



News Release

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Ridgewater Repeats Rank as #1 in Minnesota Community College ranking

HUTCHINSON and WILLMAR, MN – For the second consecutive year, Ridgewater College received top honors among Minnesota’s best community colleges, according to a recent review, *2021 Best Community Colleges in Minnesota*, published by www.niche.com.

In addition to repeating top state honors, Ridgewater also ranked nationally in the top 20 for the second consecutive year.

The Niche ranking is based on a rigorous analysis of academic, financial, and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education, along with millions of reviews from students and alumni, states the www.niche.com website.

Beyond earning top Minnesota honors, Ridgewater also earned a #3 ranking for specific comparisons in best value, academics, student life, and safety. The best professors category was close behind at #4.

The evaluation considered nine key indicators for which it graded junior colleges, public technical schools, and all other public two-year colleges: academics, value, professors/faculty, safety, campus facilities, diversity, student life, student experience surveys, and location.

Evaluators gave Ridgewater College a B+ overall grade, which was calculated with the following specific grades: safety earned an A+ grade, student life earned an A, and professors, diversity, and value all earned B grades. Location received a B-.

The admissions highlight included a 100% acceptance rate. A highlight about cost stated that 85% of students receive financial aid. Of survey respondents, 100% of students said they feel they are getting their money’s worth.

An academics highlight highly commended faculty with 100% positive feedback for the great effort they put into teaching their classes and students having a manageable course workload. More than 80% students said it is easy to get the classes they want.

“It is great to see our college and the Minnesota State system once again get national and state-wide recognition,” said Ridgewater College President Dr. Craig Johnson. “We know that our college provides students with a great value proposition for an education option, offering a low tuition rate with strong faculty, small classes and quality programs that have a great track for student employment and job success. It is especially encouraging to see that we get a very

high rating for safety, as we are doing all we can during the COVID-19 crisis to make sure our campuses are as safe and secure as possible for our students and employees.”

The Niche ranking also compared community colleges throughout the nation, where Ridgewater landed at number 17 of 853 colleges, up a notch from last year.

The ranking included more than 100 student and alumni reviews considered by evaluators. One five-star online student reviewer stated, “I take all my classes online. I work full time and take my classes after hours. It's very accommodating. I can reach out to my professors if I have questions and will hear back fairly quickly. Usually that same night!”

Another review commended instructors and facilities: “All the professors are really helpful and kind. They want to see you succeed. The building is great and super easy to navigate.”

Top 10 Online Recognition

In addition to the repeat #1 ranking, Ridgewater was also named among Minnesota’s top 10 online community colleges this summer, coming in at #7 in a ranking by www.onlineu.com. Ridgewater offers online flexibility for students with 12 associate degrees and 13 certificates, and growing. Its newest option just this fall is a Poultry Certificate, while its most established degree is Ridgewater’s Computer-Aided Drafting and Design Associate degree, which has been fully online for 11 years. The CADD program received national recognition back in February by being ranked #2 in the nation for online associate degrees by www.bestcolleges.com.

Learn more

For more information about Ridgewater College, go to www.ridgewater.edu.

To learn more about Ridgewater’s rankings, go to www.niche.com, www.onlineu.com/best-online-community-colleges/minnesota or www.bestcolleges.com.

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 340,000 students. It is the third largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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