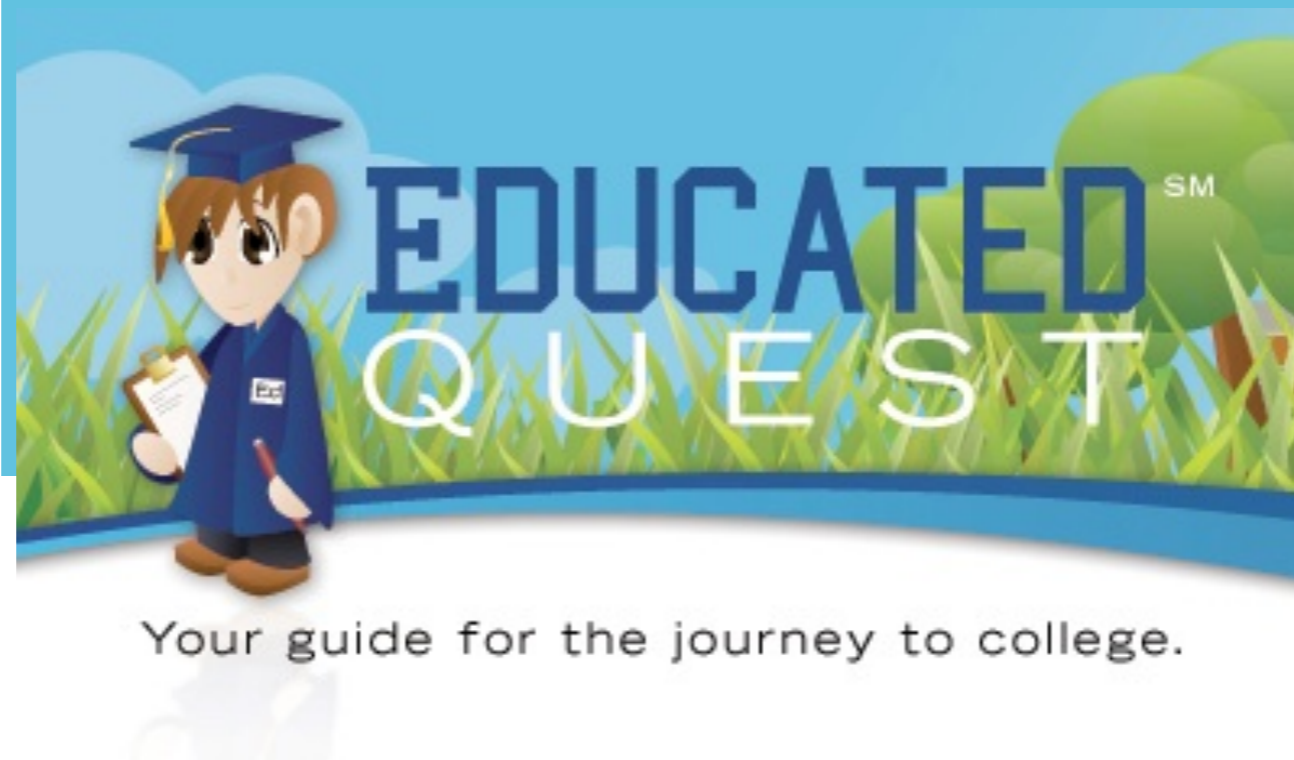


# First Impressions: SUNY-University at Albany





# Background

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Introduction to UAlbany



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# Background

Founded as a teachers college or “normal school” in 1844, the State University of New York at Albany, aka SUNY-University at Albany, often shortened to UAlbany became a broad research university in 1962. Today UAlbany has approximately 13,000 undergraduates, over 17,000 students total. It has the second-smallest undergraduate student body of New York’s public universities, after Binghamton.

Over the last ten years, UAlbany, like the other New York state universities, has become more welcoming to out-of-state students. To date, about ten percent of a freshman class comes from out-of-state, mainly from New Jersey and Massachusetts. In prior years virtually everyone came from within New York State. The campus is approximately three hours from Boston or New York City and is quite accessible to the New York Thruway and Interstate 84, which goes into New England. The campus is also quite accessible to the Adirondacks and its recreational opportunities. The Capital Region is a major arts center of the state of New York as well as a technology corridor.

Located in New York’s state capital, UAlbany has signature programs in Criminal Justice, Public Health and Public Policy. The university is also very well invested in its Business, Biological Sciences, Computer Science and Psychology programs as well as Atmospheric Sciences.

However, having recently lost its Nano-technology program to another New York state university campus, it does not have a college of engineering. The university has, however, committed to strengthening its offering in the performing arts as well as partnering to offer many accelerated or joint degree programs with other public and private universities in business, education, engineering, health professions and the law.



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Among the SUNY university centers, UAlbany has the lowest freshman retention (82 percent) rate, yet it has the second-highest four-year graduation rate (55 percent) after Binghamton. This suggests that UAlbany is not the first choice of many people who chose to go; in fact, Binghamton, which is exceptionally selective, is the campus cross-shopped most often.

For the past two years just over a fifth of the accepted students decided to come, about average for a large or mid-sized state university that has some competition for students. [Yet in 2012 the University reported a transfer-out rate of close to 19 percent, more than twice the rate for Binghamton, considerably higher than the rate for Stony Brook, but lower than the transfer-out percentage for Buffalo, the campus with the largest undergraduate population. Larger schools in other states such as UConn or Rutgers-New Brunswick have fewer problems losing students early or midway through their education.](#) The retention and transfer-out rates suggest that students in strong academic standing might be leaving for another school--UAlbany offers 50 majors, a small number for a state university--or that the University recruited too many students who were not adequately prepared to succeed. However, at most schools, the students who commit to the more demanding majors, including the signature programs, are also the ones most likely to stay.

UAlbany's main academic campus was built from the group up during the 1960's, although the University still uses the residence hall on the old teacher's college campus three miles away. The heart of this campus has concrete residential quads at the corners; each has a tower at the center and low-rise halls surrounding it. The academic center, the Podium, connects concrete buildings with fountains and a structure, the Carillon, a combination bell tower and water tower at the center. Designed

by Edward Durell Stone, later the architect of the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the beginning of the UAlbany campus were constructed at the same time New York State was building a new government complex as well as The Egg, the capital city's performing arts venue. However, each of these places within the city is apart from the other two. As a result, UAlbany resembles an urban campus that was meant to be built in a more crowded place, more like a commuter school.

But the UAlbany campus quite residential. About sixty percent of the total undergraduate student body lives in university-owned housing, according to the school's most recent Common Data Set. UAlbany also has one of the more automobile and bus-friendly campuses in the U.S. It is very easy to navigate this campus once you know where you need to be, and its very easy to leave to find dining, entertainment, recreation, shopping or the Interstate.

Notable UAlbany alumni include gay rights activist Harvey Milk, author/playwright Gregory Maguire (*Wicked*), actor Steve Guttenberg and author/political speechwriter Steve Persico, among many others.



# Competition

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



# Competition

This year UAlbany received approximately 22,600 applications for a freshman class of 2,550, of which 55 percent were accepted. The middle 50 percent of the class had SAT Critical Reading and Math score between 1090 and 1240 (out of 1600) and a mean GPA of 91.4 on a 100-point scale, about the same as larger universities such as Penn State and Rutgers-New Brunswick. The University takes the highest score from each section of the exam.

Students who applied to UAlbany most often considered Binghamton University, also within the SUNY system. However, students who would rank in the upper quarter of the applicant pool at UAlbany would rank towards the middle of the pool at Binghamton; they would be less likely to qualify for academic awards there. They also considered Rutgers-New Brunswick, the University of Connecticut and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Within New York, Cornell and Syracuse are similarly sized private institutions though Northeastern University and Boston University, also considered by UAlbany applicants, have larger undergraduate student bodies.

It may be worthwhile for applicants to choose UAlbany over these other schools if they qualify for the Honors Program. Honors benefits include priority registration, an honors colloquium and honors housing, including student apartments for the junior and senior year. A student who qualifies for admission to the Honors College here would probably not qualify for similar options at the other university centers or at the flagship state universities in neighboring states.

UAlbany accepts either the SUNY Application or the Common Application for admission. The SUNY Application allows students to self-report their grades. UAlbany does not offer Early Decision, but does offer Early Action, with a deadline of November 15th. However, SUNY schools do not make financial aid decisions at the same time as they make Early Action admissions decisions. Early Action might be more of an advantage to students who are serious about UAlbany as a “least cost” option, especially if they are New Yorkers. However, it may not be an advantage to those who believe that they might qualify for a merit-based scholarship.



# Costs

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



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# Costs

For 2014-15 UAlbany will have direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) of approximately \$21,700 for New York residents, and \$33,300 for non-residents. These are among the lowest sticker prices for a flagship state university in the U.S. Students who qualify for either the University's merit-based scholarship programs or the New York State Tuition Assistance Program will find UAlbany to be an even better value.

UAlbany invites its strongest applicants to apply for the Frederick Douglass scholarship program as well as the Presidential Scholars. Recipients have typically had SAT scores of 1250 or higher (out of 1600) as well as no grade below 83 (B-/C+). Out-of-state students who qualify for the larger awards may find that their direct charges could be less than they would pay to their home state universities, especially if they come from Connecticut, Massachusetts or New Jersey. Further, it is unlikely that schools such as Boston University, Northeastern University or Syracuse University could discount down to UAlbany's prices unless the student is also a Division I athlete.

Student loan borrowers who graduated from UAlbany in 2012 owed, on average, just over \$24,000 in debt, according to the Project on Student Debt, about the same as they would have owed had they gone to Binghamton, but about \$9,000 to \$10,000 less than they would have borrowed had they graduated from either Boston University or Syracuse. Parents who had to take out Parent PLUS Loans in 2011 borrowed, on average, less than \$9,700, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education's Parent PLUS Loan database, again far less than they would have borrowed to help their student had s/he been enrolled at one of the private schools.



# Comforts

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



# Comforts

UAlbany, unlike most other mid-sized public universities, requires that students live on campus for two years. They can pledge fraternities or sororities, some of which share housing off campus during the sophomore year or move into on-campus apartments. Over 90 percent of the freshmen live in university-owned housing, as does 60 percent of the full undergraduate student body, high for a state university.

Freshmen are usually assigned to one of two residential quads, Indian or State. Indian Quad has suite-style--two or three double rooms sharing a small lounge and bathroom--housing in the center in a 20-story high-rise tower and corridor-style housing in the surrounding low-rise halls. State Quad is all suites in the high-rise tower and the low-rise buildings. It is possible that students who live here could be tripled, though there is no discount off the standard double room charge, around \$7,500, high for a state school.

In addition to the Honors College, students have the option of living in [one of several Living and Learning Communities called Worlds](#). Both quads have their own dining halls as well as recreational facilities. Students may also adjust heating controls in their bedrooms, a nice feature. Laundry is pre-paid with the board charges. Another advantage of the suite-style arrangements; students may share the \$150 charge for the combination microwave oven/refrigerator over four or six people instead



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of only two. In addition, each residential space has Ethernet and Wi-Fi connections.

Upper-class students have the option of living in one of the other two quads on the main campus, Colonial or Dutch. The housing design is similar to Indian and State. They also have the option of living in Alumni Quad, three miles from the main campus. First opened in 1935, it was the original residential center when the University was a teacher's college. This hall has a corridor-style living arrangement.

The University has [three apartment complexes on campus](#): Empire, Freedom and Liberty Terrace, the latter being the newest. Liberty Terrace is a complex of five-story buildings, Empire and Freedom are townhouse complexes. Liberty units are four single bedrooms with two bathrooms. Apartment living on campus is expensive; it can run over \$1,000/month for an academic year or full-year lease (in Empire Commons only).

All freshmen are required to purchase one of the two [Unlimited meal plans](#); these will cost \$4,450 or \$4,750 for the current school year. Upper-class students who live in residence halls may purchase 120 or 175-meal plans that also include "Munch Money" that can be spent at the student center or other cafes and "grab and go" locations on campus. There are also small 30 and 50-meal plans for apartment residents and off-campus students, including Munch Money as well as a Munch Money-only option, a campus-wide meal card valued between \$25 and

\$650 for the year. The smaller plans may be a good option for students in majors that require extensive time in labs or practice spaces.

UAlbany has 37 fraternities and sororities though the campus does not have a Greek row, like schools with more history such as Rutgers-New Brunswick. Students in these organizations look for housing off campus. [Interestingly, the University maintains a list of Greek organizations that are either de-recognized or suspended, and therefore not considered student organizations](#). This is a concern; in the event of legal issues these organizations will receive no protection from the university administration. Incidents off campus would be handled by local law enforcement, who can be less lenient than the University.

The University maintains a registry for students who wish to live off campus. While rents off-campus can be less expensive than the university apartments, the on-campus options offer academic-year leases, which will be more attractive to students who leave campus for the summer or are entering their senior year. In addition, it's much easier to leave the car at home when living on campus.



# Community

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Campus  
Environs  
School Spirit



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# Community

UAlbany appears to be designed as a 1960s vision of a small city with the residential quads at the corners and the academic buildings at the center. While such a complex might fit in well in a downtown surrounded by tall buildings, the effect is of a city dropped into the middle of a suburb. However, the design allows for on-campus residents to get around easily on foot. In addition, mass transit stops in Collins Circle, the main entrance to the academic center as well as the apartments and Alumni Quad. All students may ride the buses free into downtown Albany as well as shopping options along Fuller Road outside of campus. Parking is at the periphery of campus. It's easier to have a car at UAlbany than most other schools, as long as you're an upper-class student. There are also bus connections to New York City with student discounts. Amtrak train service to Boston and New York City is also available from Albany.

UAlbany takes pride in the fountains facing Collins Circle and in the center of the Podium. These are lit in the evenings in warmer weather, adding much to the "city center" appearance of the campus. However, Albany is a cold-weather city; the fountains must be turned off from November through April, making the concrete campus setting appear colder as well. A cluster of tall buildings such as the residential towers will create a "canyon effect." Winter winds will become colder and stronger between the buildings. The University has tried to remedy this problem through above-ground walkways and underground tunnels. While Albany does not get as cold as New England cities further north, it does get more snow during the winter than most of the East Coast. If you hate snow, it's best to look at other schools.

On the plus side, the University has constructed one of the more attractive business school facilities in the U.S., built separately from the Po-



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dium, and also constructed very attractive apartments complexes within walking distances of the academic and recreational buildings. There is far more green space away from the Podium than close to it. The University also expects to complete plans to expand its campus center within the Podium by 2017.

UAlbany has its own entertainment options on and near campus. The University's performing arts center has five theaters and the campus has its own art museum. The student body and basketball arena are large enough to interest notable speakers and performers, though they're more likely to be seen at the Times Union Center downtown.

In addition to concerts, the Times Union Center has hosted championship rounds in college basketball and hockey as well as minor league professional hockey. New York's Capital Region should not be underestimated as a recreation and entertainment center. The Adirondacks are close by, including the largest state park in New York. [The Egg, the downtown arts center, has an extensive calendar of events.](#) Bus transit is better than most regions in the country, in part because there are more than 65,000 college students in the region.

UAlbany plays 19 Division I (scholarship) varsity sports. It competes in the Colonial Athletic Conference in football, the America East in all other sports. The men's and women's basketball teams were conference champions in 2013-14 as were the men's and women's track teams and the men's lacrosse team. The football team last made the national play-off round (in its former conference) in 2012. During the past two years UAlbany has won the Stuart P. Haskell, Jr. Commissioner's Cup, recognition for being the strongest athletic program in America East.

There are some crime statistics from 2010 to 2012, according to the [University's Clery Report](#), that cause concern. There were 10 reported forcible sex offenses in 2012, all in the residence halls, surprising for a compact campus that is not in a city center. There were also reported weapons possession arrests as well as more than 100 drug-related arrests in 2012 (80 reported in the residence halls) while disciplinary referrals more than doubled from 81 to 171. However, there were only 15 reported arrests for liquor law violations from 2010 through 2012 though the number of disciplinary referrals rose from 183 to 287. It is fair to ask if the numbers of reported incidents rose due to more aggressive law enforcement or to more misdeeds by the students.

UAlbany has many cultural and social assets, though the campus does not open into a "college town" as one would find at schools such as Rutgers-New Brunswick, UConn or UMass-Amherst. Nor does the school have an athletic tradition built around national championships or trips to the final rounds of national NCAA competition. If your idea of college is seven fall weeks of major-conference football and victory parties afterwards, other schools might be more to your liking. However, not everyone who seeks a state university education is looking for these things, although most students want to find things to do on and off-campus. It's not difficult to have fun at UAlbany if you set out to seek it.



# Curriculum

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



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# Curriculum

Unlike similar state universities such as UConn, UAAlbany does not offer a freshman seminar course. Students go right to work at finding a major and completing their general education requirements. According to the University's undergraduate bulletin, all students entering this year must complete at least 30 credits (one course each) within this course distribution:

- Math and Statistics
- Writing and Critical Inquiry
- Arts (Creative Writing, Fine Arts or Performing Arts)
- Humanities (Philosophy, Religion, Literature)
- Natural Sciences
- Social Sciences
- U.S. History
- International Perspectives
- Foreign Languages
- Challenges for the 21st Century

The Challenges for the 21st Century course is a new requirement beginning this school year. The selection of courses, according to the undergraduate bulletin, address a variety of issues focusing on challenges and opportunities in such areas as cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics, global citizenship, and others.



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All students must also demonstrate competencies of Advanced Writing, Oral Discourse, Information Literacy, and Critical Thinking within their major.

The liberal arts requirements mentioned above are not cumbersome. UAlbany allows advanced placement (and sometimes degree credit) for courses in which the student scored 3 or better on the College Board's AP exams or a 4 or better on the International Baccalaureate exam. In addition, according to the Undergraduate Bulletin, a New York resident student who has achieved a score of 85 or above on the Regents "Math B" Exam or on a recognized standardized examination indicating readiness to enter precalculus will be considered to have fulfilled the Math requirement.

Unlike most colleges and universities, UAlbany requires all students to complete at least one minor (at least six courses) as well as their major. This encourages students to combine a pre-professional interest with a personal interest or an additional skill set. It also makes it easier for students to change their major after their sophomore year, and still graduate on time. The University currently graduates 55 percent of a freshman class within four years, a very good performance for a state university, especially one that loses nearly a fifth of these class after the first year.

There are some unique majors here including Atmospheric Sciences; Digital Forensics and Financial Market Regulation, both

within the business school; Human Biology, a combination of the disciplines of anthropology and biology; Medieval and Renaissance Studies, which emphasizes the history and culture of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages; Actuarial and Mathematical Sciences, within the Math department (as opposed to the business school) and Public Health, which studies the science and processes of health care delivery as a cross-disciplinary program. Students interested in Criminal Justice, Public Health and Public Policy take these courses under the auspices of graduate schools organized around these fields. UAlbany also has one of only three business schools in New York State that has been duly accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business for its business and accounting programs.

Students who qualify should give serious consideration to enrolling in the Honors College. Benefits include Honors housing (including apartment living for the junior and senior years), priority registration for classes, smaller honors-level courses and the opportunity to write a senior thesis and present it at academic and professional conferences. A student who might be in the middle of the pool at a school such as Binghamton, Rutgers-New Brunswick or Syracuse might qualify for admission to the Honors College at UAlbany. The Honors College is especially worthwhile considering that 20 percent of UAlbany classes have more than 50 students, high for a state university of any



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size. For comparison, 14 percent of Binghamton's classes are this large.

UAlbany offers more Bachelor's/Masters and joint degree programs than most state universities, even those that have far larger enrollments. Each major offers the option of completing a master's degree after a fifth year of study. The University also offers an Early MBA, combining a liberal arts undergraduate degree with the graduate business degree after only five years of study. Just over 64 percent of UAlbany students who entered in 2007 finished their education in five years; this also includes students who earned more than one degree.

UAlbany also offers these partnerships with other universities:

- Medicine: Early Assurance with Albany Medical College
- Physicians Assistant: Early Assurance with Albany Medical College
- Dental: Seven-year joint degree with Boston University Goldman School of Dental Medicine
- Optometry: Seven-year joint degree with SUNY College of Optometry
- Physical Therapy: Guaranteed Acceptance with Sage Graduate School

- Occupational Therapy: Preferred Acceptance with Sage Graduate School
- Law: Six-year joint degree with Albany Law School
- Engineering: Five-year joint degree programs with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Clarkson University, SUNY Binghamton, and SUNY New Paltz

UAlbany also offers an accelerated master's program through the School of Education for students interested in obtaining certification to teach Biology, Chemistry, English, French, History, Mathematics, Physics, or Spanish at the secondary level.

UAlbany students gave their faculty a rating of 3.66 out of a possible 5 on RateMyProfessors.com, lower than students at Binghamton (3.80), Buffalo (3.72) and Stony Brook (3.73) gave their faculty. Students at Rutgers-New Brunswick (3.74) and UMass-Amherst also had higher regard for their teachers while students at UConn (3.64) held their faculty in similar regard. Students at Boston University (3.70) held their faculty in higher regard than UAlbany students, while students at Syracuse (3.68) and Northeastern (3.57) did not.



# Connections

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



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# Connections

UAlbany has more than 160,000 alumni. Among the more than 72,000 registered on LinkedIn.com, nearly 28,000 work in the New York City metropolitan area; about 16,000 work around the Capital Region and 2,100 in and around Boston. Nearly 2,000 are based in and around Washington D.C while almost 1,200 are in the San Francisco Bay Area.

According to LinkedIn.com, the Big 4 accounting firms: Deloitte, Ernst and Young, KPMG and PwC employ nearly 700 of these alumni while five international financial institutions: JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch, employ just over 800. The alumni base also includes more than 7,000 educators and approximately 4,600 entrepreneurs.

UAlbany's career development center has more than 5,000 employers registered in its online job board. The center's Spring Career Fair attracted 120 employers, impressive for a school of this size, who met with over 1,600 students. The center offers a three-credit Career and Life Planning course that has four or five sections per semester as well as a Peer Career Advisors program. Students selected to be Peer Career Advisors take a two-semester course, the first semester dedicated to training, the second with more hands-on advising in resume and cover letter writing, job search and interviewing skills. Peer Career Advisors receive academic credit for their work; this is excellent



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preparation for future work in counseling, education and human resource management.

While internships within the University are directed by the academic departments, the career center provides [an online handbook](#) to help students arrange them. UAlbany also takes part in SUNYWorks, an innovative cooperative education program within the university system that has several [employer partnerships](#).

SUNYWorks has these objectives:

Increased knowledge/skills (soft skills) that translate successfully into the workforce.

- Increased student retention rates;
- Increased graduation/completion rates;
- Increased job placement and acceptance rates;
- Decreased college-loan debt; and,
- Increased pool of skilled workers.

UAlbany has piloted SUNYWorks with 16 students. The career center hopes to see the program expand. Typically, schools that offer cooperative education limit it to majors such as Accounting, Computer Science, Engineering and Information Systems where placements and employer relationships are the easiest to manage. Work that is assigned to students can be continued

by a new group of students who come in for the next term. However, UAlbany offers many other majors outside of its business and computer science programs, including Atmospheric Sciences, Criminal Justice, Public Health and Public Policy where employment opportunities, either internships or co-ops can be arranged within the Capital Region.

UAlbany is one of many schools that successfully sends students into New York City's highly competitive labor market as well as the Capital Region. It has the alumni base to help its students develop the contacts they need, both through the school's mentoring database as well as LinkedIn. They might have spent a lot less for their degree than their peers at a school such as Syracuse, but they worked just as hard to earn their position.



# Conclusions

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Summing up





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# Conclusions

UAlbany is a mid-sized state university that has many of the resources of a much larger school at a bargain price, especially for students interested in careers in business, health professions, law enforcement or public policy making, among other fields. Those who are considering the University and qualify for the Honors College should take advantage of the opportunity to get a more personalized education at an exceptionally reasonable price.

It's very hard to beat the value proposition, especially for a New York resident. It's also likely that a graduate can find work in Boston or New York City as well as the Albany metropolitan area. New York's Capital Region has a strong economy and many entertainment and recreation options for college students and recent graduates.

UAlbany's campus is unusual for a state university, due in part to its short history relative to schools such as Rutgers-New Brunswick or UConn. It resembles a center-city campus that got built in a suburb. While the campus is quite residential, and mobility in and around it is quite good, the appearance may suggest "commuter school" to those looking for a school with more history. However, UAlbany has also built one of the most advanced business school facilities in the U.S. as well as strong connections into its hometown in field such as the Biological Sciences, Criminal Justice, Public Health and Public Policy. A visit in advance of submitting the application *and* in advance of com-



mitting a deposit, is recommended to become familiar with the campus layout as well as housing options.

UAlbany also loses too many first-year and second-year students. This might be because the academics proved more challenging than expected or that students who could transfer to their first-choice school, within or outside the SUNY system, were able to do so. Yet the faculty are going to be no less demanding than their colleagues at Binghamton or Syracuse.

In addition, the reported incidents of crime stated in [the University's Clery Report](#) appear high for some reported incidents. While UAlbany has many strengths, academic and outside of the classroom, it is recommended that prospective students ask admissions and student affairs officers why these numbers are what they are. Are they the result of more aggressive enforcement and better safety procedures?

UAlbany, like similar public schools, has produced many satisfied and successful alumni. It offers all of the tools that will help future students who can find an academic and social fit to succeed and not leave them with a tremendous bundle of debt. But check it out thoroughly before you commit. You could get much the same education as you might at Cornell or Syracuse in a slightly smaller and surely less expensive package. But the setting is quite different than what you will find at those schools.

Ed Quest's Report Card						
SUNY University at Albany						
Four-Year/ Six-Year Grad Rates	Freshman Retention	Costs	Comforts	Community	Curriculum	Connections
B+/B+	B	A	B+	B+	A	A
Strengths			Weaknesses			
Value for the money, especially if you get into the Honors College or you qualify for NY TAP			This campus looks bleak in cold weather, after the fountains are turned off. If your idea of college is ivy-covered buildings, look elsewhere			
There's more to the regional economy than people might think, especially in the finance, health care and technology sectors			It's the "poor stepchild" to the other SUNY flagships: Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook, all of which have engineering			
Impressive selection of bachelor's-masters and joint degree programs			If you want a "Greek row" look elsewhere.			
Easy to get a major and a minor-they're required			The on-campus housing is not cheap			
Plenty of housing on campus, and easy mass transit connections and parking if you move off			Retention and crime statistics give reason for concern			
Three hours from Boston or NYC, close to winter recreation and hiking too. Connections to both cities are better than many more selective public or private schools						
Well invested in many programs including Atmospheric Science, Biological Sciences, Business, Criminal Justice, Public Health and Public Policy						
Well-developed career services for students and alumni						
One of only three NY state business schools with dual AACSB accreditation in accounting and business						



# The End



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