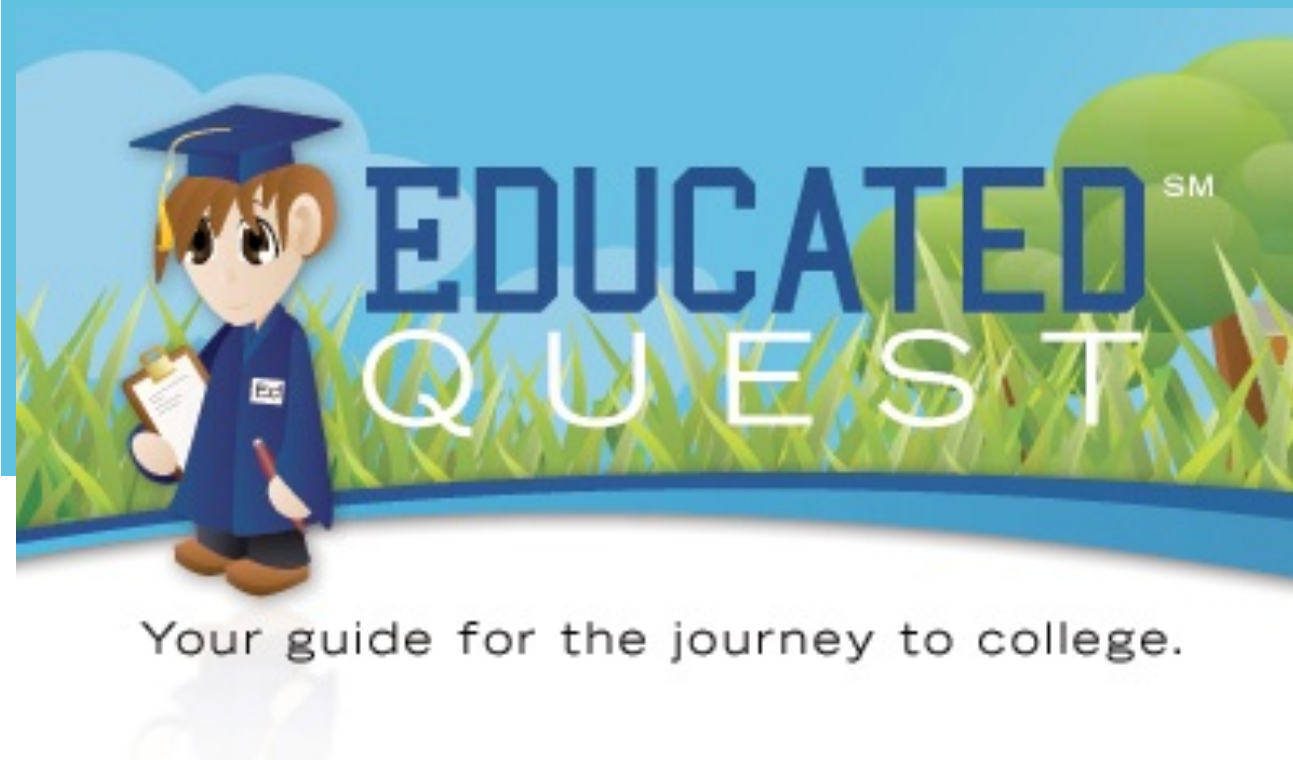


# First Impressions: McDaniel College





# Background

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**Introduction to McDaniel  
College**



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# Background

Originally named Western Maryland College after a railroad that served the region, McDaniel College was the first co-ed college established south of the Mason-Dixon Line, the dividing line between North and South at the start of the Civil War. In 2002, the College changed its name to McDaniel College in honor of alumnus and professor emeritus William Roberts McDaniel, class of 1880.

Since 1996, McDaniel has been one of the nation's 44 Colleges That Change Lives (CTCL). CTCL schools, while not all highly selective in their admissions, expose their students to much the same rigorous liberal arts education as schools that are better known for their selectivity. CTCL schools have achieved success in helping "good" as well as "very good" and "excellent" students attain very similar goals. These colleges, including McDaniel, offer small classes taught by faculty (beginning with a first-year seminar), research opportunities (some credit-bearing or funded), study abroad and numerous community service and experiential learning opportunities, just like highly-selective schools.

Most CTCL schools, especially McDaniel, which is test-optional also make admissions decisions as much on maturity and potential as they do on the numbers on a high school transcript. While this enhances accessibility, it also means that freshman retention rates are lower than they are at the more selective private liberal arts schools. McDaniel, as well as Goucher, the



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nearest CTCL school, loses just under a fifth of a freshman class each year. By comparison, schools such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg lose less than ten percent of a larger class.

McDaniel's freshman retention rate has hovered between 80 and 83 percent since 2010. However, more than two thirds of the freshmen who have entered since 2006 graduated within four years. While this rate is lower than other more selective liberal arts colleges, it is better than most large public universities including the University of Maryland-College Park. In addition, nearly 40 percent of McDaniel students are first-generation college students. McDaniel's ability to successfully graduate students who enter with economic disadvantages, while providing scholarship opportunities, makes it stand out among liberal arts schools. In fact, according to the most recent *U.S. News* college guide, McDaniel's actual six-year graduation rate (74 percent) considerably exceeds a Predicted Graduation Rate (67 percent) that takes into account the economic backgrounds of the incoming students before they start college.

While considered to be a National Liberal Arts College--more than half of all degrees are in liberal arts majors as opposed to business, education or health-related fields--McDaniel's student body is somewhat regional. More than half of the students come from Maryland while other Mid-Atlantic states (Delaware,

New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania) are well represented within the student body.

The McDaniel Plan is McDaniel's special sauce. Its stand-out features include a mandatory three-week January term (with no extra tuition charges) that can be done online or at off-campus locations in the U.S. and abroad, a writing-intensive Sophomore Interdisciplinary Studies course, a Global Fellows program, among unique features. It also includes liberal arts distribution requirements; choosing the right courses can help to not only complete general education classes, but also to graduate with a double major or multiple minors. The Plan makes it possible for a selective liberal arts education to be more accessible not only to an "excellent" student, but also the "good" and "very good" students who take advantage of what it has to offer.



# Competition

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



# Competition

McDaniel has historically admitted between two-thirds and three-quarters of the students who apply. While the College is test-optional, applicants who score 950 or higher (out of 1600) on the SAT or over 21 (out of 36) on the ACT are advised to submit their scores. Those who do not submit scores will be considered for merit-based aid, but are likely to receive smaller scholarships. However, they should have a GPA of 3.5 or higher in their core college-prep classes. A student with SAT scores of 1200 or higher or an ACT score of 27 or higher with excellent grades in a college-prep program could be invited to interview for renewable scholarships awards as high as full tuition.

McDaniel has no Early Decision plans, but students who consider the College to be a top choice would be advised to apply Early Action by December 1st, or at least have everything submitted by January 2nd to be considered for scholarships and honors coursework. McDaniel uses the Common Application as well as its own online Smart Decision Application. Students who use the Smart Decision Application should receive a decision within three weeks after all materials are turned in.

The College competes quite aggressively for students within a region--Harrisburg/York, Pennsylvania through Baltimore, Maryland--that has other attractive private liberal arts options including Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania and Goucher, Hood, Mount St. Mary's and Washington College in Maryland. According to College Results Online, a database managed by The Education Trust, the Maryland private colleges are all of similar size as McDaniel in terms of the number of students. However, Goucher grants significantly more degrees in the humanities and social sciences and The Mount grants over 40 percent of its degrees in business and education. St. Mary's College of Maryland, the Old Line State's public honors college, is also a significant competitor for students.



# Costs

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**Tuition and Fees**  
**Scholarships**  
**Debt**



# Costs

For next year McDaniel will charge approximately \$38,350 for tuition (the College did not list its fee charges on its Web site). Room and board (standard double room and meal plan) will be approximately \$9,100. The sticker price is on the low side for an East Coast private liberal arts college, and represents less than a four percent increase over the current school year according to College Navigator, the U.S. Department of Education's college search site. Room and board charges for 2014-15 are based on a five percent increase from the current school year. Only the FAFSA is required to apply for financial aid.

McDaniel's merit-based awards fall in two categories: Academic scholarships, which require no separate application, and Honors Scholarships for which highly-regarded applicants are chosen for interviews by invitation. Academic Scholarship awards range from \$5,000 to \$21,000, and are annually renewable. Honors Scholarship awards can be \$23,000, \$25,000 or full tuition. Unique among private liberal arts colleges, McDaniel also makes scholarships available to international students at amounts that range from \$10,000/year to full tuition. Only a 2.0 is required to maintain merit awards each year.

A student who falls within the middle of the applicant pool at a college such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall or Gettysburg has a legitimate chance to be considered for a merit award from McDaniel, as does a student who ranks high in the pool at [St. Mary's College of Maryland, which reduced tuition for in-state students for 2014-15](#). It is also quite possible for a student who qualifies for the Federal Pell Grant (typically from a family with an income below \$50,000) to receive a package that will make McDaniel quite affordable for a private college. However, the same students could also receive competitive packages from Goucher, Hood,



Mount St. Mary's and Washington College as well, depending on the academic path they choose. These schools, including McDaniel, are also challenged by the in-state tuition and fees (below \$14,000 for 2014-15) charged by public St. Mary's College.

As shown in the table below that same student or their parents might incur less debt at Hood or the public St. Mary's College, but more at other competing schools. The data on student debt is taken from The Project on Student Debt. Parent PLUS Loan information was taken from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Parent's PLUS Loan database. It should

College	Average Indebtedness/ Student Borrower Graduating in 2012	Average Parent PLUS Loan/Parent Borrower, 2011
McDaniel	\$31,919	\$15,076
Goucher	\$29,135	\$16,359
Hood	\$28,212	\$12,253
Mt. St. Mary's	\$32,311	\$18,083
Washington	\$34,208	\$18,560
St. Mary's (public)	\$23,834	\$13,947
Dickinson	\$25,574	\$20,932
Franklin and Marshall	\$33,200	\$23,130
Gettysburg	\$25,530	\$18,343

also be noted that all of the schools in the table, excluding Franklin and Marshall, offer merit-based and need-based aid.

One useful way to find out if a college can continue to honor its scholarship commitments and keep tuition increases to a reasonable level is to check out its endowment. It can be seen from the table below that McDaniel competes aggressively against schools that have more financial resources as well as others that have less. The data comes from the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

College	Endowment 2012
McDaniel	\$88 million
Goucher	\$184 million
Hood	\$62 million
Mt. St. Mary's	\$42 million
Washington	\$167 million
St. Mary's (public)	\$25 million
Dickinson	\$336 million
Franklin and Marshall	\$285 million
Gettysburg	\$229 million

A very good student from Maryland who is interested in a liberal arts education can have an enviable set of choices based on cost. However, that student must also consider cultural fit and academics in their decision.



# Comforts

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**On-Campus Housing**  
**Local Housing Market**

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# Comforts

McDaniel assigns first-year students to one of three halls: Daniel McLea, Rouzer or Whiteford. Rouzer and Whiteford are corridor-style halls; several rooms share common bathrooms. Daniel McLea is a suite-style hall with spaces assigned to freshman in the Honors Program. It is also the only hall where first-year and upper-class students are mixed together. A combination microwave/refrigerator/freezer is included in all living options. All three halls are substance free; no alcoholic beverages are permitted inside, even for students 21 and older. McDaniel allows up to 100 freshmen to bring cars to campus. Like housing, parking spaces are allocated through a lottery. The College charges a reasonable \$130/year for a parking permit.

McDaniel requires all students, unless they are married, over 24 or within short commuting distance, to live on campus for three years. The College guarantees all students housing for four years. Continuing students must enter an annual lottery that determines their housing assignment for the next school year. Priority is set by expected graduation date and lottery number. According to the College's residence life office, housing options for upper-class students include Affinity Housing, Greek Housing (no separate fraternity or sorority housing), Honors Housing, Language Houses, North Village and Garden Apartments, Substance Free Housing, living with an RA in an apartment, Single Room Selection, and the General Room Selection Process for the remaining rooms.

Altogether, McDaniel has 33 residence halls as well as nine apartment buildings. Given the numerous housing options it is not surprising that around 90 percent of the student body lives on campus. While McDaniel does have summer classes, the offerings are quite limited compared to a full fall or spring semester. In addition, Westminster is too far (approximately 40 miles) and too isolated from Harrisburg or Baltimore to be a practical place for students to live while pursuing summer internships. It does not pay to lease an apartment off campus if it will need to be subleased during the summer.



# Community

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Campus  
Environs  
School Spirit



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# Community

With the exceptions of the Decker Student Center, the recently completed Recreation Center and the campus chapel and theater the McDaniel's 160-acre campus follows a red-brick Colonial theme. Only one street, Main Street, technically runs through the campus; others run along the edges. The campus is attractive and well-maintained though interiors of some buildings (Decker, for one) are showing their age. Parking is more than adequate for a school of this size, especially for visitors and commuting graduate students. The College has one of the few "bowl" style outdoor sports facilities (seats, including grass berms, in a complete circle) that one will find at a small school.

About a third of McDaniel students participate in varsity sports while about a fifth are members of fraternities or sororities. However, since Greek organizations do not have their own houses the College has more control over their social activities than other schools might impose. Approximately three-quarters of the student body participates in community service, while about half are involved in music and theater. This is also one of the few private liberal arts colleges that offers Army ROTC (including scholarship students) on campus. One added benefit: Students are charged no more than \$15 for any off-campus trip run by the College's Office of Student Engagement. Tickets to Baltimore Orioles games can be purchased for \$6, among other discounted events.



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McDaniel competes in the Centennial Conference against schools such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg and Johns Hopkins. [This past football season McDaniel ranking 10th nationally in attendance among schools that compete at the Division III \(non-scholarship\) level in the sport, according to the NCAA.](#) The NFL's Baltimore Ravens used Gill Stadium, the College's football, soccer and lacrosse facility, for summer training camp, from 1996 through 2011. The former Baltimore Colts also trained at McDaniel for 20 seasons between 1949 and 1971. [The College's own relationships with football date back to the early 20th century.](#) The first forward pass ever thrown in a college football game was thrown by a McDaniel player in 1908. In 1934 McDaniel (then known as Western Maryland College) was invited to play in the first-ever Orange Bowl in Miami, though the College could not afford to participate in the game. In 1992, the College played in the first college football game ever played on Russian soil.

Liquor law violations are by far the most-reported crime on campus, according to [McDaniel's Clery Report](#). While there were no more than ten arrests annually for alcohol-related crimes between 2010 and 2012, there was an average of over 200 disciplinary referrals per year. There were only five reported forcible sex offenses total over the same three year-period as well as only 14 reported burglaries on campus.

Westminster (population approximately 18,600) is equidistant (approximately 35 miles) to York, Pennsylvania or Baltimore, Maryland. In 1997, the city hosted the movie *For Richer or Poorer*, starring Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley. It is also the birthplace of R. Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Peace Corps and Democratic vice presidential candidate on George McGovern's ticket in 1992. The City offers most suburban dining and shopping opportunities, including an enclosed mall, along Route 140, accessible by shuttle from campus. Downtown Westminster has more of a boutique retail mix, though there are plenty of dining options for students who want to venture off campus. While fairly isolated from the interstate, Westminster has enough opportunities to satisfy a small college population.



# Curriculum

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**Academics**  
**Honors Programs**  
**Experiential Learning**



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# Curriculum

The McDaniel Plan is the College's special academic sauce. The idea is to integrate multi-disciplinary coursework with a liberal arts education, beginning with the first-year seminar. Multi-disciplinary courses taken during the sophomore can also, at faculty discretion, be used to fulfill general education requirements. McDaniel students take a four-course load each semester, as well as at least one January term during their four years. They are allowed to take a fifth course in any semester for no additional charge. One January term comes tuition free. McDaniel has a student-faculty ratio of 11 to 1, comparable to more selective private liberal arts schools. No classes have more than 50 students.

[First-year seminar options](#) can be career oriented (For example programs in medicine and journalism), focused on skills (Examples: American Sign Language and Educational Technology) topical (Example; History of Baseball) or academic questions (Example: Socrates Trial). The seminar instructor will also be the student's academic advisor until s/he has declared a major. Critical writing, critical thinking and reading skills are developed through these seminars. Each also has a peer mentor, an upper-class student, to help freshmen become better acquainted with the college and its resources.

[Sophomore Interdisciplinary Studies courses](#) advance from the seminars by covering topics that embrace more than one discipline, for example, the use of theatre as therapy in corporate,



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educational and social service settings. Sophomore students may choose from among 30 such courses during the Fall and Spring. These courses are more writing-intensive than the first-year seminars.

Every student must take at least one writing-intensive course in their major during their junior year and must complete a Capstone experience as a senior. The Capstone is essentially a senior thesis.

Every McDaniel student must also take at least one--the first carries no extra tuition--[January Term](#) between the fall and spring semesters. This term may be used to take an extra class, work in an internship or study abroad.

Beyond these requirements, the McDaniel Plan also asks each student to take these courses:

- Introduction to College Writing
- Global Citizenship: Multicultural International
- A Second Language
- Critical Inquiries, including:
  - Scientific Inquiry and Quantitative Reasoning
  - Social, Cultural, and Historical Understanding

- Textual Analysis and Creative Expression

McDaniel also requires four semesters of health and physical education.

[The College offers 60 majors](#), though students may design their own major as well. Outside of traditional humanities, social science, mathematical and natural science majors, McDaniel offers degree programs in Exercise Chemistry, Exercise Science, Graphic Design, Journalism/New Media, Sports Coaching and Sports Management. Students may also pursue an [Education minor](#) that, combined with a liberal arts major, can lead to early childhood, elementary or secondary school certification to teach in Maryland schools. [In addition, approximately 175 students, more than ten percent of the student body, take courses in American Sign Language.](#) McDaniel was the first U.S college to offer a graduate degree in Deaf Education to deaf individuals in 1967.

McDaniel offers some special opportunities, including a recently-launched Global Fellows program and an Honors Program (by invitation to the students at the top of the entering freshman class). The Global Fellows program started with 20 students in its first class. Not tied to any major, the program stretches over five semesters from the sophomore through the senior year and includes more intensive instruction in foreign language (including Arabic and Chinese, rare for a small school) and international studies. In addition to courses at the



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College's sister campus in Budapest, Fellows and other selected students may take advantage of partner programs in Brussels, Glasgow and Zimbabwe.

McDaniel students have as much regard for their faculty as their peers at similar schools in the region have for theirs' according to RateMyProfessors.com, as shown in the panel on the right.

Essentially, the McDaniel student can get access to very much the same academic experiences as a student at any of the more selective colleges on this list. But the student who qualifies for the middle of the pool at Dickinson, Gettysburg, and Franklin and Marshall might also qualify for the Honors Program at McDaniel. The harder decision is really between McDaniel and St. Mary's College of Maryland for the Maryland resident. Their option might be to be one of a small group of honors students at a private school, or be one of nearly 2,000 equal members of a public honors college.

College	Rating: RateMyProfessors.com
McDaniel	3.77
Goucher	3.75
Hood	3.71
Mt. St. Mary's	3.78
Washington	3.86
St. Mary's (public)	3.78
Dickinson	3.79
Franklin and Marshall	3.83
Gettysburg	3.68



# Connections

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**Alumni Relations**  
**Career Services**



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# Connections

McDaniel puts all experiential learning and employment opportunities under one roof through the Center for Experience and Opportunity (CEO). The CEO handles community outreach, service learning, internships, work/study, undergraduate research, post-graduate fellowships, pre-professional studies, and learning communities. The concept is that the five-person counseling team works with each student to develop a four-year Experience and Opportunity plan that blends academics, extra-curricular and volunteer activities and employment opportunities. The team is also supported by student mentors. Students first become acquainted with the CEO during their first week of orientation. The CEO also hosts a Part-Time Job Fair during Welcome Week and directs a Freshman Leadership Program. The College is also part of a regional Cumberland Valley Consortium with schools in the York-Baltimore-Washington axis.

The CEO also arranges opportunities for students to engage faculty outside classes. Approximately a quarter of the student body, around 400 students, is engaged in research with faculty members. Between 20 and 25 students receive stipends during the school year for research; there are summer stipends as well.

McDaniel has a LinkedIn network of students, professors and alumni with approximately 1,500 members. Approximately 6,100 alumni are registered on LinkedIn. Of these people approximately 2,400 live in the Baltimore-Washington area while an additional 1,300 live in Washington D.C. or the surrounding suburbs. Approximately 300 each live in the New York and Philadelphia areas.



# Conclusions

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Summing up





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# Conclusions

McDaniel will give a very good, and occasionally a good, student an education quite similar to what s/he could receive from a more selective private liberal arts college--and quite possibly for a more reasonable price. In addition, the campus is attractive and appears to be relatively safe. The number of housing options is impressive for a small school. The College's track record of graduating first-generation college students who were admitted based as much on maturity and potential as academics is better than many schools with stronger brand names. College is meant to help a student become more curious and graduate better off than s/he started, either employed or on to further education. On this score, McDaniel is an excellent school--for those who take advantage of what it has to offer.

But while a McDaniel student can receive an education as good, and possibly better, than s/he might receive at Dickinson or Franklin and Marshall, the College has weak brand recognition in a region with several excellent liberal arts colleges. For one, it went through a name change only 12 years ago. [The College admits that prospective students often mistook Western Maryland College \(the former name\) for a satellite of a public university and thought it was located in rural western Maryland.](#)

While branding is hardly a reason to choose or not choose a college, especially among schools that have a successful track record of guiding students to their degrees as well as their life's work, it does have importance to many who are shopping for a college. And it is a shared responsibility of the students, alumni and the College's administration. This is an area where the school will need to get better over time, if it is to continue to attract the students who are most likely to succeed. About 60 percent of the student body comes from Maryland, [a state that is expected](#)



to produce fewer high school graduates each year through 2019. The College will need to appeal to more students in other states.

McDaniel is also more isolated than some of the other schools in the region, including the most selective schools (Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg) that are closer to interstate highways or offer better access to mass transit. There are plenty of shuttle services to help students get to shopping in Carroll County, and the College also provides access to programming in Baltimore at generous discounts. But the direct connections for students to go into Baltimore or Washington D.C. are weaker than most students would like. Ties to alumni outside of these areas are also weaker than most students would like.

Like most of the Colleges That Change Lives, McDaniel does not have a huge endowment or a roster of famous alumni who regularly appear on television. But also, like these schools, it gives the right student an education of extremely high quality with a high level of personal attention. The added plus is that the McDaniel administration truly strives to make the experience more affordable for most of its student body. At a time when college costs are coming more into question, this effort is to be admired.

<b>Ed Quest's Report Card</b>						
McDaniel College						

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

Strengths	Weaknesses
Generous financial aid for a very good as well as an excellent student--and the aid is easy to keep.	Student body is too Maryland-centric
More success at graduating first-generation college students than schools with stronger brand recognition	Westminster is an isolated community
You can get the same academics and rigor as you would get at a more selective school--with the same results--and you get a January term with your tuition.	Limited alumni presence beyond the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. metro areas.
Impressive set of options outside of the liberal arts for a small liberal arts school	Older campus buildings are showing their age on the inside though exteriors and grounds are well maintained
Easy to study abroad: the College has sister campus relationships as well as its own campus in Budapest	Weaker brand recognition within a region that has several excellent liberal arts colleges
High percentage of student involvement in research with faculty for a small school (around 25 percent)	
One of the rare liberal arts colleges that offers Army ROTC	
On-campus living options are plentiful and reasonably priced	



# The End



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