



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

FAMILY FINANCES | November 29, 2010

Some U.S. College Students Look to the U.K.

By KIM HJELMGAARD

LONDON—When final-year economics undergraduate Robert Rogers transferred from Georgetown University to the London School of Economics, his annual tuition fees plummeted to around \$20,000 a year from around \$41,000.

"It didn't even occur to me to apply abroad when I was in high school," said Mr. Rogers, on a recent afternoon outside the LSE's Students' Union. "I certainly didn't hear of any of my [high-school] classmates applying to study abroad."



Bloomberg News

Some Americans like the economics of the London School of Economics.

Mr. Rogers said that his reasons for moving to the LSE weren't financially motivated. But finances drive others to follow him. As tuition at U.S. colleges increasingly becomes less affordable for many—and as spots at the most competitive institutions more and more resemble gold dust—some American high schoolers are looking to the United Kingdom to meet their educational needs.

Doing the Math

It is almost heresy to say it right now here in the U.K., what with English students recently taking to the streets in protest at the government's proposal to raise tuition fees to no less than £6,000 a year (just under \$10,000)

for some domestic enrollees, but the fact remains that, by U.S. standards, universities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland remain a "cheap" place to get an education.

Tuition fees in the U.K. vary from institution to institution, and also from region to region, but the cost for an overseas undergraduate at University of St. Andrews, in Scotland, for the academic year 2009-2010 would be about \$19,000.

And if you're lucky enough to be able to claim "home" or "European Union" status, this figure would be just shy of \$3,000 a year—though it is set to triple or even quadruple from 2012 onward for some institutions south of the Scottish border under the British coalition government's aggressive overhauls to higher-education funding.

Even to study in the University of Oxford's hallowed halls would cost a U.S. student just over \$20,000 for an undergraduate program of study. (The fee would be about \$4,700 for a U.K. student.)

Every college that features in the top 20 of the U.S. News and World Report's most recent ranking of best U.S. colleges costs at least \$34,000 a year for tuition and fees. Most, in fact, are closer to \$40,000 a year, and quite a few top that level.

The downsides of going abroad include: plane tickets, time zones, foul weather and the cultural labyrinth resulting from two nations divided, as the saying goes, by a common language. However, if one is contemplating spending at the higher end of the scale, there is also approximately \$80,000 or more to be saved.

More than 3,000 normally U.S.-domiciled undergraduate-level students applied to do just that in 2009, according to UCAS, the organization responsible for managing applications to higher-education programs in the U.K. And while only 1,330 were accepted, according to UCAS, the relatively modest numbers mask a rising trend.

There has been a 27% increase in undergraduate applications from U.S. students since 2006, while the total number of U.S. students studying for full degrees at British higher-education institutions as of 2009—across both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels—stands at just over 14,000, data from the U.K.'s Higher Education Statistics Agency show.

It is "very important that [students] enter the global economy with global competencies," said Allan Goodman, president and chief executive officer of the Institute of International Education, in emailed comments.

Todd Weaver, an education consultant with Strategies for College Inc., a Canton, Mass.-based advisory firm, said that while students and parents in the U.S. are starting to realize that it is relatively inexpensive to study in places such as the U.K., they are also weighing the reduced cost against "the ability to have a network in place after college" when job hunting.

"If you go to school in New England, for example, there's a good chance you will be looking for a job in the local area," said Mr. Weaver.

European Vacation?

Steven Goodman, an admissions strategist with education specialist Top Colleges who has worked extensively placing students at colleges as far afield as Romania and South Africa, said the major difficulty facing U.S. students who want to study in the U.K. isn't necessarily to do with the perceived job market back home, but with "the English secondary-school specialization that is not usually a part of the American high-school curriculum."

The postcollege experience is something that is weighing on Mr. Rogers.

"Everyone's worried about the job market today, even if you have a 4.0 GPA from Harvard. The careers office here at the LSE is good, but there's also not the relationship to U.S. employers that you'd expect to find at a U.S. institution, and that is a drawback frankly," he said.

On the other hand, Mr. Rogers noted, "my dad likes that I'm in the U.K. because he gets to come visit."

www.djreprints.com