CLEMSON AMONG 'BEST VALUES'

College of Charleston, USC also named on Kiplinger's annual list

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Clemson University maintained its ranking as one of the best values in public education in the nation, while the University of South Carolina improved its standing and the College of Charleston slipped slightly but was still considered a good deal, according to Kiplinger magazine's annual 100 Best Values in Public Education ratings released Thursday.

But the annual cost of education at Clemson was the highest among the three in South Carolina that made the Top 100 list, not taking into account need-based and non-need based financial aid which lowered actual costs for students, according to Kiplinger.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill topped the list as the nation's best value.

Clemson was ranked 34th for in-state students and 39th for nonresident students, according to Kiplinger, which took into account academic quality, cost and financial aid. Analysis of academic quality includes SAT or ACT scores, admission and retention rates, student-faculty ratios, and four- and six-year graduation rates.

USC ranked 35th for in-state students, an improvement from its 57th ranking last year, and 50th for nonresident students compared to its 59th ranking last year.

The College of Charleston ranked 68th for in-state students and 82nd for nonresidents compared to last year's ranking of 61st for in-state and 59th for nonresidents.

Among the three, Clemson had the highest graduation rates, according to Kiplinger: 54 percent over four years and 80 percent over six years. USC's rate was 51 percent over four years and 70 percent over six years; and Charleston's was 52 percent over four years and 63

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percent for six years.

The annual cost of education at Clemson, not taking into account financial aid, was $22,088 for in-state students and $39,016 for nonresidents, based on account tuition, fees, room and board and estimated book expenses, according to Kiplinger.

The cost of education at USC was $19,925 for in-state students and $37,081 for other students.

The yearly cost at College of Charleston was $21,546 per school year for in-state students and $36,932 for nonresidents.

The cost for in-state students with need-based aid factored in was $17,667 at Clemson, $14,648 at USC and $18,530 at the College of Charleston. For nonresidents, it was $34,595 at Clemson, $31,804 at USC and $33,916 at Charleston, according to Kiplinger.

The cost for in-state students with non-need-based aid factored in was $19,808 at Clemson, $13,668 at USC and $26,601 at Charleston.

The state Commission on Higher Education reports that tuition and fees for undergraduates increased by 3 percent from the 2011-12 school year to $12,674 for in-state students at Clemson, by 3.1 percent to $10,168 at USC and by 3.1 percent to $9,918 at Charleston.

For others students, the increase was 4 percent to $29,600 at Clemson, 4.9 percent to $27,644 at USC and 4 percent to $25,304 at Charleston.

The average debt after graduation was $25,826 at Clemson, $24,837 at USC and $26,024 at Charleston, according to the Kiplinger report.