

First Impressions: Dickinson College



Your guide for the journey to college.

Background

**Introduction to Dickinson
Collefe**

Background

Founded in 1783 Dickinson was the first college chartered in the United States after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. The College's founder, Dr. Benjamin Rush was one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence. A prominent physician in Philadelphia as well as a member of the Continental Congress, Rush located the College on the site of a former grammar school in Carlisle. He named the school for John Dickinson, a fellow delegate to the Continental Congress. Unlike Rush, Dickinson did not sign the Declaration, advocating that the colonies, as 13 sovereign states, attempt to reach an accord with the British commonwealth. But Dickinson, like Rush, was considered an abolitionist. He was the only Founding Father to free the slaves under his employment from 1776 through 1786. He also donated his library and much of the land to the college that was founded in his name.

Dr. Rush could also be considered one of the founders of experiential learning, also known as "getting an education by stepping into the real world," a common practice among colleges and universities of all sizes today. As the first president of the College, Rush had his students observe trials in the Carlisle courthouse--this continues today--as well as study plant life along the Appalachian Trail, among other out-of-class activities.

Dickinson is one of four selective liberal arts colleges in Central Pennsylvania: Bucknell, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg are the others. While these schools are sometimes "cross-shopped" against other, they each have unique offerings and campus cultures. Like Gettysburg, Dickinson is within easy walking distance of a historic downtown, with a past where the business community aided wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Also like Gettysburg, Dickinson has attracted students interested in history, the law, politics and global issues. And also, like Gettysburg, the admissions process for Dickinson is test optional. Applicants do not need to submit ACT or SAT scores unless they wish to be considered for merit scholarships. But Dickinson and Gettysburg appeal to different students. Gettysburg has a rigorous Global Studies program, a major at the option of interested students. Dickinson, however, brings global studies into its general education requirements, interdisciplinary Mosaic classes and most of its 44 majors. As one example, the business degree granted at Dickinson is in International Business; it's also the College's most popular major. At Bucknell, to make a comparison, international business is taught as a concentration within an accredited business school. Students may take courses in any of 13 lan-

guages, a very large selection for a small (less than 2,400 undergraduate students) school. Dickinson was the first U.S. college to offer foreign language instruction. This college offers more programs abroad than most of similar size, including a partnership with the University of Bologna in Italy that has run for 50 years.

Dickinson also has partnerships with the U.S. Army War College (also in Carlisle) as well as the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute. Through these partnerships it is possible to major in Security Studies, a unique program for a school that is neither a military academy nor structured with a separate school of international affairs. Students who are interested in being a diplomat or a general who also want a liberal arts education may find Dickinson to be a great match.

Dickinson is cross-shopped not only against schools in Central Pennsylvania; applicants often consider liberal arts colleges elsewhere in the state such as Lafayette and Muhlenberg, similar schools in New York and New England such as Bates, Colby, Colgate, Hamilton and Skidmore, Southern schools such as American University, The College of William and Mary and the University of Richmond as well as the honors colleges of larger universities such as Maryland, Penn State and Rutgers-New Brunswick.

This lengthy list includes schools that are more selective in their admissions processes, although they may be no more impressive in their academic offerings. Dickinson is not viewed by rankings as an “elite” school, although it offers similar academic challenges as well as access to the same internships, research and full-time opportunities as students who choose those schools. A student who might rank in the middle of the admit pool at schools such as Bates, Colby, Colgate or Hamilton, will likely be in the upper third to upper fifth of the admit pool at Dickinson, and stand a better chance of receiving merit-based scholarship aid. Competitors such as Bates, Colgate, Franklin & Marshall and Hamilton offer only need-based awards, although they have larger endowments to provide scholarships than Dickinson. [These schools have all done about the same when it comes to diversity, according to College Results Online, a national database managed by the Education Trust, a non-partisan, non-profit education policy organization.](#)

But although Dickinson is not “elite,” applicants still need to be excellent students to get in. The middle 50 percent of the SAT range for the Class of 2018 was between 1250 and 1390 although the College is test-optional and a third of the applicants did

not submit scores. The middle 50 percent of the range for those who submitted ACT scores was between 28 and 31. It’s a good idea to complete the optional essay as well as take an interview; test scores do not automatically rule an applicant out. Dickinson also requests a recommendation from a teacher who taught a core subject as opposed to a counselor recommendation. A second teacher recommendation is optional. Major will not be a factor in admissions (none are capped for enrollment), except for considering the student’s high school transcript versus an intended program of study.

Most recently, about half (44 percent) of those who applied got in, nearly half of those who came were admitted through Early Decision. The yield rate, the percentage of accepted students who decided to join the freshman class of 600 students, was approximately 25 percent. Dickinson also maintains a wait list though few get in through that route. Among the class that entered in 2013, only 10 students were admitted off the wait list, according to the [College’s 2013-14 Common Data Set. Only 17 wait-listed students were accepted the year before.](#) Also unique among selective liberal arts colleges, Dickinson has articulation agreements with the honors programs in four public community colleges: Howard and Montgomery in Maryland and Northampton County and Montgomery County in Pennsylvania.

[The College’s own data](#) shows that 81 percent of the students who entered in 2009 received their degrees in 2013, an excellent performance for any college. Freshman retention is at 90 percent, also excellent. In addition, only a fifth of the students come from Pennsylvania though the Mid-Atlantic states (Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania) make up the largest geographic cohort. Dickinson has the alumni base to leverage to help recruit a geographically-diverse student body.

Notable Dickinson College alumni include *New York Times* best selling author Jennifer Haigh, Major League Baseball executive Andy MacPhail, former *Time*, *Life* and *National Geographic* photographer Rick Smolan, sports agent Leon Rose and actor/comedienne Rosie O’Donnell, among many others.

Costs

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Tuition and Fees
Scholarships
Debt

Costs

Dickinson charges approximately \$47,700 for tuition and fees and just under \$12,000 for room and board. Tuition and fees increased by just over three percent from the previous year. While the College estimates its Total Cost of Attendance to be \$62,400, prospective students should plan for higher costs for supplies, transportation, clothes and other indirect costs that will not appear on the term bill. Fortunately, Carlisle is quite close to [Harrisburg International Airport](#) which offers non-stop flights to Boston, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. as well as Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Orlando and St. Petersburg.

Dickinson practices “need-blind” admissions; decisions to accept students are made before considering their financial need, although they become need-aware towards the bottom of the admit pool. The College offers five merit-based scholarship programs, with the largest awards being between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year. Consideration for the larger awards requires the submission of standardized test scores. SAT scores of 1350 or higher or an ACT composite of 31 or higher are typical for recipients. The smaller awards are based on demonstrated leadership, academics and special talents. In addition transfer students who are members of Phi Kappa Theta, the community college honor society, may receive scholarships as large as \$15,000 per year.

Students who are seriously interested in Dickinson and wish to apply to early decision should request an “early read” based on the College Board CSS Profile as well as their prior-year tax return to have a better handle on their eligibility for financial aid before they apply.

According to *Big Future*, the College Board’s search site, Dickinson met the full need for 72 percent of all students who received financial aid; on average, the College fulfilled 98 percent of need for all undergraduates.

Seventy two percent of assistance came in the form of merit-based or need-based scholarships, comparable to other selective liberal arts colleges. The average need-based scholarship award in 2012, exceeded \$31,000. The average indebtedness per student borrower in the same year was less than \$26,000 according to the Project on Student Debt.

This is quite reasonable for a private college, though borrowers at better-endowed schools such as Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, Colgate and Hamilton borrowed less, on average, while the average student borrowers at Gettysburg, Lafayette and Muhlenberg owed about the same. Nearly half of Dickinson graduates in 2012 (47 percent) graduated with no debt at all; a significant share of the student body were either full-need with respect to scholarships or full-pay if they were not eligible for merit-based aid. Dickinson is also one of the smallest colleges in the U.S. to have its own Army ROTC battalion. Incoming freshman scholarship Cadets are eligible for merit awards ranging from 6,000-15,000 dollars per year. Currently, the College's Blue Mountain Battalion has 80 Cadets, large for a small school.

Dickinson parents who took out Federal Parent PLUS Loans in 2011 borrowed, on average, just under \$21,000, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Parents PLUS Loan database. This amount was about the same as parents borrowed, on average, to help their students at school at Lafayette but around \$3,000 more than parents borrowed to help their students at Gettysburg or Muhlenberg. However Dickinson parents borrowed, on average, less than parents of students at Colby, Colgate and Skidmore, about the same as parents of students at Bates and Bowdoin, and more than parents of students at Hamilton.

According to the National Association of College and University Business Officers, Dickinson had an endowment of \$357 million for FY 2013,

larger than similarly sized selective liberal arts colleges in Pennsylvania, excluding Lafayette, which has more than twice the financial resources. Dickinson also has a much smaller endowment than competitors such as Bowdoin, Colby, Colgate and Hamilton although it has more resources than Bates.

Selective liberal arts colleges such as Dickinson start out with a higher sticker price; in this case the College approaches the tuition and fees charges of the smaller Ivy League schools as well as other mid-sized private universities such as American, which also interest applicants. The upside relative to larger schools is that Dickinson only needs to assist undergraduates. Dickinson also has slightly fewer students than Gettysburg (2,300 vs. 2,600), probably the most similar and most often cross-shopped school among its most immediate competition. As a result, it can be quite competitive when it comes to financial aid awards for its needier students, while using merit aid to attract those who might be looking at a more selective school.

It might be a stretch to consider a \$60,000 college a “best buy,” but Dickinson, while not considered “elite,” may prove to be a better value than some of the more famous names such as Colgate or Lafayette, unless the student is also athletic enough to be recruited for Patriot League scholarship sports. That student will face some different decisions. S/he might not be able to drop the sport and continue to receive aid.

Comforts

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On-Campus Housing
Local Housing Market

Comforts

First-year students are assigned to live in one of two areas on campus: "Morgan Field" in Adams or Drayer or "The Quads" in Armstrong, Atwater, Baird-McClintock, Cooper, Davidson-Wilson, or Longsdorff. Rooms will typically be doubles in a corridor-style living arrangement (several rooms sharing a common lounge as well as bathroom) or large triples. Every first-year student as well as each incoming transfer student chooses a First-Year Interest Group. Living arrangements are made based on the choice of Interest Group. Dickinson is unique in that incoming students will meet not only their roommate but also their resident advisor before registering for Fall classes and moving into their assigned residence hall. Interest Group activities are supported by upper-class students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Virtually every Dickinson student lives on campus for all four years though continuing students must go through a lottery to determine their housing assignment. It is not difficult to get a desired housing assignment given that more than half of the junior class goes abroad at some time during the school year. Upper-class students may live in some halls that are also occupied by freshmen, though their floors are separated.

The College has some unique small-group living experiences including the "Treehouse," a home to 14 students that is centered on sustainability, and the Doghouse, where students help raise and train rescue/service dogs. Other theme houses focus on Social Justice, Archeology, Wellness and Diversity. [The College also converted a former shoe factory into loft-style residences.](#) Seven Greek organizations have dedicated houses near campus. Altogether, Dickinson has 58 general and special-interest residential options.

Seniors may live off campus, though few do, with the approval of the College. [The Carlisle area is not overly expensive in terms of rental housing options](#) though parking on campus, as if a student drove to school, is tight. On the plus side, a parking pass is free to all upper-class students though freshmen are not allowed to have cars on campus. However, aside from those involved in research projects, few students live in Carlisle during the summer. Dickinson offers no summer classes, in the College encourages students to take them at Franklin and Marshall through a consortial arrangement between both schools. Carlisle is also close enough to Harrisburg to make a commute by car to internships possible. But unless you need to be there for summer work, there's little reason to be obligated to a 12-month apartment lease.

According to the College's dining services office Dickinson was recently named one of the 75 Best Colleges for Food in America for 2014, according to *The Daily Meal*, an online publication devoted to food-industry news and reporting. Drawing from a pool of approximately 2,000 colleges and universities nationwide, the judges identified 320 standout food-service programs and placed Dickinson at number 67 on its list. Farm-to-table meals are quite common. Seasonal items are harvested at the College Farm as part of the college's unique 360-degree food-cycle system, which delivers fresh ingredients to the Dining Hall and compost to the farm. This year the College also implemented a grocery-purchase plan—now in trial run—that allows students with special diets to purchase groceries through Dining Services. Kosher and vegan meals are also available at dedicated food islands in the main dining hall. The College is also in the planning process of redesigning the dining spaces in the dining area; the current layout does not offer the best circulation during the peak dining times.

Depending on your residence on or off campus, Dickinson offers [a choice of four meal plans](#). Unlike most small colleges, Dickinson recommends, but does not require freshmen to take the most expensive meal plan. The "Any 20 Plan" allows students to choose 20 meals on their own schedule. It can be used at the Dining Hall or any of the other on-campus cash locations, including a sushi bar at the Holland Union Building. There are also two "Flexboard" plans that are a combination of meal points, a declining cash balance and dining dollars as well as a plan for apartment residents.

Overall, Dickinson has a high quality of life compared to most liberal arts colleges but so do its closest competitors, Franklin & Marshall and Gettysburg. Like Dickinson, Gettysburg has been awarded accolades for its dining experience. Also like Dickinson, Frank & Marshall has been lauded for its residence life programs. A student who has academic interests that can be satisfied at any one of these three schools would be wise to consider the living experience that each one has to offer. Those who find a good match in an Interest Group for the first-year experience are likely to be the happiest at Dickinson.

Community

Campus
Environs
School Spirit

4

Community

Dickinson has an attractive mix of architecture from across four centuries from the 18th--it's original building burned down in 1803 and was rebuilt a year later--to the 21st. Several older academic and residential buildings were constructed using Pennsylvania limestone; while they have been updated and renovated inside, their exteriors have aged quite well. This school has also made major investments in recreation and athletic facilities as well as its science labs and classrooms and performing arts center. The renovated Kline Center, the main gym on the edge of campus near the varsity athletic facilities opened this fall. The academic buildings and grounds have an expensive feel that would not be out of place at more selective schools. An interesting touch is the spread of Adirondack chairs painted in the school's signature red throughout the academic center of campus.

Carlisle is an interesting town for people who love U.S. History. The downtown is a historic district unto itself. While there is a well-stocked independent bookstore, a non-profit theatre and some eating and drinking places that would be of interest to students, most of the shopping is geared towards the year-round community as well as summer tourism. Carlisle is not only quite close to Harrisburg, which has a large public fair grounds; it is also the site of several national summer auto shows that fill practically all of the region's hotels. Carlisle is also home to the U.S. Army War College as well as Penn State's Dickinson School of Law. Students may take classes at the War College alongside commissioned military officers.

It might be fair to say that Carlisle is more of a "college town" than the host communities of similar liberal arts colleges, excluding Gettysburg and Skidmore which are also quite close to historic downtowns that also

depend heavily on tourism. Competitors such as Bates, Colby, Colgate and Hamilton are located in more isolated places than Dickinson. They are also situated further from interstate highways as well as international airports. Dickinson also allows all upper-class students to have cars and runs programs to bring students into Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. Opportunities for serenity away from campus can be found by hiking the Appalachian Trail, in Pine Grove Furnace State Park or various county parks nearby.

One plus about being in Carlisle is low numbers of reported crimes. The number of forcible sex reported offenses offense dropped from 11 in 2011 to only 1 in 2012 according to [the College's most recent Clery Report](#). Burglaries became the more serious crime; there were 15 reported in the same year. Reported arrests for alcohol and drug-related violations were few in 2012 only 27 and two respectively. However, the number of reported alcohol-related disciplinary referrals rose each year from 2010 to 2012, from 170 to 226. There were also 98 and 90 reported drug-related referral in 2011 in 2012, as opposed to 45 in 2010. This might suggest that the College is becoming more aggressive at enforcing its policies versus relying on the local police.

Dickinson competes in 23 varsity sports, all at the Division III (non-scholarship) level. The College's greatest athletic successes have come in men's lacrosse, where it was conference champion and NCAA tournament contestant for three consecutive years from 2011 through 2013. Since joining the conference in 1992, Dickinson has also won nine titles in football. Dickinson's conference rivals in the Centennial Conference include Bryn Mawr, Franklin & Marshall, Gettysburg, Haverford, Muhlenberg and Swarthmore among selective liberal arts colleges, Johns Hopkins (all sports outside of lacrosse) as well as three smaller liberal arts

colleges: McDaniel (MD), Ursinus (PA) and Washington (MD). The sports facilities were used by the NFL Washington Redskins for 32 years, from 1963 through 1994, including all five seasons that they have played in the Super Bowl (1973, 1983, 1984, 1988, 1992).

Greek social fraternities attract 12 percent of the men, sororities draw a fifth of the women. These percentages are lower than they are schools such as Colgate, Gettysburg, Lafayette and William and Mary and about the same as the University of Richmond, among the schools that applicants to Dickinson also consider through the admissions process. Dickinson has nine social fraternities and sororities versus 15 at Gettysburg, twelve at Franklin and Marshall and ten at Lafayette.

Dickinson may be one liberal arts school where you do not need to be a varsity athlete or a member of a Greek society to have a social life. But it is also a place where you must be willing to engage classmates outside of the classroom in clubs or other activities. The campus is where their friends are most likely to be.

Curriculum

5

Academics

Honors Programs

Experiential Learning

Curriculum

Dickinson students have [distribution requirements](#) similar those expected of their peers at other selective liberal arts colleges. All freshmen take a first-semester Seminar capped at 15 or 16 students, ranking their choices one through six. The Seminar professor will also serve as the student's academic advisor until s/he has declared a major. First-year seminars are also linked to learning communities in the residence halls. The choice of Seminar becomes important; it might help a student find new friends with similar interests.

Dickinson separates itself from peer schools by not allowing exceptions to the foreign language requirement--all students must be proficient at the intermediate (third semester) level in a language--and by requiring four half-semester, pass-fail physical education classes. Advanced placement is allowed in the language the student studied in high school, but s/he does not receive credit for a '4' or '5' on the exam. Dickinson is a good school to learn a new language. The College offers majors or coursework in 13 languages, a large selection for a small school.

In addition, the two semesters of science required are lab-based. Lectures and labs are tied together for science courses instead of being separated. No classes at Dickinson, even the "gatekeeper" introductory classes in subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Physics and Psychology, have more than 40 students. [The College's student-faculty ratio is nine to one. Approximately 85 percent of Dickinson faculty teach there full time.](#)

Dickinson offers a choice of 44 majors. Unique to the College are Archeology, Educational Studies, Judiac Studies, Law and Policy, (Public) Policy Management, Security Studies and Science Technology and Society. The theatre program is tied to dance; prospective actors learn movement

as well as acting. The Educational Studies major does not lead to certification to teach in elementary or secondary schools. Instead it prepares students in areas such as education policy as well as master’s programs in education. A partnership with the U.S. Army War College enables students to pursue the Security Studies major. As a result Dickinson might be the one of the best private liberal arts colleges to prepare prospective diplomats, leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations and military officers. The Law and Policy and Policy Management programs tie well with a college-run trial advocacy program at the nearby Cumberland County Courthouse. The College also offers many [classes linked to sustainability](#) as well as many offerings tied to international affairs and issues.

International Business is the most popular major among Dickinson students, followed by the Biological Sciences. The International Business major was developed with consultation from the Dean of the Thunderbird School of Global Management, [considered the top-ranked graduate school for international business in the U.S.](#) Interestingly, the College offers no course called “International Business.” International issues are raised in the fundamental and advanced business classes. However, this is not a school where students will find many in-depth courses in subjects such as Accounting, Finance and Marketing. Dickinson is a better place for students who would like to combine a general business program with an interest in international affairs and another liberal arts major or minors. Dickinson students hoping to work on Wall Street might want to combine the International Business major with courses in economics or mathematics.

More than half of Dickinson students travel abroad, often for a semester or a year though semester-long Mosaic classes which combine on-campus learning with a short field or service experience are also avail-

able. [Mosaic classes](#) draw their content from more than one major. In addition, Dickinson sends students to off-campus experiences in New York City as well as Washington D.C.

It can be seen from the table below that Dickinson students hold their faculty in similar regard as their peers at other selective liberal arts colleges that they had considered. The College might not have the brand recognition of some of these schools, but its students believe that they’re served by equally competent teachers.

College	RateMyProfessors.com Rating (out of 5)
Dickinson	3.80
Gettysburg	3.66
Franklin and Marshall	3.82
Lafayette	3.82
Colgate	3.79
Hamilton	3.76
Bates	3.84
Bowdoin	3.80
Colby	3.85
Skidmore	3.75
Richmond	3.79
William and Mary	3.80
American	3.68

Connections

Alumni Relations
Career Services



Connections

Dickinson's career center engages first-year students through the College's dean system. Approximately 90 students are assigned to each dean, who stays with them for all four years. The student and dean get to know each other and the student sees the dean as a resource. The deans recommend that students have at least one appointment with a career counselor during their first year. The career center also offers specific programming for first-year students. This includes networking as a first year (what it is; why it is important; and how to minimize the intimidation factor), how to think about majors, applying for internships (30 percent of first years have an internship) and developing correspondence. Programs for sophomores include an alumni career conference in their spring semester that focuses on securing internships and exploring a variety of career fields through panel presentations and networking opportunities.

Internships are often a result of collaboration, although the majority are sourced either through the career center or the student's own resources. Some, but not all, academic departments require internships. Some departments also have long standing arrangements with particular organizations. The career center works in concert with them for the students to secure the best placement. In addition, Dickinson offers access to study at Woods Hole (Rhode Island), CUNY-Baruch College and the Washington Center. All of the programs offered at these locations are affiliated with internships.

Dickinson belongs to the Liberal Arts Career NetWORK (LACN), a group of 37 top liberal-arts colleges that share internship listings (approximately 10,000). The College also belongs to the Selective Liberal Arts Consortium (SLAC). LACN provides a database of approximately 10,000 internships, as well as a jobs database that, in season, usually contains around 1,500 opportunities. The LACN also maintains a fairly comprehensive career library, where each school is responsible for researching one field in great depth, and the results are all pooled and made available to the group. SLAC is a group of

13 schools that facilitate interview schedules in New York City as well as Washington D.C. SLAC also runs several virtual days throughout the academic year when employers across the country can interview, via Skype, students on any campus. Twelve of the 13 SLAC schools, including Dickinson, are also part of the LACN. [Interestingly, the other 11 schools ranked at least 10 places higher than Dickinson in U.S. News 2015 rankings of National Liberal Arts Colleges and accepted a much small percentage of their applicants.](#) Dickinson students thus enjoy access to the same positions as students who were admitted to these schools.

More than 200 organizations recruited Dickinson students during the 2013-14 academic year. Roughly 15 percent of the class went directly on to graduate or professional school though nearly a third of the graduates of past classes continued their education within five years of receiving their Bachelor's degree. Graduates of the Class of 2013 accepted positions from a varied group of employers from Goldman Sachs to the Washington Nationals; from the Peace Corps to NBC; and from Japan to Israel. Over 500 *unique positions* were posted to the College as well as those that were posted to the collaborative LACN database and the SLAC recruitment events.

Given Dickinson's approach to global content in so many classes, it is no surprise that students are interested in positions abroad. The career development center provides workshops and participates in the pre- and post-orientation programs for students who are interested in such opportunities. The College also provide special opportunities for those seeking positions with the State Department, Peace Corps, aid agencies, and Washington D.C.-based think tanks. An upcoming January career conference in Washington D.C. will feature meetings with alumni and visits to facilities related to these fields.

Dickinson has approximately 22,000 living alumni, of which approximately 5,900 are registered on LinkedIn.com. With the exceptions of Bucknell and Gettysburg, which have larger graduating classes, Dickinson has a larger

LinkedIn alumni group than any selective liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. Among the Dickinson alumni registered on LinkedIn.com, one fifth live and work in the New York metropolitan area while 15 percent are based in Washington D.C. and 14 percent are in and around Philadelphia. Five percent remain near the College in the Harrisburg area. The largest segment of registered Dickinson alumni--nine percent--work in education, followed by finance and sales/marketing. Five percent practice law.

Few liberal arts colleges are as aggressive at [supporting alumni networking](#) as Dickinson. The College also supports 19 alumni clubs including separate groups for New York City, Northern New Jersey and Southern Connecticut as well as three within Pennsylvania. The clubs amply cover the South, Southwest and the West, though Chicago is the only Midwestern city served by the College. Dickinson's [most recent June alumni weekend brought 1,200 alumni to campus](#) with their families, an impressive percentage for a small school. [More than 100 returned to campus to participate in the College's October Career Conference and Networking Day.](#) The College also reported to *U.S. News* that approximately 28 percent of alumni made a contribution to Dickinson, on average, during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic years, another positive sign of alumni loyalty.

Along with Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg, Dickinson offers high-quality career services and alumni support. The difference is that Dickinson may connect its students to more opportunities though its involvement in the job consortia.

Conclusions

Summing up

Conclusions

Dickinson competes in a tough market versus other liberal arts colleges, some more selective, some equally selective. It also competes against mid-sized schools that have major investments in international studies as well as larger schools that have honors colleges. More recently, Dickinson has sought more geographic diversity in the student body; the numbers of high school graduates in its historical markets in the Mid-Atlantic states are expected to go down.

Although Dickinson attracts excellent students, it is not an “elite” school. However, many of the academic offerings as well as the access to internships and full-time jobs after graduation equal those of liberal arts schools that turn down far more students than they accept. A student who is considering Dickinson versus such schools who can either afford this College or needs financial aid might want to make this their Early Decision choice, as long as the academics and the campus culture are the right fit. Unlike the most selective liberal arts colleges, Dickinson offers merit-based as well as need-based scholarships.

Dickinson has separated itself its competition in two areas: adding a global perspective within its majors as well as some interesting approaches to sustainability. Dickinson also offers some unique programs in archeology and strategic studies (military decision making) that you’re not likely to find at similar schools. However, students who want to be elementary or secondary school teachers as well as those who want to delve deeper into business specialities such as accounting or marketing might want to look elsewhere. These offerings are not possible with the bachelor’s degree programs at Dickinson.

It is not possible to categorize this school as a “conservative” or “liberal” campus. Dickinson appears to be a place where you are taught to find

practical solutions to business, political, scientific or social problems as opposed to being pushed towards an ideological ones. A student who wants to become a diplomat, general, lawyer, physician or entrepreneur, as examples, will find this approach appealing. While Dickinson does not have the brand recognition of the more selective colleges in its jobs consortia, its academic offerings and preparation are equally solid.

But Carlisle, home to the College since 1784, does not offer much in the way of student-focused dining or shopping. Students who choose Dickinson will be more reliant on the campus community for arts, dining and entertainment than their peers at other top liberal arts schools such as Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg, Lafayette and Skidmore. They will be happy with the recreational facilities as well as the theaters, as well as the programming.

Liberal arts colleges have been questioned for the “value” of the education that they offer their students. Dickinson has made the liberal arts more relevant by addressing “real world” issues more than most similar schools. The College also takes advantage of its unique assets such as its proximity to the U.S. Army War College as well as to Harrisburg and Washington D.C. More important, Dickinson does a better job than most colleges and universities of introducing its students to a world beyond the one that they grew up in.

Ed Quest’s Report Card						
Dickinson College						
Four-Year/ Six-Year Grad Rates	Freshman Retention	Costs	Comforts	Community	Curriculum	Connections
A/A	A	B+	A	B+	A	A
Strengths				Weaknesses		
Beautiful campus with lots of interesting history; major investments in science and recreational facilities				Carlisle is clean, well-maintained historic town, but not really a college town		
If you want to be an archeologist, general, lawyer or diplomat but also want a liberal arts college, this is your school				There’s little mass transit to anywhere from Carlisle		
Emphasis on a global education throughout the academic program, not just through an international relations major				Bucknell,. F&M and Muhlenberg have more options for the business majors, though International Business will be stronger here		
Strong alumni base in the Northeast for a small school				Educational Studies major does not lead to teacher certification. If you want this from a liberal arts school in PA look at Bucknell or Muhlenberg		
Pre-law preparation through mock trials and partnership with the local courthouse				If your politics are extreme in either way, other schools might be better options		
If you’re interested in politics but are middle of the road on issues, this might be your school				If you want to be an actor, but you can’t dance, this might not be your school		
One of the more generous liberal arts schools when it comes to financial aid; merit and need-based awards available				Dining area really needs an update--which will happen next year.		
Excellent career services for a small school, including networks in multiple job consortia						
Integration of sustainability into academics and student life						

The End



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