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Allegheny College

Founded in 1815 Allegheny College is one of the oldest liberal arts colleges in the U.S. as well as the oldest college in continuous existence under the same name west of Pennsylvania's Allegheny Mountains. Geographically, some might say that this region is where Northeast meets Midwest in the United States. This line of thinking can be extended to the colleges that Allegheny students consider when they applied.

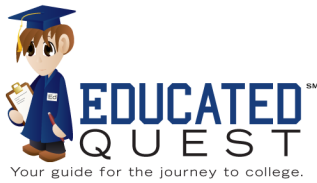
A 2,100 student liberal arts college that grants no graduate degrees, Allegheny is one of the 40 U.S. "Colleges That Change Lives," selected by the late *New York Times* education editor Loren Pope. Allegheny has been included among the Colleges That Change Lives that Change Lives since Pope's first writing in 1996.

Students who consider Allegheny also look at the other Colleges That Change Lives that are located in Pennsylvania, including Juniata and Ursinus as well as other liberal arts schools located in the Keystone State such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg. Other students have cross-shopped Allegheny against Colleges That Change Lives in neighboring Ohio including the College of Wooster, Denison, Hiram and Ohio Wesleyan as well as Kenyon, Oberlin and Wittenberg. Allegheny also pulls in students who consider colleges in Indiana such as DePauw, Earlham and Wabash. Allegheny pulls slightly more than half (53 percent) of its student body from outside of Pennsylvania, according to its most recent Common Data Set, an indication that its brand recognition is improving.

Colleges That Change Lives, including Allegheny, are not necessarily selective schools that turn away the vast majority of their applicants. However, they are listed because they have a history of helping students achieve at the same heights as their peers who chose colleges that do. The Allegheny admissions take on this practice is that the College "looks for 'diamonds in the rough'." The College is willing to take a harder look to find them in their next admissions cycle. Allegheny will offer "test optional" admissions for the first time as many other liberal arts colleges do.

This year Allegheny received approximately 4,000 applicants for the class of 580 that will enter this fall, an increase of 500 over the previous year, according to the admissions office. Approximately 60 percent were offered admission; the acceptance rate has ranged between 58 and 63 percent in prior years. About a quarter of those accepted decide to come. The SAT range for the middle 50 percent of the next entering class was between 1100 and 1300 (out of 1600) while the ACT Composite range was between 24 and 29 (out of 36). Unlike more selective liberal arts colleges Allegheny's admissions office encourages applicants to interview on campus with a senior admissions officer. Admission to Allegheny is considered "need-blind," though the College cannot meet the full need for all of its students.

Allegheny does a good job of successfully graduating students of all economic backgrounds. Between 83 and 89 percent of a freshmen class returns for their sophomore year. More impressive, the most recent four-year graduation rate was 74



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percent for the class that entered in 2009, quite close to Oberlin, which is far more selective.

Costs

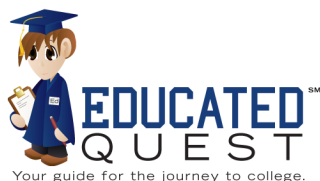
For the coming school year Allegheny will charge approximately \$42,000 for tuition and approximately \$10,800 for a double room and the meal plan. The additional fees for the health center and student activities total only \$500. However, be sure to present proof of health insurance to avoid being charged an additional \$1,500 on the term bill. The College only requires the Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to consider financial need; more selective schools will ask for the FAFSA as well as the College Board's CSS-Profile.

The merit-based awards, called Trustee Scholarships, can run for as much as \$22,500 per year. Unlike most colleges Allegheny does not require students to maintain a minimum grade point average to maintain these awards. It is not known how these awards will be granted to students who do not submit test scores during the next admissions cycle.

On average, according to Big Future, the College Board's search site, Allegheny came close to meeting the full need (92 percent) for students who needed financial aid. Over all, just under half (45) percent of the undergraduate students had their total need fulfilled. The largest merit scholarship exceeds half of tuition and fees, while the College also participates in the Bonnor Scholars program which combines service projects and stipends for students who show leadership potential. In addition, unlike the more selective liberal arts colleges, more than a quarter of the incoming classes qualify for the Federal Pell Grant as well as Pennsylvania's state scholarship programs. Allegheny has a greater share of Pell-eligible students than several more selective Pennsylvania liberal arts colleges including Swarthmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr, Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall, Gettysburg, Muhlenberg or Ursinus.

Students who want the benefit of a quality liberal arts education at a similar location have other options that might provide more aid. Allegheny had an endowment for fiscal year 2014 of \$185 million, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. By comparison, the College of Wooster (OH), which has about the same number of undergraduates had an endowment of \$269 million. In addition, Allegheny endowment is less than a third the amount of those of Denison or DePauw and less than half of Earlham's. Pennsylvania schools such as Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg all have at least 200 more students to support, but these schools also have more financial aid resources. [The College administration, however, has announced a drive to raise \\$200 million, partly to award more scholarships.](#)

Allegheny did not provide average student loan debt information to either the College Board or the Project on Student Debt. So it is not known how much the average borrower borrowed. These sources make that information available about students who graduated in 2013.



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Curriculum

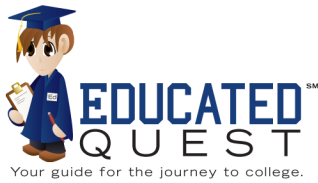
Allegheny requires a major in one of three divisions (Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences), a minor of 18 credits in another and two courses in the third. If the third area is a science, one of the two classes must be a lab. There are also Interdivisional programs that are comprised of courses in more than one major. Every student must also take a Freshman Seminar and Junior Seminar as well as complete a Senior Project called a “Senior Comp,” regardless of their grade point average. Seniors are motivated to “Chomp the Comp,” a play on the College’s alligator mascot. The College offers students the option of a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree, depending on the chosen major.

With only three distribution requirements to fulfill as well as the seminars, Allegheny’s approach allows students more freedom to choose courses during the first two years. In effect it places more pressure on freshmen and sophomores to set a direction towards a major so that they can also graduate on time. This is especially helpful for undecided students; about half of Allegheny freshmen enter college with no commitment to a major. The curriculum also makes it easy for students to graduate with more than one major or minor. The College helps the decision-making process through Gator Days, one weekday set aside every semester. Classes are cancelled on Gator Days as are all athletic and extracurricular programs. A full day of academic and career-related programming is scheduled in their place.

Over a third of Allegheny students major in Mathematics or the sciences. The most popular majors are Psychology, English, Managerial Economics, Biological Sciences and Environmental Sciences. The College offers both Environmental Geology and Environmental Sciences, an interesting choice for approaching environmental issues, as well as Environmental Studies and Environmental Writing. There are also choices between Applied Computing and Computer Science; Applied Economics, Economics and Managerial Economics; and Music History, Music Performance and Music Theory.

Allegheny also offers 11 dual degree/accelerated programs. Unique are a 4/2 accelerated Masters in Engineering partnership with Columbia University; accelerated masters programs in Occupational Therapy and the Physicians Assistant programs at Chatham College (PA) as well as the doctoral program in Physical Therapy; and accelerated masters program in public policy and management with Carnegie Mellon University and, accelerated masters *and* doctoral programs in Nursing with Case Western Reserve University (OH). There are also two options for teacher education after graduation: a 4 + 13 months program leading to a Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Pittsburgh (usually including a scholarship) plus teacher certification in Pennsylvania, or a guaranteed interview with Teachers College at Columbia University for recommended students.

Small classes will be the rule at Allegheny. Only four of 513 classes offered in 2013-14 had more than 50 students, according to the College’s most recently Common Data Set. In addition, only 11 percent of all classes offered at Allegheny had more than 29 students.



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Allegheny students gave their faculty a rating of 3.79 (out of a possible 5.00) on RateMyProfessors.com. Among the Colleges That Change Lives that are located in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana, Allegheny students held their faculty in higher regard than students at Denison (3.69). They regarded them about the same as students at the College of Wooster (3.80). Allegheny students held them in less regard than students at Earlham (4.01), Juniata (4.00), Hiram (4.05) Ohio Wesleyan (3.85), Ursinus (3.85) and Wabash (3.93).

Community

Approximately 90 minutes north of Pittsburgh, Meadville, Allegheny's home since its founding, is a hunting/fishing resort community with a well-preserved downtown historic district. However, it offers few entertainment options for college students. This is also true of other liberal arts schools in Pennsylvania, but some of them are closer to highways or major cities.

The Allegheny campus is the cultural center for the community. Because of this, the College has built impressive performing arts facilities for a small school. In addition, the Greek organizations attract a third of the student body, similar to the percentage at schools such as Franklin and Marshall or Gettysburg.

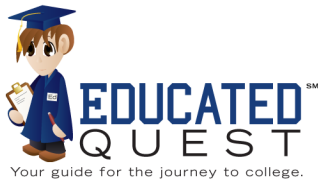
The campus itself is a very attractive mix of architectural styles from across three centuries built upon a hill above downtown Meadville. Bentley Hall, the main administration building, was the first structure on campus. It was a residence hall as well as a classroom building in its past use. Allegheny shows more respect for history than most liberal arts colleges.

Reported Forcible Sex Offenses rose from only one in 2011 to 12 in 2013, according to the College's most recent [Clery Report](#). This shows either a greater problem or less apprehensiveness about reporting the crime. However, drug and alcohol-related arrests have been few considering that most of the community lives on campus. There were no reported drug related arrests in 2013; only one was reported for each of the previous two years. There were no more than 25 alcohol-related arrests from 2011 to 2013. Drug-related disciplinary referrals did rise, however, from 12 to 60, through alcohol-related referrals did decline.

Allegheny competes in 23 sports at the NCAA Division III (non-scholarship) level in the North Coast Athletic Conference. Interestingly, the College successfully competes in women's lacrosse, but it does not field a men's team. Allegheny was conference champion in women's soccer in 2014.

Comforts

Allegheny's room and board charges total less than \$11,000 for the upcoming year, reasonable for a liberal arts school. All of the first-year students, and nearly all of the student body live on campus in university-owned or university-recognized (fraternity) housing; the school has a [three-year residency requirement](#). The College organizes first-year students as Living-Learning Communities based on their selection of their Freshman Seminar. [The College also offers 11 Special Interest living options for upper-](#)



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[class students](#). Given the residency requirement, the [upper-class housing options](#), and the lack of reasons for most seniors to live in Leadville after graduation, it is better to live on campus for all four years.

Connections

Allegheny's most notable alumni include William McKinley, 25th President of the United States (who left after freshman year), journalist Ida Tarbell who exposed the Standard Oil trusts of the early 20th century, and Clarence Darrow (who also did not graduate), perhaps the most famous labor and criminal lawyer of the late 19th and early 20th century.

More recently, the College reports that between 60 and 70 percent of Allegheny alumni hold advanced degrees. Allegheny ranks eighth among small colleges that have sent graduates into the Peace Corps. Ten percent of the most recent graduating class entered service organizations such as the Corps and Teach for America. This does not include the 60 percent of the class that is employed by other public and private organizations. Approximately 30 percent of the class continued their education in graduate or professional school.

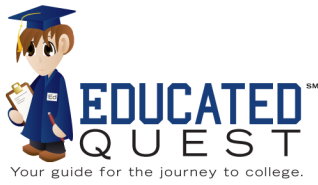
Among the approximately 12,400 Allegheny alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](#), nearly ten percent work in Education, the largest grouping. Over 750 are entrepreneurs while more than 700 work in the media. While over 2,700 live and work in the Pittsburgh area, the College has a sizable base in and around New York, Washington D.C, Cleveland and Boston.

Career development at Allegheny is integrated with student success, civic engagement and leadership development programming on campus under an umbrella called The Gateway. In addition, it is a component of every Freshman Seminar. Each year features an Employer In Residence; the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center was the honored guest for the 2014-15 academic year. The College is also a member of the Western Pennsylvania Career Services consortium (WestPACS) which hosts an annual regional job fair each year outside of Pittsburgh that has attracted more than 200 employers.

Conclusions

Allegheny College is what it promises to be: a school that gives every student a chance to create their own direction and test it through classes, activities, internships and the Senior Comp. The College offers its students as much rigor as they would receive if they had attended more selective schools, especially in the Biological Sciences and environmentally-related degree programs, and its graduates achieve similar results. It has a beautiful campus. The administration engages and empowers students in their academics and community service better than many similar schools. In addition, the College is well connected in the larger East Coast cities as well as Pittsburgh.

But Allegheny also competes in a very tough market with other Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana liberal arts colleges. Some of those schools have larger endowments. They are capable of offering more financial aid than Allegheny might offer to the same student. Allegheny does its best to meet the full need, but it also loses prospective students to



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schools that have greater resources. In addition, if you want to mix a city life with your liberal arts education, there are better options than Allegheny.

Allegheny is just “as good” as the schools that are “higher ranked” within its market, and it is no less isolated than its most immediate competition. If you can appreciate that life in Western Pennsylvania is little different than life in other regions such as Upstate New York or the northernmost reaches of New England, Allegheny is well worth a look.

Ed Quest’s Report Card

Allegheny College

Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: A

Freshman Retention: A

Costs: B+

Comforts: A

Community: B (A for campus engagement)

Curriculum: A

Connections: A