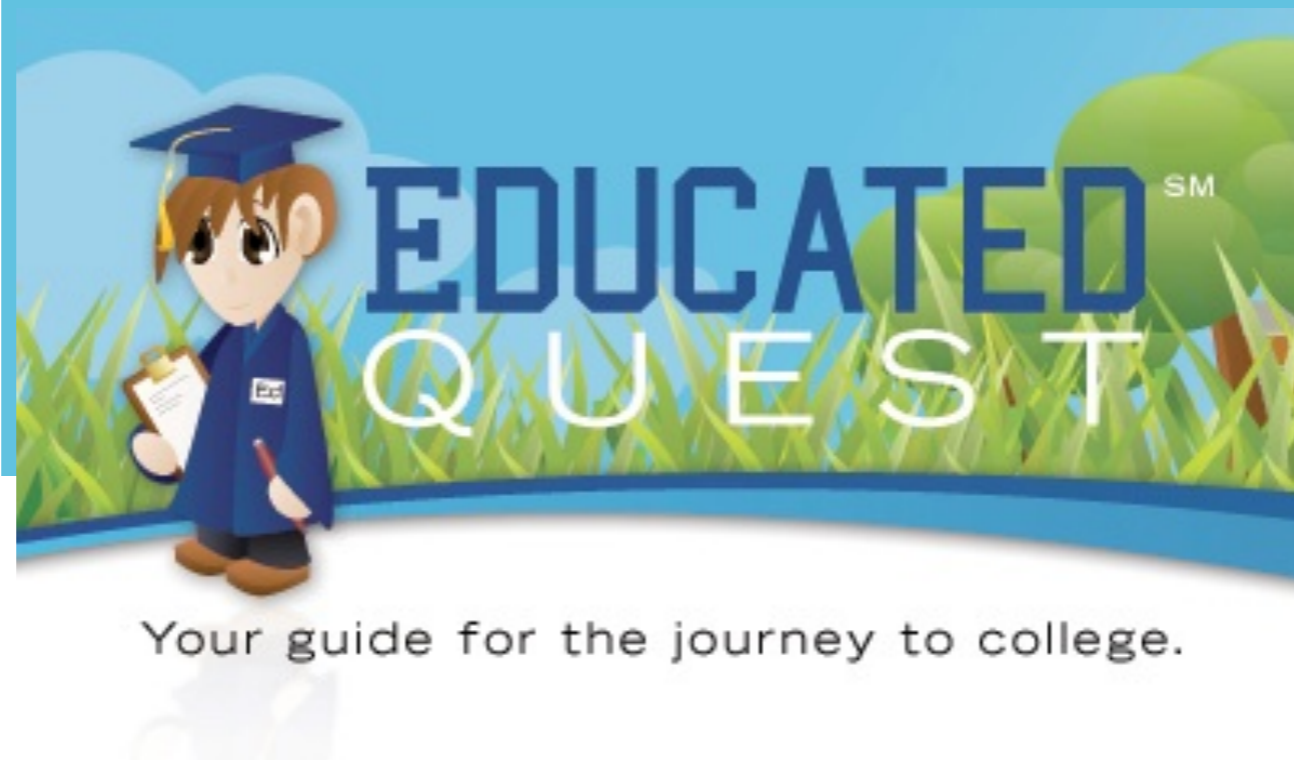


First Impressions: Stockton University (NJ)



Background

Introduction to Stockton

Background

Chartered in 1969 and opened in 1971, Stockton University was until recently known as Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. The school was named for Richard Stockton, a delegate to the Continental Congress from New Jersey as well as one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The first degrees (transfer students) were granted in 1973 while the first four-year students graduated in 1975.

Stockton University is marketed as “New Jersey’s Distinctive University.” This is partly due to academic programs as well as the design of the campus. Unlike colleges with longer histories, most of the Stockton campus was designed and constructed during the early 1970s with academic buildings constructed at the center and housing at the periphery, all in the heart of an ecologically-sensitive area. While the campus has 2,000 acres, larger than some flagship state universities, most of the land cannot be developed; it must remain in a forested state.

Stockton has attracted stronger student bodies in recent years. This is due to attractive scholarship programs, an honors college, unique academic strengths (Criminal Justice, Education, Environmental Studies, Health Professions) and more competitive admissions at other New Jersey schools including The College of New Jersey, Rowan University and Rutgers University-New Brunswick. Eighty-seven percent of the freshman class that entered in 2013 returned for their sophomore year, according to the University’s Office of Institutional Research. At least half of the students who entered in 2008, 2009 and 2010 graduated within four years. Only The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), Ramapo College of New Jersey and Rutgers-New Brunswick perform better among the Garden State’s public colleges and universities.

Stockton accepted just over 60 percent of its applicants for the class that entered in 2013, about the same as Rutgers-New Brunswick although TCNJ and Ramapo have become more selective public options. Stockton offers Immediate Decision days where applicants may come to campus, interview with admissions officers and receive a decision before they leave.

Costs



Tuition and Fees
Scholarships
Debt

Costs

Tuition and fees at Stockton for 2014-15 are approximately \$12,600 for New Jersey residents and just under \$19,100 for non-residents. Room and board for the first year is just over \$11,000. There are a number of housing options for upper-class students in the newer apartment complexes that can get pricy, approaching \$9,000 for an academic year, excluding a meal plan. However, there is enough variety in the housing mix to allow any student to find an affordable living situation. The University estimates a Total Cost of Attendance of \$25,100 for a New Jersey resident, \$31,600 for a non-resident, allowing a very low \$1,400 for books, supplies and incidentals outside of direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board). But direct charges have risen only two percent over the last two years.

The better news is that a student's costs can be reduced through merit awards that vary between \$2,000 and \$18,000 per year. There are also awards for continuing and transfer students, including those who received scholarships to New Jersey community colleges through the NJ STARS program. An applicant who would be in the middle of the pool at Rutgers-New Brunswick or TCNJ would pay about one-third the tuition and fees charged by those schools to go to Stockton and have an opportunity to be part of an honors program. This is something worth considering for students interested in fields such as Criminal Justice, Education or Hospitality that have lower entry-level salaries than degree programs in business, health care or the sciences.

However, Stockton has limited dollars available for need-based aid outside of the Federal and New Jersey programs. According to Big Future, the College Board's search site, Stockton, on average, met only two-thirds of need for students who qualified for need-based aid. According to the Project on Student Debt, the average borrower who graduated in 2013 averaged close to \$34,000, \$7,000 more than the maximum a dependent student would be allowed to borrow through the Federal Stafford Student Loan program to complete a four-year degree, \$3,000 more than s/he would be allowed to complete one in five. The Project on Student Debt figures do consider students who attended college for five years, including those who pursued joint degrees. However, given the merit scholarship programs, the average appears high for a public university. Parents who borrowed through the Federal Parent PLUS loan program borrowed, on average, \$11,500 in 2011, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Parent PLUS Loan database. This is on the lower side for parents who borrowed from this source.

Comforts

3

On-Campus Housing
Local Housing Market

Comforts

Stockton houses slightly less than 40 percent of its students on campus, though the vast majority of the freshman class will live in the residence halls. Freshmen live in a two complexes within a short walk from the academic buildings and the fitness center. The older complex, Housing II, originally built during the 1970's is in need of interior renovations. Laundry and micro-fridges are included with the residence hall charges.

The University does an excellent job at offering a mix of on-campus living options to upper-class students as well as providing transportation between apartments and the academic buildings. Housing I apartments, also known as "The Courts" are quite affordable for college housing with a five-person apartment going for around \$7,200 per person per year, including all utilities. But these units, like the residence halls, are aging and need to be renovated in stages. The more modern complexes on campus, Housing IV and Housing V, are very nice, with single rooms. However, Housing IV apartments do not have full kitchens with stoves. Residents need to purchase a meal plan as they would if they lived in a dorm. Same with students who live in the Seaview complex.

[Stockton allows students to choose from either meals-per-week plans or swipes that be used for 95, 120 or 180 meals during the course of a semester.](#)

All plans also have "flex" dollars that can be spent at campus locations outside of the dining hall. The best value for a first-year student is probably the 120 block plan that starts at around \$3,000 for the school year.

This is one school where it might pay to move off campus after the freshman year, especially if there is a summer job opportunity nearby. The rental market in the area is less expensive than all but Housing 1 units, and there is no obligation to purchase a meal plan.

Community

Campus
Environs
School Spirit

4

Community

The Stockton campus was constructed in the Pine Barrons of New Jersey with environmental sensitivity a priority. Academic buildings are clustered towards the center of the campus along with the student center. Outdoor athletic facilities, residence halls and apartments are at the periphery. A man-made lake, “Lake Fred,” is between the apartments and academic buildings. walking or biking to and from class around Lake Fred is in fashion during the warmer months. There is no need for students to drive on campus at all. Bus connections from apartments to the academic center are easily available for those who do not want to bike or walk.

Pomona, where the Stockton campus is located, is close to Atlantic City, easily reachable from campus by either car or bus. There is also bus transportation to shopping and entertainment through the “508” bus to nearby Hamilton Mall and bus service to Philadelphia. NJ TRANSIT’s Atlantic City Line is also close by for those who prefer to take the train. There’s little of interest to students in the vicinity of campus aside from the Renault Winery and a few eating places. Atlantic City has been hit hard by the recent recession and casinos have closed. However, it is still one of America’s leading entertainment and tourist destinations.

Automotive and transit access is important because Stockton does not appear to be a “spirit and sports” school like TCNJ. Stockton competes at the Division III (non-scholarship) level in varsity sports, mainly against other New Jersey public colleges. Stockton was the New Jersey Athletic Conference champion in men’s basketball in 2013-14.

Stockton has 23 Greek societies, both social and academic, though the University has neither fraternity nor sorority houses on campus.

Curriculum

5

Academics
Honors Programs
Experiential Learning

Curriculum

Stockton is unique in that students may pursue either a dual major through a single bachelors degree or earn a BA in one major and a BS in another, both in four years. [Stockton degrees require 128 credits; the distribution requirements are similar to larger schools.](#) This will mean that students will carry a four-course load, although they make a fifth course for no extra charge. There are also joint five-year BA/BS degree programs in engineering between Stockton and New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University and Rutgers University-New Brunswick. The merit scholarship program makes these five-year degree options more attractive than they might be at other other schools. Stockton also offers a Bachelors-Masters programs in Criminal Justice; the masters program is the only one in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware that has received certification from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Stockton has also sent over 900 students to the Washington Center to pursue internships in the nation's capital, more than any college in the U.S.

Stockton's location allows the University to offer some programs that are unique to New Jersey public institutions. The [Environmental Studies and Marine Sciences](#) programs have impressive equipment and facilities for a school that offers no doctoral degrees in these fields, including a field station near campus. Stockton is also the only public college in New Jersey that offers choices in the health professions between nursing, occupational therapy and physical therapy (doctorate). Atlantic Health Care has a hospital near the main entrance to campus that supports these programs. The Hospitality and Tourism Management program includes an opportunity to learn the gaming industry; the University recently purchased a casino hotel in Atlantic City. While Stockton was founded as a liberal arts college the [business](#) and [education](#) programs have considerable depth. [The Honors Program, which might be attractive to students considering Rutgers or TCNJ, is more personalized than it would be at the larger schools, although students need a 3.5 GPA or better in the Honors courses to graduate with a Certificate of Distinction in Honors.](#) The Honors Program also includes honors housing as well as an opportunity to earn additional scholarship dollars, but it also has a service learning requirement.

There are downsides. The business school, unlike those at Rider University, Rowan, Rutgers and TCNJ is not accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Many employers seeking accounting and business students prefer to recruit at accredited business schools.

Connections

Alumni Relations
Career Services



Connections

Among the 19,000 Stockton alumni registered on LinkedIn.com, more than 14,000 work in either the New York or Philadelphia metropolitan areas. The base drops down far from there with just under 400 alumni working around Washington DC.

The University offers [several career-related events](#) on campus, including Exploration Panels, job fairs and a teacher recruitment day as well as an Employer in Residence program.

Career services and university-industry relationships are important for Stockton because it is the only four-year college, public or private, serving the Atlantic City area.

Conclusions

Summing up



Conclusions

Through its own initiatives as well as more competitive admissions at other New Jersey schools, Stockton University is emerging as an attractive and reasonably-priced mid-sized public option. This is especially true for students who are interested in Criminal Justice, Education, Environmental Studies, Hospitality Administration and Nursing.

The campus is eco-friendly, given its location in the Pine Barrons. The campus is also bus-friendly but offers plenty of parking for everyone who wants to live on campus. The regional economy around Atlantic City is a large enough to offer internship opportunities in most majors. Housing is inexpensive for college students who want to live off campus.

Stockton's disadvantages are tied to its short history. This is not a school where you find historic ivy-covered buildings or a leafy main quad, although its oldest buildings are showing their age. The University has a smaller alumni base, because it has not been around very long. The business programs are not accredited because the University has not had a separate business school for long. The regional economy has also taken its lumps as tourism, especially gaming revenues, declined.

However, Stockton is becoming a better school at a time when New Jersey cannot have enough good public colleges and universities. If you can find an academic fit and prefer a mid-sized public school, give Stockton a look.

Ed Quest's Report Card						
Stockton University						

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

The End



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