

**Basic Information:**

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Entry Category: Infographic

Title of Entry: Our Tuition Promise: "The College Tuition Myth"

Client: Rosemont College

**100-Word Description:**

When Rosemont College announced a dramatic, 43 percent reduction in its tuition, it partnered with Buchanan Public Relations to announce the bold news. While the tuition reset was news itself, Rosemont wanted to go a step further and shine a light on a college financing system that was muddled and confusing. Buchanan PR developed a provocative and appealing infographic to quickly tell the story of the broken tuition model and set the stage for Rosemont's dramatic reduction. Distributed with the news release, the infographic was run, untouched, in a major *Washington Post* story.

## **Program Overview/Objectives**

### **Situation Analysis**

The college financing system is confusing. That's part of why Rosemont College, a private, liberal arts college in suburban Philadelphia, made the bold decision to lower tuition by 43 percent, moving from a high-price, high-discount model to a low-price, low-discount model. Rosemont wanted to not only generate attention for its dramatic price cut -- it also wanted to shed light and increase understanding of a complex and broken pricing model. Buchanan Public Relations was engaged to help Rosemont College announce its tuition reset and explain the confusing and outdated college tuition model.

### **Goals**

To shed light on the complex and "broken" college tuition model and to present Rosemont College's *Our Tuition Promise* as an alternative to that model.

### **Target Audiences**

One of Rosemont College's goals in resetting its tuition was to gain visibility among students who would have previously overlooked Rosemont because of its high sticker price. The second goal of the initiative was to take a leadership role in a national conversation about our broken tuition model and the ways in which it hurts both families and universities. Keeping both of these goals in mind, Buchanan PR sought to create an infographic that would reach prospective students as well as inform the general public about the college tuition myth.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the infographic were:

- To include in at least one news story
- To reach a potential audience of at least one million

## **Execution**

### **Rationale for Infographic Tactic**

Buchanan PR determined that an infographic – with its emphasis on engaging and visually appealing graphics to tell a story – was a perfect vehicle to communicate the flaws of the current tuition model and to illustrate the dramatic drop in price by Rosemont. Most families do not understand that a college's published tuition price is one that few students end up paying. To make this point, Buchanan PR used just-published research from the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). While the average published tuition at private colleges is now \$31,320, a staggering 89 percent of freshmen pay a discounted price. That means that only 11 percent of first-year college students are paying the full \$31,320.

A third statistic by NACUBO, indicating that the average discount across the nation was 48 percent, was also included in the infographic.

Together, these opening three statistics from the leading higher education business organization painted a literal picture of a system that is based on artificial pricing. This set the stage for the final statistic of the infographic – a bar chart that illustrated Rosemont's dramatic price reduction.

### **Delivery Method**

The infographic was distributed as part of a news release over the wire and manually sent to select reporters. It was also offered to journalists as part of the media kit.

### **Design Considerations**

Buchanan PR sought to create an infographic that was media-ready and that would appeal to both parents and students. We matched the design colors to complement the logo and aimed for a pleasing balance of text and images.

The infographic included statistics to help consumers better understand the numbers game that's played in the college financing system. It displayed the average published tuition at private colleges, or "the sticker price," as well as the percentage of freshmen who paid a discounted price in the 2014-2015 school year and the percentage who paid full price.

The infographic also included the average tuition discount at private colleges in the 2014-2015 school year – 48 percent. Finally, the infographic included a bar graph to display Rosemont's *Our Tuition Promise* by the numbers. It contrasted the old tuition of \$32,620 with the new tuition of \$18,500, the old room and board of \$13,400 with the new room and board of \$11,500, and the old total of \$46,020 with the new total of \$30,000.

It was all packaged under the provocative headline of "The College Tuition Myth."

### **Evaluation/Results**

The infographic was included in the wire release, which was picked up more than 99 times, reaching a combined circulation of more than 133 million.

The infographic also ran in the *Washington Post* in a feature story on Rosemont College, "[Is resetting tuition the solution to the broken college pricing model? This school thinks so](#)" and in a *Main Line Times* article, "[Rosemont College announces it will cut tuition by nearly half.](#)"