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City asks for payments; most colleges don't pay in full

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People walk through the Harvard University campus.

By [Laura Krantz](#)

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 18, 2017

For the fifth year in a row the majority of colleges in Boston did not pay the city the full amount it requested to help cover the cost of municipal services, newly released city data show.

Of the 19 colleges and universities in Boston, 14 paid less than what was requested in fiscal year 2017, which ended in June.

None of the eight colleges with the most valuable real estate paid the full amount requested by the city, including Harvard, Boston University, and Northeastern. Tufts is the only major university that did.

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“It’s disappointing, obviously, that these schools continue to not do it, in particular Northeastern,” said Boston City Councilor Josh Zakim.

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Harvard paid 53 percent of its assessment. Northeastern paid 24 percent, and Boston College 19 percent.

Under a six-year-old program — called PILOT, for Payment in Lieu of Tax — the city asks nonprofits with more than \$15 million worth of tax-exempt property in Boston to help offset the cost of police and fire protection, snow removal, and other services. The payments are voluntary.

The total value of the land owned by the 19 colleges is \$7.2 billion, according to city data. If that property was taxable, the city would be entitled to \$223.7 million. Instead, the city requested PILOT payments totaling \$26.9 million from colleges and universities and received \$13.4 million, data show.

Zakim said the PILOT payments requested are reasonable because they take into account the intangible assets the universities provide the city. But, he said, the city relies primarily on property taxes to pay for city services, and when so much city land is tax-exempt, it makes things difficult.

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“City services cost money, and everyone benefits from the services,” he said.

The city also requests PILOT payments from a few private high schools as well as large medical and cultural institutions. The Boston Symphony Orchestra and WGBH paid in full. So did Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Children’s Hospital, Boston Medical Center, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary.

Among those that paid nothing: Franciscan Hospital, Joslin Diabetes Center, the Museum of Science and the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Boston Children’s Museum, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Overall, the city received \$32.4 million of the \$49.5 million it requested in PILOT payments from all

institutions, or about 65 percent. That is about \$300,000 more than it received last year.

Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh called the PILOT program a “vital partnership used to fund important city programming.” In a statement Friday, he said the city is encouraged by increased participation and is evaluating the program.

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“We will continue to work with all institutions to maintain and increase this program’s success,” the mayor’s statement said.

Five colleges paid in full: Boston Architectural College, MCPHS University, New England College of Optometry, the Showa Institute, and Tufts.

Most schools paid in part. The city’s smaller colleges generally paid a smaller percentage of their assessment. Emerson College paid 15 percent and Emmanuel College paid 11 percent, according to the city.

Fisher College, New England Conservatory, Simmons College, and Wheelock College paid nothing.

For decades, Boston negotiated payments individually with nonprofits when they built a facility or acquired property. But starting in fiscal year 2012, the city established a structured system and began to incrementally increase the amounts requested from the institutions.

Institutions can fulfill up to half of their obligation through a “community benefits credit” — demonstrating that they provide services that benefit Boston residents.

The rules were drafted by a task force that included representatives from an assortment of nonprofits, including leaders of city colleges.

The schools that paid in full generally have done so for the past six years. Other schools, like Northeastern, paid 100 percent five years ago but their payments have dwindled, data show.

Simmons paid 100 percent of the city's request in fiscal year 2012, but this year paid zero. BU also paid in full the first year of the program and this year paid 76 percent.

Harvard spokeswoman Melodie Jackson said the school tries to strike a balance between paying taxes on its taxable property, making some PILOT payments, and funding programs in the neighborhoods where it owns land.

According to the school, it also paid \$7.8 million in taxes in fiscal 2017. Harvard is in the midst of a [major expansion into Allston](#) and now owns more land in Boston than it does in Cambridge.

A spokesman for Boston College said the school does not participate in the PILOT program. He said the school pays \$335,250 to the city of Boston and \$125,000 to the city of Newton for fire protection services.

“As a Jesuit, Catholic university committed to service, we believe that the best way we can assist the city of Boston is through the more than \$30 million in community benefits that we provide to the city and its residents each year through scholarships, jobs, volunteer outreach, community grants, and the public and private grants we procure for Boston's public and parochial schools,” spokesman Jack Dunn wrote in an e-mail on Friday.

Emerson College President Lee Pelton defended its low payment by mentioning other ways the school has contributed to the city.

Emerson is in the third year of a four-year, \$270 million facilities upgrade that includes a new dormitory and renovation of an old dormitory that by 2019 will remove 700 students from off-campus apartments, Pelton said in a statement.

He also said the school's partnership with Ambassador Theatre Group will revitalize the Theater District, create new jobs, and help other local businesses.

Boston nonprofits' payments in lieu of taxes

Figures are for fiscal year 2017, which ended June 30.

Nonprofit	Type	Would owe, if taxable	Requested	% paid
Boston University	College	\$64.31m	\$8.05m	76%
Mass General Hospital	Medical	\$55.44m	\$7.04m	98%
Harvard University	College	\$48.08m	\$6.09m	53%
Northeastern University	College	\$44.19m	\$5.48m	24%
Beth Israel Deaconess	Medical	\$25.24m	\$3.17m	100%
Brigham and Women's Hospital	Medical	\$24.55m	\$3.09m	98%
Boston College	College	\$16.33m	\$1.75m	19%
Tufts Medical Center	Medical	\$12.45m	\$1.54m	77%
Museum of Fine Arts	Cultural	\$8.77m	\$1.06m	6%
Emerson College	College	\$7.79m	\$938k	15%
Dana Farber Cancer Institute	Medical	\$7.7m	\$927k	100%
Boston Children's Hospital	Medical	\$20.51m	\$808k	100%
Wentworth Institute of Technology	College	\$6.46m	\$769k	49%
Emmanuel College	College	\$6.04m	\$714k	11%
Suffolk University	College	\$5.78m	\$681k	66%
Faulkner Hospital	Medical	\$5.03m	\$584k	98%
Tufts University	College	\$4.91m	\$570k	100%
Spaulding Rehab Hospital	Medical	\$4.78m	\$553k	98%
Boston Medical Center	Medical	\$8.69m	\$519k	100%
Simmons College	College	\$4.34m	\$496k	0%
Berklee College	College	\$4.64m	\$467k	53%
New England Baptist Hospital	Medical	\$4.1m	\$466k	80%
Mass Eye & Ear Infirmary	Medical	\$3.63m	\$405k	100%
Harvard Vanguard	Medical	\$3.41m	\$377k	55%
MCPHS University	College	\$3.39m	\$375k	100%
Shriners Hospital	Medical	\$3.29m	\$362k	0%
Joslin Diabetes Center	Medical	\$2.68m	\$284k	0%
New England Aquarium	Cultural	\$2.18m	\$219k	0%
Wheelock College	College	\$1.7m	\$158k	0%
Roxbury Latin School	School	\$1.64m	\$150k	0%

MASCO	Cultural	\$1.58m	\$143k	100%
Franciscan Hospital	Medical	\$1.56m	\$141k	0%
WGBH	Cultural	\$1.55m	\$139k	100%
Fisher College	College	\$1.39m	\$118k	0%
Showa Institute	College	\$1.33m	\$110k	100%
Winsor School	School	\$1.28m	\$105k	0%
Institute of Contemporary Art	Cultural	\$1.15m	\$88k	0%
Museum of Science	Cultural	\$1.08m	\$79k	0%
Children's Museum	Cultural	\$963k	\$64k	0%
Bayridge Center	Cultural	\$925k	\$59k	16%
New England Conservatory	College	\$923k	\$59k	0%
Boston Symphony Orchestra	Cultural	\$906k	\$56k	100%
Hebrew Rehabilitation Center	Medical	\$1.3m	\$53k	48%
Gardner Museum	Cultural	\$865k	\$51k	0%
Boston College High School	School	\$844k	\$48k	0%
New England College of Optometry	College	\$778k	\$40k	100%
Boston Conservatory	College	\$706k	\$31k	0%
Boston Architectural College	College	\$592k	\$16k	100%
Catholic Memorial	School	\$506k	\$5k	0%

SOURCE: City of Boston

Matt Rocheleau of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Laura Krantz can be reached at laura.krantz@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@laurakrantz](https://twitter.com/laurakrantz).

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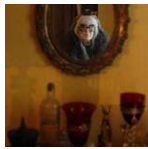
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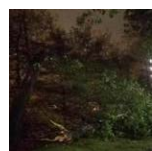
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