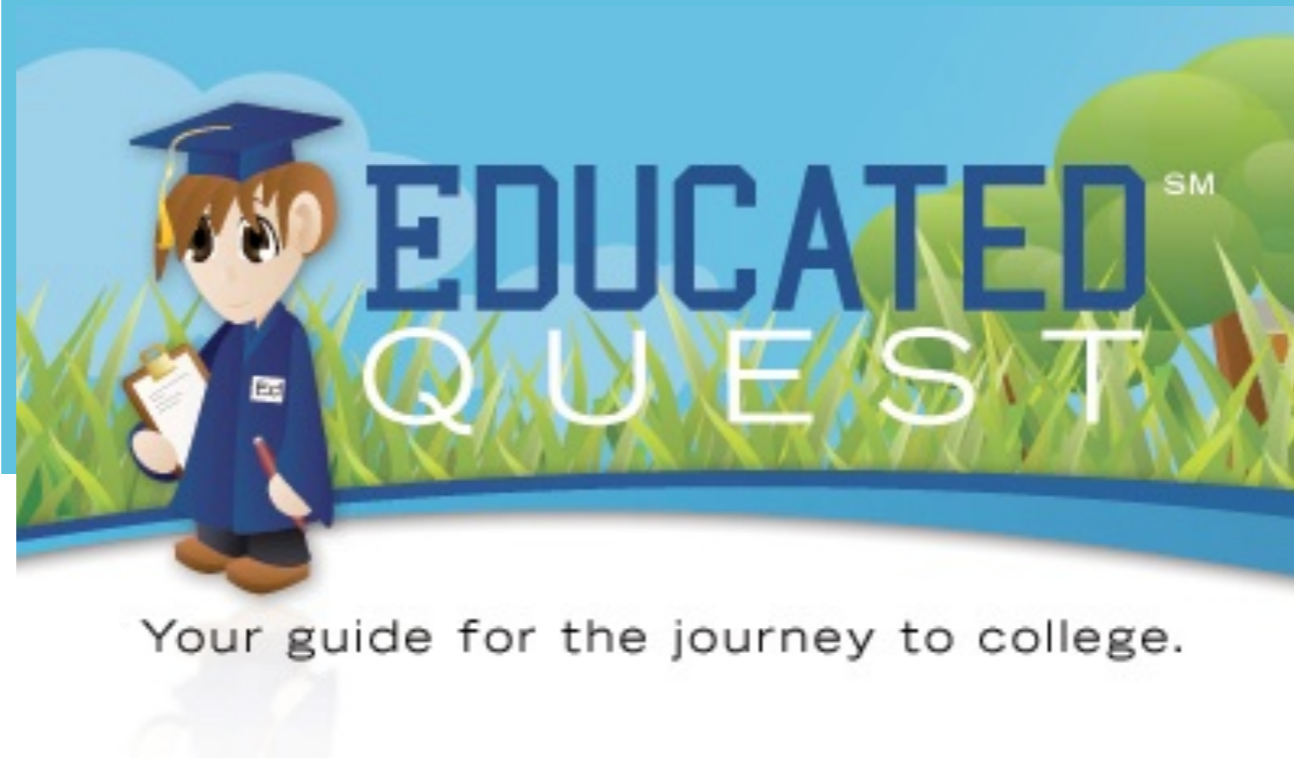


# First Impressions: Lehigh University (PA)



# Background

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Introduction to Lehigh

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# Background

Founded in 1865 after the close of the Civil War, Lehigh University opened with a \$500,000 donation from Asa Packer, the President of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. According to Lehigh's official history, Packer's donation was the largest single contribution to an American college up to that time. In 1871 Lehigh made the decision to be tuition free and kept that commitment for two decades. Lehigh was organized into its three undergraduate divisions: the College of Arts and Science; the College of Business Administration; and the College of Engineering in 1918 and has held to this structure ever since. These undergraduate divisions became co-ed starting in 1971.

With around 5,000 undergraduates, Lehigh is a smaller school than most comprehensive national research universities. Because of its academic depth in the liberal arts, business and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, Lehigh is cross-shopped against larger public and private universities such as Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, Penn State and Villanova as well as smaller technically-focused schools such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Stevens Institute of Technology. It is also cross-shopped against Patriot League sports rivals Bucknell and Lafayette, which are smaller liberal arts colleges that also offer engineering. [Case Western Reserve is probably the most similar school to Lehigh in terms of academic programs and its organization around colleges of lib-](#)

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eral arts, business and engineering, although it has about 1,000 fewer undergraduates.

According to the Office of Admissions, 38 percent of Lehigh undergraduates are enrolled in the Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science, 34 percent in the College of Arts and Sciences and 25 percent in the College of Business and Economics. Another three percent are enrolled in a joint program in Computer Science and Business offered through the engineering and business schools. Between the engineering and science majors, just over 40 percent of Lehigh's graduation seniors will earn a degree in a STEM subject.

It's not easy to get into Lehigh. Approximately 11,500 students applied for one of 1,220 spots in the class that entered this past fall. Just over 3,900 were offered admission. Nearly half (46 percent) of the class was filled through Early Decision. While nearly 3,700 applicants were offered a place on the waiting list--and about a third of them accepted the offer--only two were later offered admission. High SAT scores are not an assurance of admission; the University turned down more than half of the applicants who scored 1300 or higher (out of 1600) on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the test.

Fortunately, those who get in stay in. Ninety-six percent of the members of the class that entered in 2014 returned for their sophomore year, a performance that is about the same as more selective schools. Lehigh's most recent four-year graduation

rate was 76 percent for the class that entered in 2008, though others take advantage of programs that make it worthwhile to stay for an extra year to earn a master's degree.

Notable Lehigh University alumni include Lee Iacocca, formerly president of Ford and Chairman and CEO of Chrysler; entrepreneur and race car driver Roger Penske; and Dr. Harry J. Buncke noted Plastic Surgeon and the "Father of Microsurgery," among many others.

# Costs

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



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# Costs

Lehigh's direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) for 2014-15 were approximately \$57,000; the Total Cost of Attendance was estimated to be around \$59,000, slightly more for students enrolled in the College of Engineering. The Total Cost of Attendance estimate appears to be low, not allowing enough for indirect costs such as books, transportation, clothing, supplies (including software) and lab fees at a school that has so many students pursuing STEM majors.

Lehigh requires not only the FAFSA and the CSS Profile; the University also asks for income tax information to help the financial aid office to render decisions. Lehigh attempts to make the award process more personal by assigning applicants their own financial aid counselor as a contact. The University can make a preliminary award to students admitted through Early Decision, but will expect their family to supply an updated tax return as soon as it is completed.

Lehigh practices need-blind admissions, though admits off the wait-list will be considered on a need-aware basis. On average, according to Lehigh's 2014-15 Common Data Set, the University met 93 percent of the demonstrated need of the members of the freshmen class, and close to 96 percent of demonstrated need across the full undergraduate student body, based on their estimated Total Cost of Attendance. Students who come from families that earn less than \$50,000 will have no student loans in their financial aid packages. Those from families that earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 have loans capped at \$3,000 per year. In addition, the University hosts a Student Employment Fair to help students find campus jobs.

Aside from Ivy League schools and a limited number of selective private institutions, Lehigh's financial aid practices are fairer than most colleges.

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But Lehigh also has a relatively high (about half) percentage of undergraduate students who would be considered “full pay,” and therefore do not qualify for need-based aid (including Stafford Loans) from public sources or the University. This allows the University to better help the students who are truly needy. Lehigh has a very large endowment (approximately \$1.2 billion in FY 2014) for a school of its size according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Lehigh’s endowment is larger than schools such as Tulane, Syracuse and Baylor that must assist more undergraduates.

In addition to need-based Lehigh Grants, the University offers full and half-tuition merit awards as well as smaller Dean’s Scholarships and talent-based awards. President’s Scholars provide graduating seniors (3.75+ GPA) with a tuition-free fifth year of graduate school. Between five and ten percent of a freshman class is selected for merit awards. While this is low for school that welcomes more than 1,000 freshmen each year, other schools that are cross-shopped against Lehigh such as Cornell offer no merit-based awards at all.

Lehigh is also a great school for the smart athlete. The university competes at the highest level in the NCAA, Division 1, in all sports excluding football, where it competes in the “Playoff Series” group; it offers fewer football scholarships than much larger schools such as Penn State. The University also offers Army and Air Force ROTC on campus, including the scholarship programs.

Lehigh undergraduate students who earned their degrees in 2013 and had to take out student loans had, on average, a high debt burden. According to the Project on Student Debt, the average borrower borrowed approximately \$33,300, over \$6,000 more than the maximum a dependent may borrow under the Federal Stafford Loan program. Parents who

took out Parent PLUS loans borrowed approximately \$21,300 in 2011, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education Parent PLUS Loan database.

However, Lehigh graduates, even in the liberal arts, received starting salaries that were significantly higher than their debts. Lehigh is a more career-oriented university than other schools of similar size. It is also fair to state that the University makes it attractive to complete Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees within five years, more so than most research universities. In addition, nearly half (46 percent) of the graduating seniors in 2013 had no student loan debt at all. This is partly due to financial aid policies, a small part due to athletic and ROTC scholarships. However, a school that fills nearly half a freshman class through Early Decision is likely to have a higher percentage of full-pay students than most others.

Given Lehigh’s endowment, the high enrollments in the business school and the STEM majors, combined with active alumni relations and aggressive career services, Lehigh could be perceived to be a “better value” than many private universities--especially for those who enter and follow through on an academic direction quickly.

# Comforts

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



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# Comforts

Lehigh requires first and second-year students to live in University-approved housing. However, the University does not guarantee housing in campus past the sophomore year, unusual for a privately-supported school. Third, fourth and fifth-year students who do not live in fraternities or sororities must enter a housing lottery, or move off campus. Overall, just over two-thirds of the student body lives on campus, including the fraternity and sorority houses. Greek life attracts 40 percent of the undergraduate men, 45 percent of the women, high for any college or university.

Lehigh has some housing practices that are different from other selective schools. For example, the University provides separate substance-free housing for first-year students as well as upper-class students. There are residence halls and apartment living options for students who keep Kosher. Lehigh also allows second-year students to live in fraternity and sorority houses; the pledge process can begin during the second semester of the freshman year. Since the houses are on campus, the University provides essential services and imposes [maximum occupancy policies.](#)

Fortunately, Bethlehem has low off-campus housing costs. The University's online database, run through Places4Students, showed a sufficient number of listings, either in apartment complexes or shared houses, for just under \$400 per person per month, some including utilities. The low housing costs in the community make it attractive for students to move off campus, especially if they have employment, research or study opportunities during the summer.

# Community

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**Campus**  
**Environs**  
**School Spirit**

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# Community

Lehigh's campus community has to consider not only Bethlehem; it also needs to consider the region, the Lehigh Valley. There are at least as many entertainment and recreational opportunities in the Valley as there are in a college community dominated by a very large public university such as Penn State--as long as you have access to transportation to get to them.

The University has the facilities, including the Zoellner Arts Center, to attract notable speakers and entertainers to campus as well as many clubs and organizations. However, the Greek system is a more important part of the campus social life than it is at larger selective private universities as well as technically-focused schools such as Case Western or Carnegie Mellon. Lehigh has "ranked" high as a "party school" in the *Princeton Review*, a startling contrast for a demanding academic institution.

Lehigh has a very attractive main quad, complemented by some impressive modern buildings for the business school (Rauch) and the Campus Square but also a more utilitarian science and engineering complex. The main campus is easily navigable. However it is stacked upon a hill. The walks that might be pleasant early and late in the school year could be far less pleasant in the winter months. Fortunately, Lehigh provides a van service to help students, faculty and staff get around.

Reported incidents of crime in [Lehigh University's most recent Clery Report are fairly low](#), considering the size of the student body and the location of the campus. Liquor law violations are, by far, the most reported crimes, and they trended down between 2011 and 2013. There was only one reported incidence of either forcible or non-forcible sexual assault between 2011 and 2013, *unusual for any college or university of any size in any location*.

Lehigh competes in the Patriot League in 24 sports. Within Pennsylvania only Penn State competes in more sports at the Division 1 (scholarship) level. Lehigh's football rivalry with nearby Lafayette College reached its 150th anniversary this past season, though Lafayette, a Patriot League rival, is a much smaller school. Lehigh has also enjoyed recent success in men's basketball, lacrosse and wrestling (which is not a Patriot League sport). In 2012, Lehigh's men's basketball team, seeded 15th in their regional in the NCAA Tournament, upset Duke, a 2nd seed.

# Curriculum

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

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# Curriculum

Lehigh comes quite close to offering the breadth of a larger university in a mid-sized package and also asks its students to take on a similarly demanding five-course load depending on the academic program they choose. However, the University also makes it easier to change schools or enter one of the schools undecided than a larger public or private university. Entering students do not need to declare a major, unless they are interested in one of the integrated degree programs (Business or Liberal Arts and Engineering, Business and Computer Science). But they must remain enrolled in the college they choose within Lehigh for at least one year. Lehigh also offers enrollment in South Mountain College which substitutes faculty-designed multi-disciplinary classes for the more traditional liberal arts distribution requirements. Further, Lehigh offers tremendous opportunities for independent study and research inside and outside of a honors program.

The options and programs within majors are astonishing for a school of Lehigh's size. A Marketing major, for example, has a choice among five different concentrations. Finance majors may receive optional instruction at no charge to learn the software packages used by investment analysts on Wall Street. Business students can collaborate with STEM students on product development projects for area businesses ranging from start-ups formed by Lehigh alumni to the region's major natural gas utility. Or they can spend time meeting alumni and venture

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capitalists in Silicon Valley, It is very easy, for example, for a liberal arts major to develop a business minor or the business student to double major in a liberal arts subject. Those who are interested in business or liberal arts *and* engineering may choose, if selected, the integrated program with general engineering course or a five-year dual degree with a business or liberal arts major and a major in one of the engineering disciplines. Lehigh also offers some liberal arts programs that are not found at liberal arts colleges including art, architecture and design, cognitive science and sustainable development. [Lehigh also offers co-op for engineering students which provides up to nine months of paid full-time employment while still allowing them to graduate in four years.](#)

In addition to the undergraduate degree programs, Lehigh offers a five-year Bachelors-Masters program in Education as well as joint degree programs in medicine (with Drexel University), dentistry (with Penn) and osteopathy (with the State University of New York).

But Lehigh, while having tremendous academic depth, has its downsides. The popularity of the business and STEM programs means larger introductory courses in subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Math and Physics while the school is becoming more demanding at accepting AP credits. Sixteen percent of Lehigh's 910 class sections enrolled more than 40 students in the previous academic year, with 30 enrolling more

than 100 according to the University's most recent Common Data Set. Larger introductory courses help to create a setting that could be more competitive than cooperative for first-year students, especially given the appeal of many of the majors and integrated programs. But help is available. It is wise to seek it early, if needed.

Lehigh students gave their faculty a rating of 3.68 (out of a possible five points) on RateMyProfessors.com about the same as students at the University of Rochester (3.7) and Case Western (3.67) rated their faculty but lower than students at Patriot League rivals Bucknell (3.84) and Lafayette (3.82) rated theirs.

# Connections

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



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# Connections

Among the nearly 41,000 Lehigh alumni registered on LinkedIn.com, over 20,000 live and/or work in the New York or Philadelphia metropolitan areas or in the Lehigh Valley. Lehigh's location makes it easy for alumni to come to campus or for students to knock on doors in these places. There are also just over 1,800 alumni in the Boston area, around 1,700 in and around Washington DC as well as just under 1,200 in and around San Francisco. About a quarter of Lehigh alumni make a contribution to the University, higher than more selective schools such as Carnegie Mellon, NYU, Tufts and Washington University in St. Louis, all of which have more undergraduate students and alumni, according to the 2015 *U.S. News Best Colleges* guide.

Lehigh graduates have tremendous success immediately after they complete their degrees. According to the [First Destination Report](#) produced by the University's Office of Career Services, 66 percent of the members of the Class of 2013 found full-time employment within one year of graduation while 29 percent were enrolled in graduate or professional school. Eighty four percent of the graduates of the College of Business and Economics were working full-time as were just over half of the graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences and two thirds of the graduates of the engineering school. Just over 200 employers conducted 2,500 *on-campus interviews alone* while more than 1,100 employers posted more than 3,700 co-ops, internships and full-time jobs. More than 40 percent of 2013 graduates found their first jobs through Career Services. Just over a fifth were hired full-time following a co-op or internship they had held while in school. And most of those working--88 percent of the class responded to the survey--earned salaries higher than the amounts they might have borrowed for student loans.



# Conclusions

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Summing up



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# Conclusions

Take a large university, including the engineering and business programs, pare it down to 5,000 undergraduates and you get Lehigh. Few schools offer so many options, even larger private and public universities that have more famous names. And few schools, public or private, have as loyal an alumni base. Work hard at Lehigh and you can go anywhere, even the same places as Ivy League graduates expect to go.

The depths of the career-oriented programs are as much a weakness as they are a strength. It is too easy to be drawn into an education where you could be studying all the time or lured into a social life where you believe that you do not have to study to succeed here. It takes a special student to succeed at Lehigh. That same student might also be at Bucknell or Penn State, one of the larger Ivies, Penn or Cornell, or a more technically-focused school such as Carnegie Mellon, Case Western or Rochester. These schools, while different in location and setting, have the same competitive climate. You can make friends here, but you must come ready to work, especially in the introductory courses. The various degree options allow better students will delve deep into STEM or business problems, many that are “real world,” work in good-paying co-ops or internships, even earn a free year of graduate school. But the less prepared may really struggle.

Lehigh has two “image problems” that are not linked to Ivies or other private universities that are strong in business and STEM such as Case Western or Carnegie Mellon, nor to mid-sized schools such as Villanova that offer similar degree options. The first problem is that Lehigh has a high rank in “party school” surveys. While that has not stopped excellent students from finding employment or gaining admission to graduate or professional schools, nor has it hurt alumni loyalty, it compromises the

University administration in any efforts they make to have the school taken more seriously as a national research university.

Walk around this campus and you will see facilities that are as impressive as any you might find at a school without the “party school” label as well as larger public universities that do. Yet Lehigh is not listed among the membership of the Association of American Universities--although it is deserving of such recognition. Lehigh matches up closely in undergraduate student body size with schools such as Case Western, Dartmouth, Princeton, Rice and Rochester while also offering more comprehensive undergraduate business and computer science programs than any of these institutions as well as an equally impressive engineering school.

The second issue is the surrounding neighborhood. While Lehigh has a very attractive campus, especially its main green, the surrounding area has many rough edges after you go downhill. The Lehigh Valley offers much for college students to do as well as many entrepreneurial opportunities for Lehigh students. But Bethlehem, while it has a reviving downtown and a very nice historic district, is not a college town unto itself.

Lehigh is powerfully appealing to exceptionally bright and career-oriented people who want the offerings of a larger school but not the huge classes in the upper-division courses. Lehigh students appear to receive a very good return on their investment as well as their educational experience. Lee Iacocca had the choice to invest his money in Lehigh, where he earned his bachelor’s degree, or Princeton, where he earned his masters. He banked on Lehigh. That’s quite a recommendation from an American business hero.

<b>Ed Quest’s Report Card</b>						
Lehigh University						

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

Strengths	Weaknesses
Pretty much anything you can find at a larger school (even an Ivy) is here in a mid-sized package	If you don’t want a school with a large Greek population, look elsewhere
Loyal alumni base, including Lee Iacocca, among others, and effective career services.	Bethlehem has some nice neighborhoods, but they’re not right by the campus.
One of the best schools to test various career options in business or engineering, including entrepreneurship. Engineers can also do co-op and graduate in four years.	“Party school” label might have hurt this school in its moves to be taken more seriously as a research university.
Great school for a smart athlete who wants a scholarship (Patriot League)--and they even beat Duke in NCAA Tournament play!	Merit awards do not go far down into a freshman class.
There’s more for college students to do in this metro area than people think--and New York and Philadelphia are not far away!	You might have to live in a triple room in your first year.
Financial aid policies are fair, though about half of the students are full-pay	The University cannot guarantee housing past the sophomore year, unusual for a private research-oriented school
Easy to shift out of engineering into liberal arts or business and still graduate in four years--or you can do a dual or combined degree, even get a year of grad school for free!	The University’s estimate for Total Cost of Attendance appears low, though the school reports meeting a very high percentage of financial need

# The End



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