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A Choice: Haverford College and Swarthmore College

A little background

Haverford is a Quaker-founded, but not religiously-affiliated, liberal arts college with around 1,200 students. Haverford was founded in 1833, just under 30 years before the Civil War. Haverford was all-male until 1980 when women became part of all entering classes. Today more than half (54 percent) of Haverford students are women, according to *College Results Online*. Students are bound by an honor code that is taken quite seriously. The College also calls Plenary Sessions twice yearly where a quorum of the student body may vote to change school policies or amend the Honor Code.

Swarthmore is also a Quaker-founded liberal arts college, but it has remained religiously affiliated. The College was founded by Lucretia Mott, an abolitionist and woman's right activist, and has always been co-ed. Today enrollment is almost evenly split (49/51) between men and women. The College has approximately 1,600 students. Swarthmore was founded in 1864 while America was at war within itself. Unlike Haverford students Swarthmore students are not bound by an honor code.

Based on information on *College Results Online*, Swarthmore appears to be the more diverse school. Approximately one fifth of Swarthmore students come from underrepresented minority groups versus 15 percent for Haverford. Both schools recruit students from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds through the [Questbridge College Prep Scholarship program](#).

Both schools are exceptionally selective. They are likely to accept less than a fifth of all applicants for the class that enters in the Fall of 2015. High grades in a challenging academic program, as well as exceptionally high ACT (30+) or SAT (1350+) scores will be expected of virtually all applicants to either college.

Academics

Both offer traditional liberal arts majors although Swarthmore also offers programs in Education and Engineering. Haverford offers a 4+1 Bachelors/Master's in Engineering program with the University of Pennsylvania. About 30 percent of the graduates at each school earn degrees in the Sciences, Engineering or Mathematics, about 40 percent in the Social Sciences and about a fifth in the Arts and Humanities. Close to 90 percent of the students who enter either school as freshmen graduate *within four years*, outstanding for any college or university.

Students will have small classes during most of their education at either school, although the larger introductory courses in subjects such as Biology, Economics and Psychology will top 100 students. At Swarthmore the professor teaches recitation sections that break the course into smaller groups.

Students enrolled at one school can take courses at the other, provided that the course is not offered on their campus. Haverford students have slightly more flexibility because of geography. The campus is less than ten minutes from Bryn Mawr's campus. It is not unusual for a Haverford student to take more of their courses within their major at Bryn



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Mawr, or even take on a major that is administered by Bryn Mawr faculty. Both require a demanding capstone experience, though for Haverford the option is a thesis. During the senior year students have a major advisor and a thesis advisor. Some academic departments require a senior to defend their theses, though others do not.

Swarthmore is more involved when it comes to working with undecided students. Sophomores are asked by their academic advisor to develop a plan of study—including a list of classes—for their last two years, though it can be changed, that also includes career-related plans. Swarthmore also has clever names for tutors in the more difficult introductory classes including Ninjas (Computer Science), Pirates (Mathematics) and Alchemists (Chemistry). Haverford assigns a dean as a freshman advisor.

There are also opportunities to do honors courses within a minor as well as a major, even if you are not in the Honors Program. Swarthmore has offered an Honors Program since 1921, longer than most schools of any size. The honors courses are two-credit tutorials. Most courses are one to two-credits with 32 required for a degree. Swarthmore also has a four-credit physical education requirement; these courses are pass-fail. So are all of the classes that you take first semester freshman year.

Both schools focus distribution requirements around three areas: Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences; you take three courses in each. You also take a freshman seminar as well as writing, quantitative reasoning and a foreign language. It's very easy to do a double major at either school. Both schools as well as Bryn Mawr operate on the same academic calendar, making it easier to schedule classes, and possibly another major or minor between the three schools. Both offer similar opportunities for independent study and funded research.

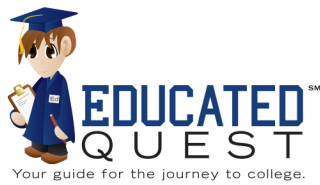
Students at both schools have very high regard for their faculty. Haverford students gave their professors a rating of 3.93 (out of 5.00) on [RateMyProfessors.com](https://www.ratemyprofessors.com). Swarthmore students gave their faculty a rating of 4.01.

Community

Both schools are served by direct mass transit into Philadelphia from train stations that are within walking distance from campus.

As previously mentioned, Haverford is much closer to Bryn Mawr than Swarthmore. This also makes it closer to entertainment and shopping in Bryn Mawr, which also a very nice movie theatre. Swarthmore is located near Hamilton Mall in Springfield, but the mall is not within walking distance and there's nothing of interest to students in the downtown. The Swarthmore student is more likely to go into Philadelphia for entertainment or remain on campus. However events at Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore are free and open to all students on all campuses. Students literally do not need to carry money around, unless they venture off campus.

Both schools have campuses with a mix of architectural styles from the 19th through 21st century. Buildings on both campuses mix Pennsylvania limestone and glass. The more modern buildings on both, including some of the residence halls, are eerily similar in design, as if they same architect might have designed both. Students will rarely cross a street to get around either campus.



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Swarthmore's campus is more spread out, with about twice the acreage (400 vs. 200) of Haverford's as well as soft rolling hills, a beautiful arboretum and an outdoor amphitheater. Swarthmore's library with its wood-paneled main floor is one of the most beautiful undergraduate libraries in the country.

Haverford though smaller, is beautifully landscaped, with a pond and nature trail. Founder's Hall, Haverford's main administration building, was the College's first building. It has some interesting historical details as well as a breathtaking main ballroom. It, too, has a very nice main library; the reading room is the main attraction.

Both schools give their students a tremendous voice in campus life and have bonding traditions that will be memorable long past graduation. Haverford also has a "customs network" for each incoming student to help her get settled into the culture, understand the Honor Code and succeed academically, while Swarthmore is one of the smallest colleges in the country to operate a college daily newspaper. Haverford is the more sports-oriented of the two schools, although both compete in the same athletic conference (Centennial), perhaps due to the school playing more varsity sports (including football) while having a smaller student body. Swarthmore drew national attention for dropping football in 2007 although the College has new athletic facilities under renovation during the Spring of 2015.

Comforts

Virtually everyone lives on campus at both schools. There is also a Dorm Exchange between the two campuses and Bryn Mawr where academic pursuits make it feasible.

Haverford is more "floor-oriented." Freshmen may get a single room, but still be active participants in hall governance, or choose a traditional double room. There is a [diverse choice of living options](#) for upper-class students for a small school. Those who live in the residence halls have a choice of only one meal plan: unlimited meals over the 20 meal periods per week. Laundry is coin-operated, an outdated practice in college residence halls. The College has neither fraternities nor sororities.

Swarthmore has only residence halls among the on-campus living options. It also allows mixed-gender living arrangements, including mixed bathrooms. The upper floors of Swarthmore's main administration building (Parrish Hall) are student residences, rare for any college. The College will be opening a new hall with 70 to 75 beds this fall that will be located between two existing halls, Dana and Hallowell. The College's practice is to assign freshmen sophomores to double rooms while juniors and seniors have singles. Swarthmore also has two fraternities (both have housing) and one sorority (no housing). However, Swarthmore has only one dining hall (Sharples), and limits meal points to that location. They cannot be used at other campus locations that sell food.

Costs

The direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) for 2014-15 were approximately \$64,000 at Haverford, just over \$61,000 at Swarthmore. Swarthmore worked off a Total Cost of Attendance of \$64,000 in estimating financial need, allowing extra costs for transportation home further from campus. Haverford has the more generous financial aid policies while Swarthmore has a much larger endowment to work with. However, both



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schools will meet the full demonstrated need for their students. All prospective students must submit a FAFSA as well as a CSS Profile to both schools.

Haverford has “no loan” aid packages for students who come from families that earn less than \$60,000. More significantly, the College tries to limit annual borrowing to \$3,000 for all other students who need loans. Nearly half of Haverford’s students received need-based scholarships; the average grant came close to full tuition. [According to the Project on Student Debt, only 30 percent of Haverford graduates in the Class of 2013 had any student loan debt at all. The average borrower borrowed \\$15,000.](#)

Swarthmore had an endowment of approximately \$1.9 billion in Fiscal Year 2014 according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers versus approximately \$495 million for Haverford. Swarthmore awards mainly need-based aid, although a small number of merit scholarships are also available. [Only 36 percent of Swarthmore graduates in the Class of 2013 had any student loan debt. The average student borrower borrowed approximately \\$19,300.](#)

Connections

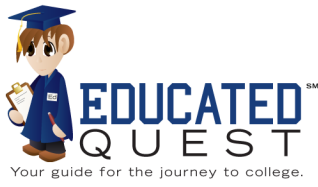
Both schools are similarly networked in [LinkedIn.com](#) in regions in the same order: New York, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago. They leverage their alumni networks very well through events, shadowing and mentoring. According to *U.S. News Best Colleges*, both schools have exceptionally loyal alumni. The alumni giving rate, the percentage of alumni who made a contribution to the school, was 43 percent for both colleges, excellent for any college or university.

Haverford is a member (along with cross-town neighbor Bryn Mawr) of the [Selective Liberal Arts Consortium](#), which shares jobs and conducts Recruiting Days with 11 other highly-selective private colleges. Swarthmore is a member of the [Liberal Arts Career Network](#) with 36 other highly-selective private colleges. The Network operates a job board and produces career-related materials for students and alumni.

Conclusions

Of the two schools Haverford has the edge when it comes to financial aid and housing options. It is also closer to Bryn Mawr as well as a downtown setting and is more sports oriented for those who want a “spirit and sports” setting. Swarthmore has a more peaceful campus setting as well as more options for students who want a greater academic challenge as well as programs in education and engineering. The College’s history also appears to be more rooted in social justice.

But it’s not like one school is a distant second to the other. Both have well-deserved reputations for excellence in academics and student engagement. If you visit one of these schools, stay an extra day to visit the other. Young women might want to take a look at Bryn Mawr, too.



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Report Cards

	Haverford College	Swarthmore College
4-Year/6-Year Grad Rates	A	A
Freshman Retention	A	A
Costs	A	A
Comforts	A	B+
Curriculum	A	A
Community	A	A
Connections	A	A