

Study: Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins rank among best places to attend college

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A new report rating the best places to attend college in America ranks Denver, Boulder and Fort Collins among the top 10 cities in different size groups.

The **American Institute of Economic Research** ranked Denver No. 5 among mid-sized metro areas in its "College Destinations Index 2009-10." Boulder is No. 1 and Fort Collins No. 5 among small cities.

Analysts at AIER compared the nation's 360 metropolitan statistical areas on factors, including academic environment, quality of life and professional opportunities.

AIER organized the metro areas into four population categories: Major metro areas (with populations of 2.5 million or more), mid-size metro areas (1 to 2.5 million residents), small cities (250,000 to 1 million residents) and college towns (under 250,000).

The top 10 small cities on the institute's list in order of ranking are Boulder; Bridgeport, Conn.; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Gainesville, Fla.; Madison, Wis.; Durham, N.C.; Trenton-Ewing, N.J.; Honolulu; Fort Collins; and Santa Barbara, Calif.

The top 10 mid-size metros in order of ranking are San Jose, Austin, Hartford, Raleigh, Denver, Salt Lake City, Pittsburgh, Orlando, Portland and Sacramento.

And the top 10 major metros in order of ranking are New York City, San Francisco, Boston, Washington, Seattle, Los Angeles, Baltimore, San Diego, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Miami.

An independent research organization based in Great Barrington, Mass., AIER got its start 76 years ago on the campus of MIT.

The Portland Business Journal contributed.