

'Sugar Daddy' solution gains ground among female college students



By [Natasha Lindstrom](#)
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More than 200 women from Pittsburgh-area colleges are turning to a controversial solution for avoiding student loans: Going online to land a so-called "Sugar Daddy."

[SeekingArrangement.com](#), which touts itself as the world's largest Sugar Daddy dating site, reported Monday a recent surge in student sign-ups.

The website, which calls itself an online dating service for "mutually beneficial relationships," encourages wealthy, generous men, the Sugar Daddies, to connect with so-called "Sugar Babies," or attractive young women looking to "experience a luxurious lifestyle."

"College Sugar Babies receive an average \$3,000 per month allowances and gifts from Sugar Daddies," the website boasts. "Don't waste precious study hours at a minimum wage job."

Forty-two percent of the website's 3.5 million members worldwide are university students, the company reports. The average user is 27.

"It's just a great opportunity for girls who are considering forgoing college because they don't want to be in debt," website spokeswoman Brook Kuric said.

The Las Vegas-based company and ones like it have drawn fierce criticism from those who liken the type of "arrangements" being promoted to prostitution. A billboard advertising one of Seeking Arrangement's Toronto-based competitors spurred controversy when it went up in July 2013 on Route 88 in Overbrook.

"Prostitution is illegal, obviously, and we take a lot of measures to get those people off of our site and prevent them from joining," Kuric said. "These girls are not escorts."

Kent State, Penn State and Temple University made SeekingArrangement.com's list of the top 20 fastest-growing Sugar Baby schools, each with 160 to nearly 400 new student sign-ups in 2014. They joined a mix of public and private schools nationwide, from the University of Texas and Arizona State University to Columbia University and Florida State University.

The University of Pittsburgh had 164 newly registered Sugar Babies, Carnegie Mellon had 23, California University of Pennsylvania had 12, and Duquesne University had seven, the website's registered university email addresses show.

By marketing directly to students, the services are tapping into a large market.

Roughly 37 million Americans are saddled with \$1 trillion in student loan debt, which now tops the totals for either credit cards or auto loans, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Pitt's base undergraduate in-state tuition is \$16,872 a year, among the highest rates for public universities in the nation.

“I just think it's really sad that young women want feel the need to resort to these kinds of things in order to fund their college or get ahead,” said Lynn Knezevich, executive director of Gwen's Girls, a North Side-based nonprofit aimed at empowering young girls and women. “They're not valuing themselves, and they're going to more or less sell themselves to their ‘companions.’ ”

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