



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

### Clark University

Founded in 1887 in Worcester, Massachusetts, Clark University was originally a graduate school. Today it is the smallest National Research University in the United States that is based in an urban setting. Since 1996 Clark has also been recognized as one of the 40 “Colleges That Change Lives.” It is the only one of these schools that is a research university. The remainder are liberal arts colleges that are not as invested in graduate education as Clark. But Clark, like those other schools, emphasizes collaborative learning over competition in the classroom. Clark has approximately 2,300 undergraduates as well as just under 1,100 graduate students.

The schools most similar to Clark are Bard College (NY) and Brandeis University (MA). Like Clark, Brandeis is also a research university, and is small (just under 3,500 undergraduates) within a city setting. Bard is considered to be a liberal arts college, though it offers many graduate programs on and off campus as well as a collaborative learning model. But Clark is less selective than either school. Nearly two thirds of the students who applied to join the first-year class (Clark does not use the term “freshman”) that entered in 2014 were offered admission, according to the university’s 2014-15 Common Data Set. Approximately 230 accepted a spot on the waiting list and 90 were later offered admission. Of these, 39 chose to come.

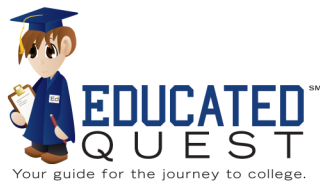
Clark has test-optional admissions; a fair share of admitted students took advantage of the practice in 2014. Only 62 percent of the first-year students who entered in 2014 submitted SAT scores, according to the university’s 2014-15 Common Data Set; just under a fifth submitted ACT scores. The middle 50 percent for SAT scores was between 1110 and 1330; for the ACT Composite it was between 25 and 31. If there truly is a good school where test scores don’t matter for much, it’s Clark. Over 30 percent of the incoming first-year students who submitted SATs scored below 600 (out of 800) on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the test. The university considers all applicants for merit-based scholarships, whether or not they submit test scores.

Clark does a very good job at retaining a first-year class; the retention rate has been 88 to 89 percent in most years. More important, nearly everyone who returns for the second year goes on to graduate within five years, often with a master’s degree. Clark has a unique practice where students who earn a 3.4 GPA or higher may pursue a fifth year for a master’s degree tuition free. The four-year graduation rate has been around 76 percent for the past four academic years. The five-year graduation rate was 80 percent for the class that entered in 2008.

### Costs

Clark’s direct charges for 2015-16, tuition and fees, room and board, were just under \$50,000. The room and board charges, on average, run below \$9,000, quite reasonable for a private university that is located in New England.

Clark is also one of the more reasonable private schools when it comes to financial aid. The university met, on average, 95 percent of need for students who qualified for need-based aid, awarding an average need-based scholarship of around \$26,000 in 2014-15, according to the university’s 2014-15 Common Data Set. Just over 30 percent of the first-year students who



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

entered in 2014 were awarded merit-based scholarships averaging just over \$17,000. The largest awards, called [Presidential LEEP Scholarships](#), are a full ride. [There are also renewable awards at \\$10,000, \\$15,000 and \\$20,000 per year.](#)

According to the Project on Student Debt, Clark students who graduated in 2014 who took out loans owed, on average, \$24,990. This is extremely low for a private university, actually more than \$2,000 below the \$27,000 maximum that a student may borrow through the Federal Stafford Student Loan program. While more than 90 percent of the students who graduated in 2014 needed to borrow to finance their Clark education, only seven percent needed to go to a source other than the Federal Government to take out a loan. Clark graduates actually owed around \$5,000 *less* than graduates of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, whether they came from Massachusetts or elsewhere.

### Curriculum

According to the university's Web site, Clark offers more than 30 majors/minors (including a student-designed major) and 11 interdisciplinary concentrations. Qualified students can also take advantage of Clark's 14 [Accelerated B.A./Master's Degree Programs](#), with the fifth year of study tuition-free. Students who elect to stay on for the fifth year may do a summer internship after their senior year before beginning graduate study. This includes an opportunity to earn a MBA from an accredited business school. Between 25 and 30 percent of a senior class continues towards a masters at Clark.

In undergraduate education Clark tries to hit a sweet spot between being a liberal arts college and a research university. The curriculum, called [Liberal Education and Effective Practice \(LEEP\)](#), is designed to combine academics, including research opportunities, with practical experiences outside of the classroom. The university's LEEP Center places academic advising, career services, student affairs (community service, extracurricular activities, service learning), study abroad and the writing center under one umbrella. Each student is assigned a LEEP Advisor for four years. After the student has declared a major, the LEEP advisor can assist in the other services offered through the LEEP Center. The freshman seminar professor will be an academic advisor before the student has declared a major.

The academic side of LEEP includes First-Year Intensive Courses (called freshman seminars at other schools), Foundations Courses (Verbal Expression, meaning presentation and communications skills as well as Formal Analysis, combining analytical and writing skills) and Perspectives (Global Studies, Foreign Language and Culture, Historical, Values, Science and Quantitative Reasoning). Students take one course in each of the Foundations and Perspectives areas. Introductory courses taken in the Perspectives can also be used toward major and minor requirements. The curriculum is flexible enough to make it easy to enter undecided on a major, while at the same time not pressuring the student to try to complete general education requirements too early. It is easy to be in a position to choose between possible majors by the middle of the sophomore year.

Psychology is the most popular major at Clark followed by the Biological Sciences. More than a quarter of the students who have declared a major chose one of the social sciences other than



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

Psychology. Geography is a standout; students may also use the major towards a masters in either Geographic Information Systems or Community Development as well as a doctorate. Clark offers instruction in eight foreign languages, including Greek, Latin and Hebrew, though only two, French and Spanish are actual majors. The rest are part of cultural studies programs as well as elective classes that might also fill a Perspectives requirement. The undergraduate business programs are limited to entrepreneurship and management, though Clark has bred nearly 1,400 entrepreneurs, among those alumni registered on LinkedIn.com. The university also offers an education minor; it recommends that students who are interested in teaching careers remain for the fifth year to pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching, with a specialty in urban education. In addition, Clark offers not only independent study and research opportunities with faculty; it also offers undergraduates the opportunity to apply for funding for self-designed research proposals.

There are larger (over 50 student) classes in the introductory Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Physics and Psychology courses; these are pre-requisite to several majors. Clark grants doctorates in all of these majors; it's quite possible to have recitation and/or lab sections led by a graduate student, though a PhD will coordinate the class. However, only five percent of Clark classes are this large, according to the university's 2014-15 Common Data Set. Over 80 percent have less than 30 students. Clark attracts visiting professors to teach as well.

Clark students gave their faculty a rating of 3.72 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](http://RateMyProfessors.com). This was about the same rating as Brandeis students (3.77) gave their faculty, though Bard students (3.9) held their faculty in higher regard.

### Community

With more than 182,000 residents, Worcester, Massachusetts is the second-largest city in New England, after Boston, and is within 40 miles of that city. It's relatively easy to get into Boston by bus, train or car. Worcester is also home to 13 colleges as well as 38,000 college students; about the same number of undergraduates as Penn State or Michigan State have on campus, and has much of the amenities that you would find in or around State College or East Lansing. Worcester has its own civic center that will attract most entertainers and speakers who would appear in a college town. However, unlike the college towns that host a flagship state university, college campuses in Worcester are not next to each other. Holy Cross, for example, is situated on its own hilltop; it is not within walking distance of Clark. [But the city has received media accolades for being a great place for recent college graduates to live.](#) Students who are interested in starting their own businesses might find Worcester to be a more attractive location for a start-up than Boston. Similar properties, such as factory spaces, are available at lower costs. Housing prices are much lower as well.

Clark is located in Main South, not the fanciest of college neighborhoods, though the open campus itself is very nice. The university has done an excellent job blending the newer buildings with the original red brick ones, including Jonas Clark Hall, the main administration building. Buildings are in very good condition, with a new Student and Alumni Engagement Center under construction. The campus' dining hall will remind visitors of a large sports bar, only cleaner. Clark allows all students to have cars, though the bus fare is only \$1.50 to get around the city. There are also weekend bus trips to Boston.



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

Citing the Clark Web site, over 78 percent of 12,000 residents of the one-square mile area of Main South are of low or moderate income, according to the 1990 census, and over one-fourth of residents live at or below the poverty level. Unemployment is twice the national average and 44 percent higher than Worcester's average. The university not only engages with neighborhood organizations; [it also offers scholarship opportunities to neighborhood residents.](#) Clark students may volunteer or take credit-bearing classes that focus on community service. This is one school where students should become more serious about community service. Approximately half of the student in the junior and senior classes live in the neighborhood versus remaining on campus for the full four years.

There have not been many reported incidents of crimes against property at Clark according to the university's [2015 Clery Report](#). There were two reported incidents of sexual assault on campus in 2014; there were 5, all in the residence halls, the year before. Reported burglaries in the halls trended down from nine in 2012 to five in 2013 and five in 2014. Drug and alcohol-related crimes also trended down from 2012 to 2014. There were 98 reported drug-related incidents in 2013, all in the residence halls. The number dropped to 71 for the following year, There were 278 alcohol-related violations in the halls in 2013. Two years later the number dropped to 212. This number appears to be high for a school where less than 1,600 students live on campus, including virtually all of the first and second-year students. While the number is not reflective of the college's location, it does indicate that students might be struggling to find things to do on nights when college students are less likely to study. Clark has neither fraternities nor sororities; the university has a stronger influence on the campus social life. The university police patrol coverage of the neighborhood overlaps with the city police coverage.

Clark competes in 17 varsity sports at the NCAA Division III (non-scholarship) level as a member of the New England Men's and Women's Athletic Conference. Rivals include Babson College, Emerson College, Wellesley and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, among others. Clark has not won a regular season championship in the conference since 2002; it shared the women's field hockey title with Wellesley. The Clark Cougars were the conference tournament champions in men's basketball in 2010, though MIT, one of the dominant powers in most conference sports (Springfield and Wheaton are the others), won the regular season championship. While Clark has not been a powerhouse in varsity sports, its students are active athletically. Nearly two thirds of the student body competes in at least one varsity, club or intramural sport.

### Comforts

Clark guarantees housing for two years. The university requires students whose families reside more than 25 miles from campus to live on campus.

There are three first-year halls. The freshman halls are more modern than expected for the low price. Two, Bullock and Wright, were renovated six years ago. The third, Johnson Sanford Center, is newer. All three halls have corridor-style living arrangements; students in several rooms, usually doubles, share a common bathroom. The room charge includes laundry.

Upper-class students have corridor, suite-style and apartment living options. The university also owns 14 small houses, some arranged like apartments, others like homes with shared kitchens,



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

all co-ed. These houses are organized around special interests such as social justice, entrepreneurship and wellness, among other areas. Unique among smaller schools, Clark makes its apartment-style housing available to students who need to live on campus for the summer months.

Clark has a [Roommate Bill of Rights](#), rather than an honor code, for residence life. The university, through the help of Psychology faculty, also developed an [Anti-Violence Education Program](#).

[Clark offers choices of “All Access,” per week and block meal plans.](#) The best buys are the 100-Meal Block Plan for lighter eaters and the All-Access basic plan. While Clark does not require apartment residents to purchase a meal plan, a five meal plan is the default choice, unless a student opts out before s/he moves in.

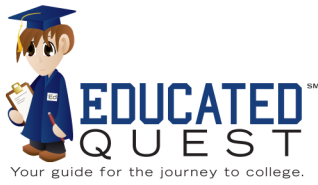
Rents off campus, but close by are low for any college, especially one in New England. [The off-campus listing for the university](#) showed three-bedroom apartments renting for \$900 to \$1,500 per month (utility cost information was not posted). Four-bedroom apartments were advertised at rates between \$1,200 and \$2,000 per month.

### Connections

Among the nearly 22,000 Clark alumni who submitted information to [LinkedIn.com](#), just over 9,700 live and work around Boston, including Worcester More than 2,400 live and work around New York City. About 700 are based around Washington D.C. while around 500 are situated in the San Francisco Bay area. Nearly 1,400 are entrepreneurs while over 2,000 are teachers or educators.

Clark attracts between 1,500 and 2,000 alumni for its spring reunion, organized around the same weekend as graduation, with over 70 events on campus. The university also hosts a Family Weekend for students, alumni and parents. Each undergraduate class from first-year to the last year at Clark has a Class Dean who interacts with parents of all of the students in the class. Notable Clark alumni include Matt Goldman, co-founder of the Blue Man Group; Hugh Panero, CEO of XM Radio; Ronald Shaich, founder and CEO of Panera Bread and co-founder of Au Bon Pain; Mark Bittman, food journalist for the *New York Times*; film producer and screenwriter Mitch Glazer; and Padma Lakshmi, co-host of *Top Chef*.

The outreach of the career center is excellent for a small school. In addition to its own events, including a community engagement fair in the fall and a Spring Career Fair. Clark participates in the [Liberal Arts Career Network](#), an online job board shared with 38 other selective liberal arts colleges across the country including schools such as Amherst, Dartmouth and Tufts. Clark students are invited to career fairs at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, a plus for those who are math/science oriented in their major or career choices. The university also hosts Worcester-area career fairs and serves on a Career Services Committee with the area chamber of commerce to arrange more connections between students and employers. Clark will also bus students to networking events off campus.



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

### Conclusions

Clark is one of the best values among private universities in the United States, and does more than most to help a good to excellent student to succeed. It is rare to find a private school where you can earn a bachelors and a master's degree within five years, and owe little more than you would after four. The curriculum is quite flexible, the support services impressive for a school of this size. Living costs are also quite reasonable, given the location not far from Boston. Those who are interested in community service while in college will find many opportunities to serve. Clark is also an excellent school for students who want an urban setting but cannot afford the costs, or crowded feelings, that they might have if they attended college in a larger city such as Boston.

There are downsides. The City of Worcester, while the second-largest in New England, has several colleges, but it is not really a "college town." The colleges are spread out; students hardly mingle. Students who are not used to a city setting might feel uncomfortable on campus. Those who are looking for a social life based on Greek life or major sports events should give this school a pass.

Clark is deservedly a college that has changed lives. If you want a liberal arts education, and possibly get a taste of graduate work, Clark is well worth a look.

### Report Card for Clark University

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