live in university housing, which will further increase the access of the first-year student population to this type of academic support.

Many universities are also using their resources to provide high quality amenities within residence halls. At Worcester State University (+67%), for example, students are offered on-campus suite-style living, in which each suite contains a common area and a kitchen. This comfortable housing offers students a larger, more private space for them to live and work.

At Clark University (+43%), these amenities include 24-hour maintenance and security. According to Kevin Forti, the Director of Residence Life and Housing at Clark, students often forget to consider the extra services they're receiving for staying on campus.

**“ When schools like Clark try to compete, it’s really about value proposition. We’ve found that students have an inflated sense of value for the off-campus market. They see a figure, like \$300 a month for a bedroom, and they get this mindset that that’s the real cost of living off-campus. At the end of the day, they find that there’s high heating bills, high electric bills, high water bills; there’s cable and internet, not to mention that off-campus landlords may or may not be responsive. There’s a lot of value in living on campus because we provide services that they’re not going to find in the private market, that’s one of the ways that we try to illustrate to students and to their parents the value of staying on campus. ”**

Kevin Forti  
Housing Director, Clark University

So while some universities charge a higher price for on campus housing, this price comes with additional social and academic value that they can’t find elsewhere.



# The JumpOffCampus Team

---

While attending Tufts University as undergraduates, we were frustrated by the inefficient process of finding off-campus housing. There was no transparency and an abundance of misinformation that ultimately led to a myriad of problems. Unresponsive landlords (quickly termed “slumlords”) were a common theme for us and our friends. In doing more research, we were shocked that this was the case at the vast majority of institutions across the country. We then set out to solve these off-campus housing issues, first at Tufts and now at 15 schools in the Northeast.

JumpOffCampus partners with universities, offering a free and online resource for their students to find safe and affordable housing. Aside from providing a valuable resource to students, JumpOffCampus also delivers value to the other elements of the off-campus housing ecosystem: universities, and landlords. We give universities an effective way to oversee the process of their students moving off-campus and provide them with the necessary data to address safety, as well as to coordinate across departments (e.g. Housing and Admissions). For landlords, we provide a simple and cost-effective property management tool with direct access to student tenants.



**Mark Abramowicz**  
CEO & Co-Founder

Mark is an avid New York sports fan and loves to travel the world. While he was born in New York, Polish was his first language. He has also played soccer his entire life, including at Tufts University, where he graduated in 2010. While at Tufts, he studied Quantitative Economics and Entrepreneurial Leadership. Contact: [mark@jumpoffcampus.com](mailto:mark@jumpoffcampus.com).



**Kyle Nichols-Schmolze**  
CTO & Co-Founder

Kyle grew up in Newton, a suburb of Boston, and graduated from Tufts with a degree in Computer Science Engineering. He is passionate about bikes, ultimate frisbee, the web, climbing, and skiing. He also spends a lot of time with the three Bs of music: Beethoven, Bach and Brahms. Contact: [kyle@jumpoffcampus.com](mailto:kyle@jumpoffcampus.com).

**Steve Brown**  
Director of University Outreach

Steve is a dynamic sales executive and team leader offering over twelve years of success in sales and marketing. He is a Boston sports fan, and loves the outdoors. Contact: [steve@jumpoffcampus.com](mailto:steve@jumpoffcampus.com).



# Appendix

We obtained on-campus data for this study from Common Data Sets (CDSs) for universities, as well as individual university websites. From this information, we chose room rates for single rooms, as we believe that these rates would most closely relate to off-campus living styles (one student per bedroom).

To find off-campus housing data, we scanned Craigslist to obtain the average rate of two-bedroom units available for rent. We chose two-bedroom units, as this appears to be the most common, and the most desirable off-campus option for students. We then divided these rates by two, as we are looking for the rate per student. We then added \$50 to the rate so as to account for utility expenses that may be associated with off-campus living.

Below is the list containing the schools that were chosen and the data that was collected. It should be noted that the column labeled "On Campus/Off Campus" accounts for the difference between on-campus and off-campus rates (in percentages).

University	On Campus / Year	On Campus / Month	Off Campus / Month	On Campus / Off Campus
Cameron University	\$1,458	\$162	\$550	29%
Stanford University	\$5,398	\$600	\$1,600	37%
College of New Jersey	\$3,886	\$432	\$775	56%
Prescott College	\$2,300	\$256	\$425	60%
Northeastern	\$9,120	\$1,013	\$1,300	78%
Boston University	\$8,600	\$956	\$1,150	83%
Loyola Marymount University	\$9,995	\$1,111	\$1,300	85%
Tufts University	\$6,450	\$717	\$814	88%
Midwestern State University	\$2,880	\$320	\$362	88%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	\$3,522	\$391	\$425	92%
University of Pittsburgh	\$4,800	\$533	\$550	97%
RISD	\$7,516	\$835	\$839	100%
Azusa Pacific University	\$4,986	\$554	\$550	101%
University of Washington	\$6,192	\$688	\$675	102%
St. John's University	\$11,650	\$1,294	\$1,232	105%
Baylor University	\$4,494	\$499	\$450	111%
Emerson	\$14,458	\$1,606	\$1,441	111%
Brandeis University	\$7,632	\$848	\$720	118%
Brown University	\$6,974	\$775	\$650	119%
CUNY - Queens College	\$13,800	\$1,533	\$1,232	124%
University of North Florida	\$7,064	\$785	\$550	143%
Clark University	\$6,320	\$702	\$490	143%
Worcester State	\$7,346	\$816	\$490	167%
Providence College	\$7,000	\$778	\$457	170%
Fitchburg State University	\$6,975	\$775	\$430	180%
University of Idaho	\$5,883	\$654	\$350	187%
Montana State University	\$7,558	\$840	\$400	210%