

# Lower Costs Lure U.S. College Students Abroad

BY RENEE SCHOOF  
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WASHINGTON — More American teenagers are thinking about picking up a passport and heading abroad for their college years as a way of attending a top-rated school at a lower cost, Canadian and British college recruiters say.

More than 10,000 Americans are earning graduate and undergraduate degrees in Canada, and 15,000 are pursuing degrees in the United Kingdom. Even with extra fees for international students, colleges and universities outside the United States, in many cases, cost less than the tuition at private colleges or the out-of-state charges at public universities.

In some places, American student interest has gone up as tuition rates rise here nationwide and state spending for higher education declines. The University of British Columbia, for example, reports a 33 percent growth in U.S. applications since 2008.

Because of California's "sagging economy" and cutbacks in public aid to higher education, "I am encouraging my students to look beyond our state's borders, and that includes other countries, such as Canada," said Jill Montbriand, a counselor at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento.

Annual tuition costs for international students in Canada ranged from about \$14,000 to \$26,000 last year, according to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

The average tuition last year at an American public university was nearly \$21,000 for out-of-state students and almost \$28,000 at a private four-year school, according to the College Board. The averages, of course, don't show great variation of costs at actual schools, but specific comparisons between U.S. and Canadian schools can show more of a difference.

Montbriand was among thousands of high school counselors who attended the recent annual National Association for College Admission Counseling conference in Denver, attended by representatives from 28 Canadian universities.

"Students tell us they were looking for a top-ranked West Coast university in an outstanding location," said Aaron Andersen, manager of international recruitment at the University of British Columbia. "When they realize it is also an international experience close to home, and an incredible value compared to many other comparable U.S. institutions, (that) often pushes UBC to the top of their list."

An additional lure is that American students can work in Canada for three years after graduation.

Maegan Cowan, a senior at UBC from Oakland, Calif., said she originally wanted to go to New York University, George Washington University in Washington or UBC.

"And UBC, even with paying international tuition, was waaayyy cheaper," she wrote in an email.

Tuition, fees and room and board at UBC this year are about \$34,000. Tuition and fees alone at New York University and George Washington is more than \$41,000. Room and board is extra.

UBC also had an international



McGill University in Montreal, Canada, is a university sought by some American students. Even with extra fees for international students, colleges and universities outside the United States, in many cases, cost less than the tuition at private colleges or the out-of-state charges at public universities.

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AARON ANDERSEN

studies program, just what Cowan wanted, and it was something "a bit different," she said, "because it's Canada but still has some of the comforts of home and familiarities."

Lila Weintraub said she chose McGill University in Montreal because she wanted to leave her home state of Maryland and go to school in a city.

"Most schools fitting that description are extremely expensive, so even being an international student at a school in Canada ends up being much cheaper for me," she said.

Both women said they faced some early challenges, such as the logistics of getting a Canadian bank account, phone plan and student visa.

McGill has 2,267 U.S. students,

while UBC has more than 1,000 American students.

The University of Alberta, in contrast, has 68 undergraduate U.S. students, mostly from California, the Pacific Northwest and Texas. Texans often choose it for its engineering and science programs linked to the province's oil and gas sectors, said John Soltice, assistant director for interna-

tional recruitment.

The Canadian university has brought high school counselors from target schools in the U.S. to the campus for summer workshops for the past two years, and applications have increased. Tuition is about \$21,000 per year.

"The main factor has been efforts by many Canadian universities and the Canadian government to increase awareness across the U.S. about the high quality of education in Canada, at a competitive rate at well-ranked universities not too far from home," Soltice said.

Jack Whelan, director of college guidance at Providence Day School in Charlotte, N.C., who visited Canada's booth at the guidance counselor fair, said he hasn't seen an increase in interest among students.

"Actually, they may have been

more popular a few years ago when the U.S. dollar was stronger, but now the value-conscious folks look much quicker at in-state public options or else safer private schools where a merit scholarship may be in the offing," he said.

The Canadian government reports that enrollment of American students grew in the late 1990s until about 2007 and then leveled off, but it hasn't dipped.

Tamsin Thomas, who handles education issues in the U.S. for the British Council, a non-governmental organization that promotes British culture, said more American students are interested in British universities every year. Thirty universities took part in a recent online recruitment fair, and recruiters from the United Kingdom travel around the U.S. talking with students and parents at

school visits and college fairs.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, undergraduate degrees are finished in three years. Tuition for international undergraduates varies from about \$11,000 to \$40,000 per year. Many universities administer U.S. federal loans to eligible students, and American students are able to work in the U.K. while studying and during vacations.

Chris Payne, who opened the first U.S. office for King's College London near Washington this summer, said the highly selective university has had many students from the East Coast, but that interest was picking up now from Texas, the Midwest and California as well.

"U.S. students are demanding more of an international experience than a (single-semester) study abroad," he said. "Jobs can be anywhere now."

Meaghan Couture, from Colorado, started studying at the University of Manchester in England in September 2010 and plans to graduate in July. She has a job answering questions from prospective students on the British Council's Facebook page and on Twitter. One of the things she tells them is that an international education shows versatility, and employers like that.

"You stand out above the rest when your resume is on someone's desk," she said in an email.

Couture started out at a community college in Colorado while working nights at a restaurant. She transferred and studied for a semester at Metro State College of Denver but quit and worked in banking for six years. But then she went back to school — in England.

"What I really wanted to do (when I was in high school with big dreams)," she wrote, "was to go to an internationally recognized university, to travel the world and to spend a few years living abroad."

Her tuition at the University of Manchester is about \$17,900 per year. Had she gone to school in England right out of high school, "I would have saved a bundle," Couture said.

"England has always fascinated me and now I can say that I've lived there, I've worked there, I've studied there and that I found myself there."

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