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# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Columbia named in nation's best college towns index

In September 2009, MU ranked ninth in its size category of America's best college towns.

The data, collected by the American Institute for Economic Research, was based on statistics about Columbia's economic health rather than interviews with students. The study was part of the College Destinations



Index, which looks at 75 towns and cities and divides them into four groups based on size. Columbia is included in the smallest population category, representing cities with fewer than 250,000 inhabitants.

Don Laird, MA '97, president of the local chamber of commerce, says the results are positive for Columbia. The town retains graduates better than some of the other Big 12 school communities like Ames, Iowa, Lawrence, Kan., and Boulder, Colo.

Plus, Columbia had scored "well in entrepreneurial activity with a good net increase of businesses per capita."

The survey divided criteria into three parts: academic environment, quality of life and professional opportunities.

Dave Mandy, professor and chair of the economics department at MU, says some rely on community rankings to help them decide where to live. “Columbia has often ranked high in various community rankings and this helps attract people to the community, which, in turn, supports the local real estate market, local businesses and the community tax base.” Also, “in some cases, the people making these types of decisions have significant discretionary financial resources, such as retirees who relocate to Columbia, which can amplify the effects on the local economy.”

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