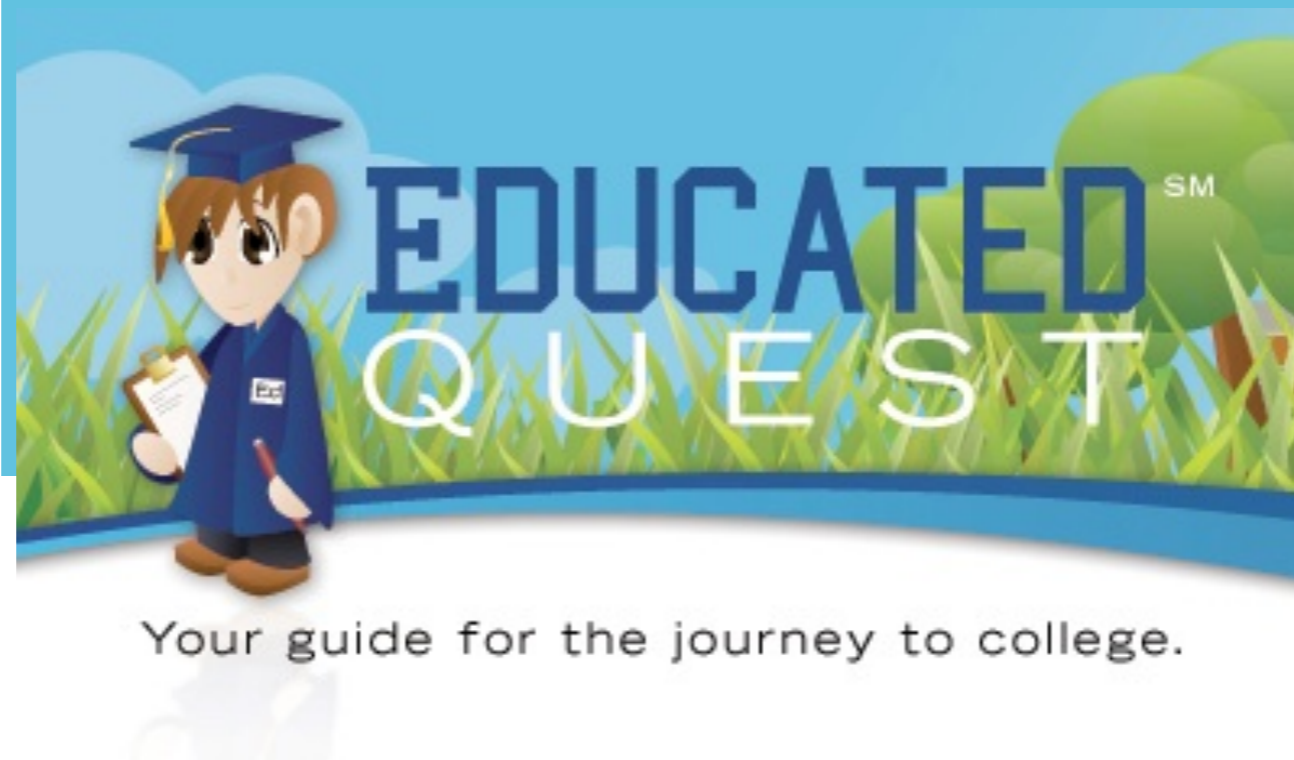


First Impressions: Muhlenberg College



Your guide for the journey to college.

Background

**Introduction to Muhlenberg
College**

Background

Founded in 1848 as the Allentown Seminary, Muhlenberg College was later named for Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the eighteenth-century patriarch of Lutheranism in America. His great-grandson, Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, D.D, became president of the college in 1867.

While chartered as a Lutheran institution, Muhlenberg is quite welcoming to members of all faiths. For example, according to Hillel.org, Muhlenberg is one of the top 60 colleges attracting Jewish students. Approximately 750 of the college's 2,300 undergraduates are Jews. Another third are Catholic while a quarter are Protestant. The college also has an academic advisor who assists students who want to attend theological seminaries after graduation, unique for a small school.

Today Muhlenberg appeals largely to students who live in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states though students from other regions and countries are represented. Students from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York represent the largest share of the student population, with more than one third coming from New Jersey alone. Allentown, the college's home, is quite close to the Pennsylvania-New Jersey border.

Muhlenberg attracts very good-to-excellent students; they stay and they finish. While test-optional, the middle 50 percent of accepted students scored between 1140 and 1340 (out of 1600)

on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the SAT. The college retained 93 percent of the freshman class that entered in 2012. Eighty percent of the class that entered in 2009 graduated within four years. According to the 2014 U.S. News Best College's guide, Muhlenberg's actual six-year graduation rate for the class that entered in 2006 (87 percent) respectable exceeded its Predicted Graduation Rate (80 percent). The difference was higher than for the college's most immediate competition in Pennsylvania such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg as well as more selective colleges in the Keystone State such as Bucknell, Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore.

While Muhlenberg is considered a National Liberal Arts College (more than half of all degrees granted are in liberal arts majors) the school has extremely comprehensive Business and Theater programs, joint degree programs in Engineering, Health Professions and Medicine and a certificate program in Education (K-12). Biological Sciences, Theater and Neuroscience are the three most popular majors. Approximately one-fifth of the student body is involved with theater either as a participant and/or an academic pursuit.

It's extremely difficult to categorize Muhlenberg as one type of school or another. It is reasonably selective--last year there were 5,500 applicants for 580 seats in the freshman class, with half admitted through Early Decision--though not "elite." A stu-

dent with a 3.5 or better in a strong college preparatory program and SAT scores of 1300 or better can qualify for merit-based aid that s/he would not receive from "higher ranked" schools. Overall, less than half of those who apply get accepted.

Muhlenberg is diverse in terms of religious orientation, but not an ethnically diverse institution. Less than four percent of the student population comes from under-represented minority groups. The lack of a dominant academic or social group, as well as the opportunity choose from an impressive variety of majors and minors as well as participate in varied clubs, organizations and sports may be Muhlenberg's strengths. Greek life, for example, has long been a staple of social activity at schools such as Colgate or Union though it is non-existent at other liberal arts colleges such as Skidmore. Muhlenberg students have the option to participate though they're less likely to feel "out of the loop" if they do not. However, Muhlenberg, like other liberal arts colleges, is not the best option for a wallflower who does not want to get involved in the campus or community.

Competition



**What does it take to get in?
Who decides to go?
What other schools do
applicants consider?**

Competition

Muhlenberg attracts a very bright student, usually from a Mid-Atlantic state (New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and of course Pennsylvania), who is professionally motivated but does not want to attend a larger school. In 2012-13 Muhlenberg received approximately 5,100 applications for 580 seats in the freshman class. Around 40 percent were offered admission. About half the class was filled by students who had applied Early Decision. Students who applied Early Decision were accepted at twice the rate of those who applied under Regular Admission. On average their SAT's were 100 points higher than the median for the class (around 1240 out of 1600). Their grade point averages were a quarter point higher. The college also offered approximately 1,800 applicants a place on the waiting list, but admitted only 52.

One reason for the popularity of Early Decision is that the college will do an "early read" of the CSS Profile to help determine the financial need for students interested in applying Early Decision. Those who are not satisfied with the results from the early read are under no obligation to apply. Those who do and are accepted for admis-

sion receive notice of their award quickly. Muhlenberg is also unique in that the Early Decision deadline is February 15th (for joint-degree programs it is January 1st), though Early Decision applications are reviewed starting in November. Early Decision means a faster decision, as well an obligation to withdraw applications from other schools, provided that the college and family agree that the financial aid offer is sufficient.

Muhlenberg is also one of the selective liberal arts colleges that practices test-optional admissions. Currently 15 percent of applicants do not submit either SAT or ACT scores when they apply. In the case of students who apply for a talent-based major such as music or theater, test score results do not matter. These students remain eligible for talent-based scholarships in amounts of \$4,000 per year. However, students who wish to be considered for merit-based academic aid must submit test scores.

Because of the college's location and applicant pool, Muhlenberg is cross-shopped most frequently against other Eastern and Central Pennsylvania private liberal

arts colleges including Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg, Dickinson, Lafayette and Ursinus. The college is also cross-shopped against Lehigh, a mid-sized, highly-selective national research university in nearby Bethlehem. Among its in-state competition Muhlenberg is most similar to Dickinson in terms of its mix of majors and the student body size. However, it has far more joint degree programs than any in-state competitor, especially in the health sciences. Within a larger Mid-Atlantic region, Muhlenberg is most similar to Skidmore College (NY), which also [offers a larger selection of joint degree programs](#) than most selective liberal arts colleges and has about the same number of students.

Those who are interested in Muhlenberg for the joint degree programs should keep in mind that [there are extra steps to the application process](#). Admission to these programs is more competitive than admission to the college itself. However, these programs are a major attraction that is not offered by many similar liberal arts schools, including sister schools in Pennsylvania.

Costs

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Tuition and Fees
Scholarships
Net Prices
Debt

Costs

Muhlenberg charged a comprehensive fee (tuition and fees, room and board) of approximately \$52,800 for the 2013-14 school year. This represented an increase of around three percent from the previous year, according to [College Navigator, the U.S. Department of Education's college search site](#). The college estimates between \$1,300 and \$1,400 for books and supplies and \$1,200 for additional expenses. While most students pursue a four-course load each semester, they may take a fifth class for no extra charge. All applicants must submit the FAFSA and the CSS Profile.

Muhlenberg has some of more transparent financial aid practices in college admissions. The college admits to “preferential pricing,” aka “need-aware” admissions. This means that the higher a student ranks in the applicant pool (usually the top third), the more likely their package will be weighted more heavily towards scholarships first, a job second, and loans third. Students ranking in the bottom quarter of the class will have a package weighed more the other way. Students who rank in the upper third of the class typically score 1,300 (out of 1,600) or higher on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the SAT with a GPA of 3.7 or higher, according to Christopher Hooker-Haring, the college's Dean of Admissions.

The college allocates 40 percent of its grants and scholarships for the freshman class; the dollar amount is increased annually, says Hooker-Haring. The remaining classes each receive 20 percent. The college allocated \$9.5 million in grants and scholarship dollars to entering freshmen in 2013; this, says Haring, will be increased to \$9.5 million in 2014. This is an average of approximately \$16,400 per entering freshman, if the size of the incoming class remains the same (around 580 students) as the previous year. The annual aid budget for freshmen is then allocated towards the sophomore class. Aid packages can change as families have more or fewer students in college.

Approximately 30 percent of financial aid dollars are awarded in merit-based scholarships, the largest award is \$10,000 per year, with three honors program each awarding \$4,000 annually. Students interested in music or theatre may audition for talent-based awards of \$4,000 per year. And, while most colleges use merit-based aid to fill all or part of a student's (and their family's) demonstrated need) Muhlenberg allows a students to keep up to \$6,000 in scholarship dollars *earned over their estimated need as long as the total aid package does not exceed the college's Total Cost of Attendance*. The Total Cost of Attendance includes the Comprehensive Fee (tuition and fees, room and board) plus estimates for books and supplies, travel home and expenses to live on campus This policy is a tremendous help to students who not only earn scholarships from Muhlenberg, but also receive scholarships from sources outside of the college and Pell Grants from the Federal Government. Mr. Hooker-Haring adds that the college will not package ParentPLUS loans as financial aid.

The result of these policies is that students who come from families with incomes of \$110,000 or higher, the largest quartile of the freshman class, receive an average discount (in scholarships and grants) that's just under a third of Muhlenberg's comprehensive fee. However, the average student loan borrowed freshmen was approximately \$9,000 in 2011-12, the last year data is available, according to TuitionTracker. Approximately half of the freshmen class has had to take out loans each year from 2008-09 through 2011-12. According to the Project on Student Debt, the average student borrower graduated from Muhlenberg in 2012 with just under \$26,000 in debt. The total is reasonable considering the additional costs of a private college and the \$27,000 maximum that a student may borrow in Federal Stafford Loans over a four-year period. Parents have also borrowed; the average Parent PLUS loan borrower borrowed just over \$18,000 for their student to attend Muhlenberg during the 2010-11 school year, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Parent's PLUS loan database. However, the number of parent borrowers represented less than ten percent of the student

body. This is a positive indication that the college does what it can to help families minimize debt. The table below shows that while Muhlenberg asked freshmen who entered in 2011-12 to borrow more, on average, than entering freshmen at the schools cross-shopped most often against the college, Muhlenberg also asked students and their families to borrow less. Considering only loans, Gettysburg comes closest helping students and their families avoid debt. It is also worthwhile to note that Muhlenberg's endowment (approximately \$150 million) is approximately \$80 million less than Gettysburg's. Muhlenberg's student body size is approximately the same as Franklin and Marshall's, while Franklin and Marshall's endowment is \$130 million larger. Yet Muhlenberg may be the more benevolent college over the duration of a student's education.

| College | Avg. Freshman Student Loan 2011-12 | Avg Indebtedness/ Student Borrower 2012 | Avg Parent PLUS Loan 2010-11 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Muhlenberg | \$9,020 | \$25,858 | \$18,005 |
| Dickinson | \$6,039 | \$25,574 | \$20,932 |
| Franklin and Marshall | \$5,155 | \$33,200 | \$23,130 |
| Gettysburg | \$4,876 | \$25,530 | \$18,343 |
| Lafayette | \$6,443 | \$26,717 | \$22,301 |
| Lehigh | \$7,291 | \$31,122 | \$21,523 |
| Ursinus | \$7,342 | \$40,652 | \$16,400 |

Comforts

4

On-Campus Housing
Local Housing Market

Comforts

Freshman residence halls at Muhlenberg are clustered together in traditional corridor-style (several rooms share a common bathroom). Brown is the all-female hall, Walz is co-ed by wing. Prosser, where freshmen are in the majority has a main building that is co-ed by wing and an annex that is co-ed by floor. Rooms in all halls are WiFi enabled. Rooms in Walz are air conditioned (Central A/C, rare for any college); students who live in other halls may request permission to bring a wall unit. The college will place students in triple rooms which are slightly larger than the doubles. The college requires all students to live with a roommate for two weeks until dissatisfied students can move.

After freshman year the number of housing options increases. Benfer, East, Robertson, South and 2201 Chew Street offer air-conditioned suite-style living. Taylor is also air conditioned, but a corridor-style building. Martin Luther, which offers singles, doubles and triples in a corridor-style arrangement has no air conditioning. Continuing students are assigned housing by lottery with rising seniors receiving first priority. The college also owns 47 MILE houses that provide two and three-

bedroom apartment living configurations. While these homes and apartment buildings are close to campus, like those owned by private landlords, lease terms follow the college's semester schedule. The college also charges only \$200 for a security deposit, instead of a month's rent charged by a private landlord.

Unique to Muhlenberg is Campus Cleaners, a start-up business founded as an Entrepreneurial Studies project. Student-run, but college-owned, Campus Cleaners picks up and delivers laundry at four locations on campus. This is an attractive option for students who do not want to do one of the more tedious, though important, college chores.

About a fifth of Muhlenberg students join fraternities or sororities, a smaller percentage than similar schools such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg. Sophomores may visit, then pledge one of three recognized fraternities after a three-week recruitment period during the fall; the college and its Inter-Fraternity Council may agree to have a one-week recruitment period in the spring. Sororities have the same three-week recruitment period during the fall to rush the five recog-

nized sororities. Prospective members must have at least a 2.5 GPA to be allowed to receive a bid in the four sororities that make up the college's Panhellenic Council.

With the current housing mix, more than 90 percent of Muhlenberg students live on campus, in MILE Houses or the Greek houses. Rents in privately-owned properties near campus range from \$450 to \$600 per month plus utilities. However, unless a student is committed to summer courses or research or an internship in the vicinity of campus, it does not pay to commit to a lease with a private landlord. While the college offers summer courses and research opportunities for students to work with faculty, the student population drops too dramatically to make it possible to sublet private housing.

Community

5

Campus
Environs
School Spirit

Community

Muhlenberg has a compact (82 acre) campus located within Allentown, Pennsylvania's third most populous city after Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

While mis-portrayed as a declining steel town in a 1982 Billy Joel song, Allentown was more famous for its silk and textile industry as well as railroads, breweries and heavy manufacturing. While Joel was [given a key to the city](#) after *Allentown* became a hit, the city and region have evolved around a service economy. The Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton metro area has become the fastest growing region, in terms of population, in the Keystone State. The Lehigh Valley Health and Hospital Network is the largest employer in the region. Pennsylvania Power and Light and Air Products, among other corporations, are headquartered here. Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom, a 200-acre amusement center off Interstate 78, traces its history in Allentown back to 1860. Allentown is also home to the Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs, the Philadelphia Phillies' AAA minor-league baseball team. The Lehigh Valley Phantoms, the minor-league affiliate of the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers begin play in Allentown next season. The Lehigh Valley Shopping Mall has more than 200 stores..

The problem is that none of these amenities are close to the Muhlenberg campus. Although the campus is surrounded by a stable residential neighborhood and adjacent to the Cedar Creek Parkway, a beautifully-maintained 120-acre city park, the

trek into downtown, in opposite direction from the park, is not safe to walk. A Cardinal Shuttle--the college's sports teams were formerly named the Cardinals--is the way to go to the shopping malls and to a large and an impressive farmer's market. Otherwise, it is a good idea to have access to a car, or a friend who has one for travel off campus. Shuttle service to Allentown's bus station is also provided, connecting students to New York and Philadelphia. The college allows all upper-class students to have cars; the fee for a parking permit is only \$50. However, parking on campus is tight.

Muhlenberg has an impressive set of amenities on a small campus footprint. One can walk this campus end-to-end in around 15 minutes. The performing arts center is modern and superior to facilities at much larger and better-endowed colleges. Recent renovations have given this school exceptionally modern library, dining and student center facilities for a small college. Student participation in theatre, music and dance is very high, even among non-majors, which adds much to the cultural offerings on campus. The college has also been on the President's Honor Roll for Community Service since 2008.

The college's Greek community is large enough to be noticed--about a fifth of the student body belongs to fraternities and sororities--but it does not dominate the social scene on campus. The college has never been noted as a "party school" in any print college guide. The college participates in 22 sports in

the Centennial Conference, considered one of the "smartest" conferences in the country after the Ivy League, has produced a winning football program. [Muhlenberg has won over 70 percent of their games since 2000.](#) The college has also ranked consistently at the top of its conference in men's soccer, wrestling, women's basketball and softball. This past fall, Muhlenberg shared a conference championship in women's volleyball. Yet Muhlenberg has never been noted in any college guide as a "jock" school.

Liquor law violations are the most reported crime on campus according to [Muhlenberg's 2013-14 Clery Report.](#) In 2012 there were 54 alcohol-related arrests, more than double the 24 in 2010. There were also 204 alcohol-related disciplinary referrals, up from 178 two years before, high numbers for a school with around 2,500 students. The number of reported incidents of vandalism is surprisingly high though it has declined from 154 in 2010 to 91 in 2012. Larceny-thefts have been on the downswing as well from 72 to 55. There were also six reported sexually-related offenses in 2012. Incidents of drug-related crimes are extremely low, even for a small school. There were no drug-related arrests in 2012 and only 21 incidents requiring disciplinary referrals.

Curriculum

6

Academics
Honors Programs
Experiential Learning

Curriculum

Muhlenberg offers 40 majors and nearly as many minors. Incoming freshmen must take a First-Year Seminar, a small discussion-focused class. The other requirements are typical of a liberal arts education:

- Two writing-intensive courses, one in the student's major.
- Competency in a foreign language to qualify (but not necessarily enroll) in a 300-level conversational course. This can be satisfied through a proficiency exam or by taking two semesters of a new language.
- One course in mathematics or logic
- One course in the arts
- Three courses in the humanities
- Two courses in mathematics or sciences
- Two courses in the social sciences
- One semester of Principles of Fitness and Wellness
- Two Cluster Courses around a shared area of interest, theme, or question, examining it from the perspective of each discipline
- Two courses in the areas of Human Difference and Global Engagement (these may also count as Cluster Courses)

-
- A Capstone experience than can be an independent study or research project or an assignment within a class.

Muhlenberg allows enough overlap between the major and general academic requirements to make it easy for students to graduate in four years with more than one major or multiple minors. The college allows students to take five courses per semester--the fifth can be taken at no extra charge--though a typical load is only four. The option of a fifth class allows students to complete most of the general academic requirements by the sophomore year as well as eight additional classes that can be combined for double majors or multiple minors. In addition, about half of Muhlenberg students earn credits through study abroad.

While Muhlenberg is a fairly small (approximately 2,400 students) school, it has an impressive mix of pre-professional and liberal arts majors. It is easier to pursue a dual major in a business field (Accounting, Finance, Management or Marketing) and a liberal arts subject here than at a larger university that has separate business and liberal arts schools. The college also offers education certificates to teach in Pre K through 4th grade, 5th through 8th grade and secondary schools as well as joint Music Education program with nearby Moravian College.

Muhlenberg's stand-out draw is joint degree programs. In addition to the Music Education partnership with Moravian, students can pursue a 3-2 Engineering program with Columbia University. Muhlenberg is also one of the few liberal arts colleges that offers [As-](#)

[sured Admission programs leading to the MD as well as Dentistry, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Optometry.](#) This contributes to the popularity of the Biological Sciences and Psychology on campus.

While the choices in business, education and the joint degree programs stand out among similarly selective liberal arts colleges, they may also create a very competitive academic environment. In a setting where so many people are goal oriented there will always be some who fall short. In addition, introductory classes that are required for the more popular majors or the joint degree programs: Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Physics and Psychology are larger than they are likely to be at similar schools. The college reported to U.S. News that only one percent of its classes have more than 50 students. However, other schools including Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg reported that none of their classes are this large. But by comparison, 12 percent of Lehigh University classes enrolled 50 or more.

Muhlenberg students gave their faculty an average rating of 3.71 (out of 5) on RateMyProfessors.com. By comparison, Dickinson students gave their faculty a 3.80, Franklin and Marshall students gave theirs a 3.83, Gettysburg students awarded a 3.68, Lafayette students a 3.84, Lehigh students gave their professors an average of 3.67 and Ursinus students gave theirs an average of 3.85.

Connections

Alumni Relations
Career Services

Connections

Muhlenberg's career development center is well staffed for a small school. It has five professionals as well as five Career Assistants, all students, and six Student Workers. Career Assistants are peer counselors trained to critique resumes and cover letters, and answer general career-related questions.

In addition to providing job listings, resume reviews and interview workshops the career development center engages alumni through a series of panel scheduled throughout the school year as well as a one-day Shadowing Program that students can participate in during Winter Break. Students interested in the Shadowing Program sign up in October and attend an orientation session before they are matched with a sponsoring alumnus. Students entering their senior year register for a Senior Year Experience which is managed by a full-time professional. The Senior Year Experience covers preparation for the job search, continuing on to further education and becoming settled in life after college. The program also has its own [Facebook page](#).

More than half of students gain career-related experience before graduation. “Career Road Trips” are arranged to visit area businesses such as Lutron, PPL and ArtsQuest. Students are also connected with prospective employers at the first nonprofit internship fair. The career development center and the college’s Office of Community Engagement and Air Products, an area corporation, co-developed an internship program for students with stipends when employed with nonprofits.

The career development center also supports two LinkedIn networking groups. The Muhlenberg College Career group has approximately 350 members while the Muhlenberg Alumni and Student Networking Group has more than 3,600, impressive for a small college. In 2012-13 MuhlNet, the school’s secure alumni volunteer database had 667 members and facilitated 246 connections, according to the college’s [Annual Report](#).

However, unlike more selective liberal arts colleges, Muhlenberg is not a member of the Liberal Arts Career Network nor the Selective Liberal Arts Colleges jobs network. While the Muhlenberg LinkedIn networks are invaluable, schools that are often cross-shopped with Muh-

lenberg including Dickinson, Lafayette, Skidmore and Union have access to the multi-school jobs networks. Within Pennsylvania alone, Bryn Mawr, Dickinson and Haverford are in both multi-school networks. The College of Wooster (OH), which has the same *U.S. News* ranking (65th) among National Liberal Arts Colleges as Muhlenberg, is a member of the Liberal Arts Career Network.

In its [2012-13 Annual Report](#), the college stated that their research showed that 95 percent of Muhlenberg students are employed or in graduate or professional school within one year of graduation, an excellent record for any four-year school.

Conclusions

Summing up



Conclusions

Judging by the college's admissions and financial aid practices, Muhlenberg has done an excellent job at recruiting a student body that is mature, satisfied and successful. The college also assembles very attractive financial aid packages for the students it really wants. The campus is also quite attractive and well maintained. Muhlenberg is well-located for interviews for internships as well as full-time jobs after graduation. The college also has an impressive on-campus housing mix for a small liberal arts college.

Unlike some Eastern liberal arts colleges such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg or Lafayette, Muhlenberg has no dominant social group. There are sports, the arts and Greek life, but one does not need to participate in either to feel welcome on this campus. While Muhlenberg was founded as a Lutheran school, it is quite diverse religiously and respects religious diversity.

However, Muhlenberg is not a geographically-diverse institution nor is it ethnically diverse. The Allentown area, while well-located for anyone with access to a car or

seeking a bus ride into New York or Philadelphia, is not one of the more attractive locales for a selective liberal arts college. Although Muhlenberg is a small school, it has some larger introductory classes in the more competitive and popular majors. Students who are serious about business or a pre-med or pre-dental curriculum, for example, might face more intense competition than they would at other liberal arts schools that do not have these options.

Muhlenberg can satisfy students in any major. But the Mules who appear to benefit the most are those who are interested in business, the health professions and theatre. The programs in these areas are either stronger or quite unique to a small liberal arts college. There may be more “selective” liberal arts schools with stronger brand recognition. But most do not set up students for success in these fields better than Muhlenberg does. A very bright, professionally-motivated student who prefers a small school should give this school a look.

| Ed Quest’s Report Card | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Muhlenberg College | | | | | | |

| Four-Year/ Six-Year Grad Rates | Freshman Retention | Costs | Comforts | Community | Curriculum | Connections |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| A/A | A | B+ | A | B+ | A | B+ |

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| Easy to carry multiple majors or minors | You might still see 100 classmates in your intro Bio or Psych class |
| Easy to combine liberal arts with business, education, performing arts or sciences | Extremely limited number of merit scholarships |
| Impressive arts facilities for a small school | Few amenities near campus aside from Cedar Crest Parkway and Farmer’s Market |
| Easy connections to New York City and Philadelphia | Little in the way of ethnic and geographic diversity outside of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states |
| Abundance of joint degree programs | Peer schools are part of career networks that Muhlenberg is not part of. |
| This school will meet the full need for its neediest students | Business and joint degree programs may create a more competitive atmosphere than at other liberal arts schools. |
| Nice living options on campus | |
| Character and integrity of admissions and financial aid offices | |
| Region has many outdoor recreational opportunities | |

The End



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