

Getting the biggest bang for your college bucks

Natalie Fink
news editor

Ivy League schools are often seen as the pinnacle of higher education. The eight elite schools carry a positive reputation that is stretched across the globe. However, are these prestigious schools actually worth it, or are they simply an expensive name that does not guarantee success?

The strongest argument in favor of the Ivies is opportunity. Alumni networks open doors that most colleges simply can’t. When employers notice you have a degree from Harvard, you are often immediately considered a competitive and impressive candidate. Surrounding yourself with highly motivated, ambitious peers also pushes students to perform well. For those who thrive in competitive environments, this can be the perfect fuel to their fire.

There is also an undeniable prestige factor. An Ivy League diploma signals excellence to the world, whether you’re applying to medical school, pitching a startup to investors, or interviewing for a global consulting firm.

In the article by POLITICO titled “Ivy League grads have a leg up in State Department promotions,” they say “...Foreign Service employees with degrees from Ivy League schools have significantly better odds of earning a promotion early in their careers than colleagues who lack such credentials. At one point in the department’s career hierarchy, their odds are more than 20 percent higher.”

Despite this, according to an article from the New York Times “Opportunity Insights,” a group of economists at Harvard who inspect inequality, conducted a study that measures the extent to which being wealthy is its own “qualification in selective college admissions.” Susan Dynarski, an economist at the Harvard Graduate School of Education stated. “I conclude from this study that the Ivy League doesn’t have low-income students because it doesn’t want low-income students.”

This proves that the downsides are hard to ignore. Tuition and living expenses often soar past \$80,000 a year. While wealthy families are able to afford this and the schools tout aid for some, scholarships remain limited. Many middle and lower income

families fall into a frustrating gap where they are too “wealthy” for aid, but nowhere near able to afford the bill. This makes Ivy League access much more realistic for the rich than for the average student.

Additionally, the cost of an Ivy League education can leave students with six-figure debt, which can take decades to pay off. Meanwhile, students at public or smaller colleges who receive scholarships or have a lower tuition to pay are more likely to graduate debt free and can start building wealth or investing in their careers immediately. In the long run, avoiding massive loans can outweigh the prestige of an Ivy League diploma.

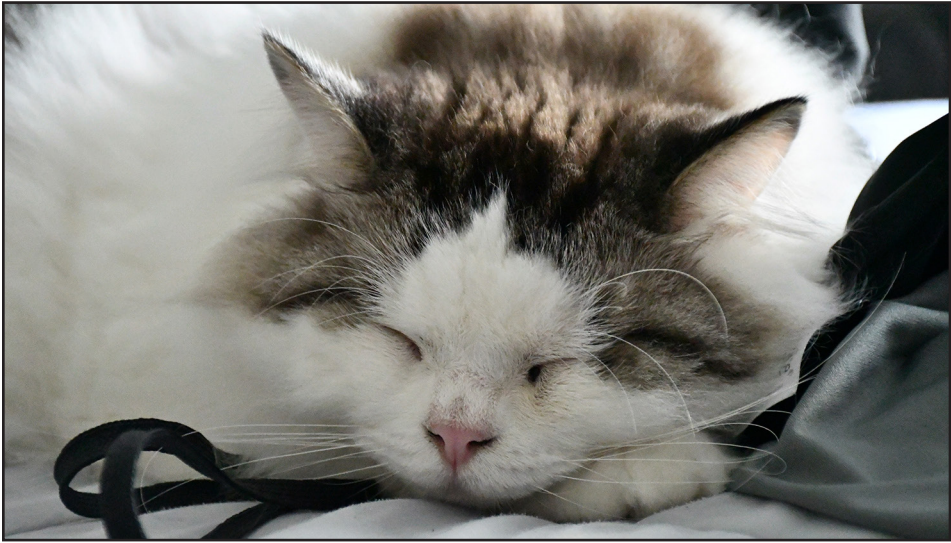
Even for those who make it in, the experience is not always glamorous. Students who were at the top of their class in high school can suddenly feel average when put in a pool of those who are all extremely intelligent.

Malcolm Gladwell explores this phenomenon in chapter two of David and Goliath, pointing out that high-achieving students often lose confidence when surrounded by equally brilliant peers. Struggling to keep up can make once confident students feel like imposters, which will negatively affect their mental health.

Furthermore, it is worth considering what Ivy culture does to young people. The extreme pressure environment can breed stress, burnout, and even a warped sense of success. For some, the Ivy League becomes less about learning and more about surviving.

Ivy leagues are neither a golden ticket nor a waste of time, it is an option with clear trade offs. They can open doors, provide powerful networks, and impress employers, but they also bring steep costs, intense pressure, and challenges that are not right for everyone. If you are weighing the decision, take time to consider all of the factors before committing. The Ivy Leagues can be a great choice, but it does not belong on a pedestal. Success is not tied to one set of campuses but it is created by how you use the opportunities you are given, no matter your circumstances.

Success does not only come from an Ivy League education, you must consider all the trade offs before choosing a college.



The ‘Great Outdoors’ isn’t great for our furry friends

Alex Elgert
staff writer

Any cat owner will tell you, the humans don’t run the household- the cats do. Still, there is a great deal that we, as pet owners, are responsible for when it comes to the care and well-being of our furry, scaly, and feathery friends.

A significant misconception and a source of considerable debate within the feline-loving community is the question of whether domestic cats should be kept outside.

Cats are notorious for bringing well-intentioned “gifts” to their humans. More often than not, these gifts consist of injured or deceased animals such as rodents and small birds.

“Predation by domestic cats is the number one direct, human-caused threat to birds in the United States,” Grant Sizemore of American Bird Conservancy said. “Although this number may seem unbelievable, it represents the combined impact of tens of millions of outdoor cats.”

The introduction of domestic cats to

the Hawaiian Islands has significantly impacted their natural ecology. Cats have hunted native birds, such as the Hawaiian Petrel and the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, to near extinction during and after the colonization of the archipelago.

Even in the continental U.S. and coastal Europe, where these felines are native, there is little control over their population under human care and protection. Now, this isn’t to say we shouldn’t hold our cats near and dear to our hearts, quite the opposite. Even when cats are fed and doted on, there is no way to eliminate their instinct to hunt for survival. This can be eased, though, with ample indoor enrichment through the use of feather toys, laser pointers and playtime with other animal friends.

Cats are needy little creatures, and rely on humans as their caretakers to make the right decisions and keep them safe. As daunting as it seems, there will always be communities of like-minded pet owners to turn to for those unsure of proper pet care.

To pledge or not to pledge? Personal preference is key

Caden Reynolds
features editor

Every morning, students and teachers stand for the pledge of allegiance to show loyalty to the nation, however the pledge has become more contentious with younger generations. Now more than ever, individuality and freedom of expression have been the core ideas that younger generations have pushed for.

For many, it’s a moment of unity, even comfort. But for others, especially students from marginalized or politically conscious backgrounds, the pledge is a symbol of contradiction.

“I feel it’s becoming harder and harder to separate the country itself from its government,” senior Alex Elgert said. “I can’t rightfully pledge allegiance to it right now.”

Take the case of Danielle Khalaf, a 14-year-old student in Plymouth, Michigan, who chose to remain seated during the pledge in protest of the United States’ support for Israel’s war in Gaza. According to a lawsuit, her teacher allegedly told her to “go back to your country.” Never mind that Danielle is a U.S. citizen, her dissent was treated not as a constitutional right, but as a threat. (AP News, Washington Post)

This isn’t an isolated incident. Students in Colorado, Maryland, South Carolina, and elsewhere have faced consequences ranging from social ostracism to physical force — simply for choosing not to say a pledge they don’t believe in or feel excluded by.

In West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943), the Supreme

Court ruled that no student can be forced to salute the flag or say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Justice Robert Jackson stated, “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official... can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.”

That decision was made at the height of World War II, in a time when patriotic pressure was arguably at its peak. Even then, the Court understood that freedom of conscience especially in schools is essential to democracy.

Today, that principle is under attack not just legally, but culturally. Students protesting the pledge aren’t trying to tear the country down but rather they’re asking us to live up to the ideals the pledge claims to stand for: liberty and justice for all.

When the phrase “under God” was added in 1954, it alienated nonreligious Americans.

When the pledge speaks of “justice for all,” but students see injustice in their communities, their silence is a form of truth-telling. When immigrant or Muslim students are told to “go back” simply for sitting down, it reveals that the unity some people claim to see in the pledge is only skin-deep.

Patriotism should not be performative. Standing for the flag should mean standing for the values it represents not demanding obedience to a script.

If a student believes their values are not being honored, they have every right to express that peacefully.

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Let's go CRAZY

Seniors set sights on boosting school spirit

Brooke Samson
entertainment editor

The Huskers have Henry, and the Chicago Bears have Stan. Millard West has a Wildcat and the Crazies to boost enthusiasm and spirit.

When the school opened in 1995, the principal, Dr. Rick Kolowski, started the group as a pep squad for athletic events and assemblies. Thirty-five years later, the group is still going strong.

“Two reasons the wildcat crazies are such a vital part of the football games,” activities director Lance Smith said. “One, it’s tradition, and traditions are always good. Two, they serve as the go-between between the administration and the student section, so it helps us be organized in terms of themes, chants and cheers. They help facilitate sportsmanship. We use the crazies to help out-of-control sections.”

This year, 18 students applied for the role. Normally, they would only accept around 10 people, but after the first meeting, Smith decided not to cut any of them.

However, the large size has dwindled; it is still a big group to work with. And



mascot MATCH

Match the team (left) with the mascot on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Minnesota Vikings | _____ Miles |
| 2. Philadelphia Eagles | _____ Big Red |
| 3. Denver Broncos | _____ Viktor |
| 4. Carolina Panthers | _____ Roary |
| 5. Arizona Cardinals | _____ Swoop |
| 6. Detroit Lions | _____ Sir Purr |

ANSWERS: 3, 5, 1, 6, 2, 4

Crazies have a reputation to uphold.

“I’m excited to work with this year’s team of Crazies, and not,” senior Ella Gordon said, “I think that it’s gonna be fun, but also there is a lot of reputation we have to uphold to a certain level just because of how good our student section has been in the past.”

The Crazies have always exceeded expectations, and this year will be no different.

The Crazies play a role for everyone in the stands and on the field. The mascot and Crazies work hand-in-hand. Between

“I chose to become a Wildcat Crazy because I thought it would be fun to lead the student section and show school spirit,” senior Jady Bedel. “I joined because I have a lot of pride for Millard West and I knew it was going to be a good football season. I also have a loud voice.”



the two, they aim to keep the student section cheering loud and proud.

“It is good to have some people to be rowdy with me, and so it’s not just me hyping up the crowd,” school mascot Zach Sheikh said. “I think the Crazies make it more fun for people because they wear fun outfits and hype up the crowd.”

This year will be another year in the history books for the Crazies. With the squad size, the school can have student helpers in the stands and on the track.

This year is the year to be crazy.

WildCAT CHAT

What is your favorite way to show your school spirit?



“Show up to events and cheer people on.”

Chloe Chesterman, Freshman



“I am a cheerleader, so cheering from the sidelines.”

Chloe Huber, Junior



“Because I’m a wildcat crazy, I go to all the football games and I get the student section the hypest.”

Taiyana Augustine, Senior



“Is to go to the events and support the kids playing in the events, theater or sports, or any event.”

Alexander Fields, Teacher



“I love to yell loudly during school football games.”

Anthony Cruzan, sophomore

Just the FACTS

NEED AN APPOINTMENT?

► Send your counselor a quick email saying you’d like to meet. Add a short note about what it’s about to ensure we schedule adequate time to assist you.

► You can always stop by the counseling office during the passing period or lunch, and just ask one of the counseling secretaries to set up an appointment with your assigned counselor.

► If it is an emergency and you are in class, let your teacher know. They can write you a pass to come straight down to the counseling office and we will meet with you as soon as we can.

COUNSELORS

Amy Reoh	A-BUR
Dellyn Feighner	BUS-FRA
Maureen Zohlen	FRE-I & ELL
Shawn Juricek	J-MARR
Monica Griffin	MARS-PE
Kristin Westbrook	PT-ST
Katie Van Ravenhorst	SU-Z & ELL

Tutors offer assistance for academically struggling peers

Kyla Riveland
opinions editor

Eight tiring classes a week, loads of homework, while trying to juggle jobs, sports, and social life can cause a lot of stress upon students’ shoulders. Adding uncomprehension and confusion about a class can make that stress even greater, but Millard West offers a program to help struggling students.

As simple as going to your assigned counselor, students can get a free tutor for whichever class(es) they are having trouble understanding. Whether it’s just one challenging concept or multiple, you will be matched up with a fellow student who has prior knowledge and success in the course.

“We have been offering peer tutoring at Millard West for 15 years or so,” Counselor Maureen Zohlen said. “To become a tutor, students need to express interest to their counselor and let us know which subjects they are comfortable tutoring. We check transcripts to ensure the student tutor has been successful in the courses in which they are going to be tutoring.”

Signing up to get a tutor might be daunting at first, as some students might feel scared or embarrassed to be matched up with a fellow peer. However, no student should feel that way. Every tutor is there to help and is guaranteed to be a beneficial resource.

“I became a tutor mostly because I love to teach other kids what I’ve learned,” junior Mackenzie Ostronic said. “I think that it can really benefit kids and I really like



On Oct. 8, while seniors and freshmen slept in, the class of 2028 was completing their Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA). Students are required to pass the AWA as part of their graduation requirements.

to teach what I’ve been taught before. Also, it’s a great way to review and I like to help people whenever I can, but it doubles as a great volunteer opportunity.”

When a student gets assigned a tutor they can expect some of the best students Millard West has to offer. They will come to each session prepared in whatever subject, and bring helpful material to each lesson.

“To prepare to tutor someone I usually retouch on the subject,” junior Grace Heftie said. “If it’s like a math or spanish class I haven’t taken in a while then I go through my notes, so I keep all my notes from prior

years just in case I have to tutor someone. I also try to think about what works for me, and tell them tips that I use while explaining things in ways that anyone could understand.”

The tutoring program at Millard West is more than extra help. It’s a great way for students to support one another academically, while also building confidence in all aspects.

As the program continues into future years it can be expected and encouraged to see new faces to lend and reach for a helping hand.