

• Rankings



• [Blog Entry](#) [Comments \(1\)](#) **Southern New Hampshire Offers Cheaper College Option**

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**Southern New Hampshire University** is beginning an experiment in [no-frills higher education](#), offering four-year university coursework for \$10,000 a year at a satellite campus just 20 miles south of the school's main campus in Manchester, the *Boston Globe* reports.

Southern New Hampshire is at the forefront of a push by some colleges around the country to provide a no-frills, lower-cost education for students who don't mind forgoing traditional college life and its accompanying amenities, particularly during a recession, as long as they get a diploma.

At a college stripped to its academic core, some higher education leaders worry that students are missing the dearly held residential experience. For generations, glossy brochures have touted the ideal of spending four years ambling along leafy quads and partaking in deep discussions with dormmates late into the night.

"Families come to campus and they want to see a food court, a fitness center with a climbing wall, and brand-new dorms," said Paul LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire. "So we build everything, each one nicer than the other, to remain competitive."

But, LeBlanc added: "I'm not sure that improves education. It just drives the price up. Not everybody needs it, and frankly, not everybody can afford it."

Daniel Webster College offers a similar tuition break, and the public university system in Pennsylvania is considering creating four-year colleges sans dorms, athletics, and extracurriculars.

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### **One must ask: Just who are the students?**

Many fall onto that stereotypical traditional student wagon, believing that "parents" come to the university to check it out for their kids when, in essence, the parents doing the checking are considering higher education for themselves.

Non-traditional student numbers continue to grow, and with a collapsing economy and job losses, more and more non-trads will be seeking a first degree as well as looking to enhance their current education.

All colleges need to look at their student population--the number of students who do not live in dorms, the commuters, the night students. These students couldn't care less about a fitness center, climbing wall, or even a food court. They are there to get an education.

Sure, a university experience can involve more than the learning, but for many, it won't.

I say build the low-cost, quality education satellite colleges and they will come.

**Trish Lindsey Jagers** of KY

Feb 06, 2009 15:29:07 PM [[permalink](#)] [[report comment](#)]