How Have Costs in Higher Education Changed since Today’s Entering Cohort were in Kindergarten?

Delaware Cost Study * Data 2003 through 2015

Everyone is asking why a college education is so expensive! It may be surprising to learn that after adjusting for inflation**, the cost of instruction has actually decreased in several disciplines.

**Cost per Student Credit Hour ($/SCH)

Used to measure the cost of instruction across disciplines and institutions. Direct Instructional Cost includes salaries, benefits and other non-personnel expenditures.

$65-$453 / SCH

The national average $/SCH range across the 12 most popular disciplines from 2003 to 2015 (see pp. 2-4 for more detail)

16% or 1.3% per Year

After adjusting for a cumulative rate of inflation of 28.8% over the 12 year period, the overall average percent increase in $/SCH from 2003 to 2015.

Institution Classification:

- Research (R1 & R2)
- Doctoral (R3)
- Comprehensive (M1, M2 & M3)
- Baccalaureate (BAS & BD)

% of Change in $/SCH by Subject Areas and Carnegie Classifications

Delaware Cost Study data 2003 vs. 2015
### Percentage of Change in $/SCH by Programs and Carnegie Classifications from Delaware Cost Study Data 2003 vs. 2015

**Institution Classification:**
- Research (R1 & R2)
- Doctoral (R3)
- Comprehensive (M1, M2 & M3)
- Baccalaureate (BAS & BD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Area</th>
<th>Research (%)</th>
<th>Doctoral (%)</th>
<th>Comprehensive (%)</th>
<th>Baccalaureate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Sample (AVG)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering (ENGR)</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-33</td>
<td>-23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science (CS)</td>
<td>-18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry (CHM)</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration (BA)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages (FL)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography (GEOG)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (COMM)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science (PS)</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>History (HIS)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics (ECON)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (EGL)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy (PHL)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology (SOC)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red numbers are generated by sample sizes of less than five participants.

**Baccalaureate institutions are not shown due to inadequate sample size.**

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**Variability in $/SCH depends significantly on discipline and Carnegie Class.**
SCATTER PLOT — DIFFERENT SAMPLE SIZES

We use a scatter plot to depict data points reported by institutions from a Carnegie Classification group for a specific discipline over the 12-year period. A single dot in each plot represents the $/SCH (inflation adjusted) reported by Institution X for Department Y to Delaware Cost Study in Year 20XX.

CONNECT THE DOTS — INCREASE AND DECREASE

In each scatter plot, means and medians were computed for each year's data. These values are connected by Red (Means) or Blue (Medians) lines to illustrate cost trends over 12 years in each Carnegie Classification in a specific discipline.

FACET VIEW — VARIABILITY ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND INSTITUTION TYPES

The facet approach allows us to compare and contrast data patterns of one measurement ($/SCH) across disciplines and Carnegie Classifications. The plots demonstrate the significant variability in the cost of instruction found among disciplines based on institutional mission as differentiated by Carnegie Classification and the academic focus of the department.
Engineering programs are often aggregated in instructional expenditure reports, seen as Engineering, General.

The plots below demonstrate the significant variability in the cost of instruction found among engineering disciplines (From Row 2 to 4, Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering).

Significant variability was also found between Row 1, the aggregated General Engineering and each of the other rows.

Means and Medians were computed when 5 or more programs were reported each year.

* Delaware Cost Study is also known as the National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity.

** In this report, the costs for each year were converted into 2003 dollars.