



**Stuart L. Nachbar**  
College Counselor  
Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC  
322 Windsor Court  
Ewing, NJ 08638  
(609)406-0062  
[stuart@educatedquest.com](mailto:stuart@educatedquest.com)  
[www.educatedquest.com](http://www.educatedquest.com)

## Connecticut College

Founded in 1911, Connecticut College (Conn) is a selective liberal arts college located in New London, Connecticut. Conn was founded as a women's college, becoming co-ed in 1969. Today, it has approximately 1,900 undergraduates, divided approximately 60/40 between men and women. Among selective liberal arts colleges only Macalester College (MN) and Rhodes College (TN) have undergraduate student bodies similarly weighted towards women, according to *College Results Online*.

Conn is a relatively selective college, though admissions are test optional. About a third of the approximately 5,900 students who applied to join the 500-member Class of 2020 were offered admission. Over a third of the students who applied did not submit ACT or SAT scores. Admissions are need-blind. The college awards no merit-based aid, while reporting that it will meet the full need for its admitted students. Conn requires the FAFSA as well as the CSS Profile.

Conn competes in the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), considered one of the "smartest athletic conferences" in the U.S. Its member schools including Amherst, Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, Connecticut, Hamilton, Middlebury, Trinity, Tufts, Wesleyan and Williams have also been called the "Little Ivies" or the "Hidden Ivies." Conn is the least selective college in the conference, though it is often cross shopped against the other schools. Conn is also considered versus the small and mid sized undergraduate schools within the Ivy League (Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, Yale) as well as numerous other selective liberal arts schools across the U.S.

Conn does an excellent job of retaining and graduating its students. Ninety percent of the members of the 2014 freshmen class returned for their sophomore year. Seventy nine percent of the students who entered in 2009 and 2010 graduated within four years.

### Costs

Conn charged a comprehensive fee of approximately \$62,700 in 2015-16, an increase of just over three percent from the previous year. Presuming a four percent increase, the fee would rise to approximately \$65,200 for 2016-17. The comprehensive fee includes direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) as well as other costs typically charged as extras at other schools such as a funded internship (summer after junior year), music lessons, course-related travel and [study away](#).

The average need-based scholarship within the undergraduate student body in 2014-15 was approximately \$35,800. A three percent increase would have raised this average to just over \$37,900 in 2015-16. The student who would have received the average scholarship would have had estimated charges of \$24,800 to cover through wages,



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loans or their family's investment in their education. This is less than s/he would have paid to a public college or university in their home state, if s/he did not qualify for scholarships.

According to the Project on Student Debt the average indebtedness of Conn graduates in 2014 who took out loans was approximately \$28,300, more than the maximum (\$27,000) that a student could borrow under the Federal Stafford Student Loan program. Nearly a quarter of those who borrowed (24 percent) took out a loan from a source other than the Federal government. However, 58 percent of the class graduated with no debt at all. It is quite possible that many of those students came from families that could afford to pay for the costs of their degree.

The scholarship and loan data shows that students who believe that they have need should not be discouraged from applying to Conn, especially if they are also considering other NESCAC schools. However, it also reveals that the college is more likely to ask students to take on debt. While Trinity graduates in 2014 who took out loans borrowed, on average, about the same as Conn graduates, the average borrowers from the other NESCAC schools owed as much as \$14,000 less (Amherst and Williams). The student who can gain admission to the more selective NESCAC schools might find them to be a better value for their money.

Conn had an endowment of approximately \$284 million in FY 2015, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Among NESCAC schools only Bates (\$260 million) had a lower endowment. Conn might offer "as good" an education as its sports rivals. But it has fewer financial resources to work with than most of them.

## **Curriculum**

Conn has revised its general education requirements towards "pathways" for students [who will be entering freshmen in 2017. According to the college's Web site, the new general education curriculum will be called Connections.](#)

After taking enhanced foundational courses in their first two semesters, students will explore a topic of broad intellectual significance (examples include Public Health; Global Sustainability; The Liberal Arts: Classical and Modern) through multiple lenses, by completing a series of thematically linked courses called an "Integrative Pathway." The Connections curriculum also includes enhancements to the advising program and a new world languages and cultures requirement. There will be five pathways available to incoming students beginning in 2016-17. According to the college, each pathway is will expose students to at least five different modes of intellectual inquiry, including creative expression; critical interpretation and analysis; quantitative and formal reasoning; scientific inquiry and analysis; and social and historical inquiry.



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It is a wise idea for prospective students to ask about the pathways that are likely to be offered by the time that s/he would begin a freshman year. Pathways are chosen by the faculty, though it appears that consideration is given to modern day issues such as sustainability or technology and society. Connections is designed so that material taught in the junior and senior year is built upon what was taught in the freshman and sophomore years. In this sense the curriculum has become more structured. Students will no longer pick and choose courses to fulfill a requirement to take a math, lab science, humanities or social science that might not necessarily complement their major and/or career interests. They will choose courses that fulfill the requirements for their pathway as well as their major. Given that courses in the pathway *and* the major build up on what is learned in the freshman and sophomore year, the curriculum becomes more rigorous each year.

Conn is one school where incoming students should choose their first semester Freshman Seminar carefully. While most colleges that offer a freshman seminar have the seminar instructors double as the academic advisors for their students, Conn goes a step further by assigning each freshman to an advising team. The advising team includes the seminar instructor, a career counselor and an upper-class student. The team advises on course options, helping the student to choose a major as well as a pathway towards their degree and direction towards further education or employment after graduation. The choice of seminar should be made with possible pathways in mind.

This year Conn will require that all students complete at least two semesters of foreign language study by the end of the sophomore year. [The college offers a choice of 11 languages, a large number for a small school.](#) In addition, all students who enter in 2017 will be expected to complete at least one cross-disciplinary class, called a ConnCourse. Conn also offers Study Away Teach Away classes in the junior year directed by the college's faculty. [More than half of Conn students take at least one of these classes before they graduate.](#) Conn is also one of the few colleges that offers a funded internship after the junior year; participants receive a \$3,000 stipend. [Eighty percent of eligible Conn students take advantage of this opportunity.](#) Seniors are required to participate in a reflective senior seminar in their pathway and/or major as well as complete a capstone project.

Conn is one of only 30 liberal arts colleges that has an [honor code.](#) Students are given the opportunity to schedule their own examinations over time blocks and take them in rooms where no faculty or staff member would be present.

Conn offers more than 40 majors as well as 43 minors. The college also offers certificates that cut across multiple academic departments through five centers on campus: the [Ammerman Center \(Arts and Technology\)](#), the [Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity \(Racial/Ethnic Studies\)](#), the [Toor-Cummings Center for](#)

[International Studies and the Liberal Arts \(Language and International Studies\)](#), the [Goodwin-Neiring Center for the Environment \(Environmental Studies\)](#) and the [Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy \(Civic Engagement\)](#). Certificates in [Museum Studies](#) and [Education](#) are also available. Unique majors include [Architectural Studies](#), [Botany](#), [Global Islamic Studies](#) and [Music and Technology](#). Conn was the very first college in the U.S to offer [Environmental Studies](#) as a major. Unique minors include [Applied Statistics](#), [Cognitive Science](#), [Geology](#) and [Linguistics](#). Just under a third of the class of 2015 earned a degree in one of the social sciences, according to the college's 2015-16. The biological science programs ranked second at 16 percent. More than half of the students will go abroad as part of a semester break or a full semester.

You are not likely to see large classes at Conn. Only 13 percent of the classes offered by the college had more than 30 students; only six enrolled more than 49, according to the college's 2015-16 Common Data Set.

Conn students had high regard for their faculty giving them a 3.84 (out of a possible 5.0) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). Among the NESCAC schools students at Bates, Bowdoin, Colby and Tufts held their faculty in similar regard. Hamilton students held their faculty in less regard (3.77) as did Trinity students (3.78). Students at Amherst, Middlebury, Wesleyan and Williams thought more highly of their faculty. Conn might be the least selective of these schools. But the quality of the faculty, from the student's perspective, is no less than it would have been at most of the schools they were likely to consider.

## Community

Conn has a less isolated campus than all but two NESCAC schools, Trinity and Tufts, which are located in city settings. Conn's campus, including its 750 acre arboretum. is atop a hill over New London and the Sound, it is also close to highway and rail transportation to Boston and New York—both are two hours from campus—as well as ferry service to Long Island. The academic center of the Conn campus is around Tempel Green, a very large open space where students relax, study and play during warmer weather months. Conn has a mix of Gothic-style architecture more commonly found at older schools, including in-state sports rival Trinity and more modern arts, science, recreation and library facilities. It is easy to walk the campus, outside of the arboretum, within 15 minutes rarely crossing a street. With neither Greek life nor football in the fall, Conn students build a social life through campus activities and by traveling into New London.

At most colleges, Conn included, the most reported crimes are alcohol-related disciplinary referrals. Conn reported 216 in its residence halls alone for 2014 on its [Clery Report](#), nearly the same number as in the previous two years combined. There were at least 79 reported drug-related disciplinary referrals each year from 2012 to 2014. This information is of concern given that Conn is a very residential campus and nearly



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everyone lives in university-owned housing. Weapons possession violations were also reported in the residence halls, one each year in 2012 and 2013. Other statistics of concern: the college reported eight incidents of rape in 2014 as were three incidents each of dating violence and stalking.

New London, also home to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy as well as a center of commercial and recreational boating, hosts many eating and drinking places commonly found in a college town. However, students need to ride a bus—though it's free—to get to them. Neighboring Groton is the home to General Electric's submarine manufacturing operations. Conn students may see submarines traveling under testing conditions if they compete in sports. The college's athletic fields are adjacent to the Thames River.

Within the NESCAC Conn competes in all sports excluding baseball and football. The college won the conference championship in women's soccer in 2014, was runner in women's volleyball in 2012. However, it is has not achieved similar successes in the other sports since 2000. But the school has one of the more unique nicknames in college sports. All teams, men's and women's, are called the Camels. Camel sculptures and artwork can be found throughout the college's student center. However, given Conn's limited successes within its sports conference, it is difficult to call Conn a "spirit and sports" school.

### **Comforts**

Conn guarantees housing for four years. According to the college's Web site, 98 percent of the student body lives on campus in 23 residence halls, known as houses, all within a five-minute walk of their classes. Conn calls all of its residence halls "active learning communities" and has 11 faculty fellows to aid in providing academic programming in the halls. as quiet living and substance free options. Knowlton is the college's language house. Given the number of choices it is relatively easy for students to find the living options that they will like after the freshman year.

First-year students are assigned to doubles, triples and large quad rooms, though there are no halls that are exclusively occupied by freshmen. Among the 23 halls, the apartment living options (360 House, Abbey House, River Ridge and Winchester Road), Earth House (sustainable living) and Lazarus are exclusively for sophomores, juniors and seniors. Abbey House, which is located off campus between Conn and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and Lazarus are also year-round living options for students who want to remain on campus during breaks. Conn offers single sex floors in several halls as well.

### **Connections**

Conn is unique among liberal arts colleges in that students are assigned a career advisor during their freshman year. That advisor will work with the student through all

four years. The college is also unique in that every student can be placed in a funded internship during the summer between their junior and senior year. Upper-class students, called Career Fellows, also assist freshmen and sophomores in preparing resumes and cover letters as well as in setting a career direction through research and course selection. [A four-year career plan is set, and modified, with each student, beginning with the Freshman Seminar.](#) Conn is also a member of the [Liberal Arts Career Network](#), a consortium of 39 selective liberal arts colleges that share job and internship postings.

Among Conn alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](#), more than 4,000 live and work in and around New York City and more than 2,900 are based around Boston. There are also more than 1,400 in Connecticut. The communities in and around Washington DC (approximately 800) and San Francisco (just over 600) are fairly large for a small college. Among the more than 14,000 registered alumni, nearly 2,000 work in the education sector, over 1,300 are media or communications professionals while nearly 1,200 are entrepreneurs.

As a liberal arts college Conn is often a starting point to further education immediately after college as well as after brief periods of employment. Ninety-six percent of the most recent graduates are either employed full time or attending graduate and professional schools within a year after graduation. The college reports that half of its graduates will have earned an advanced degree within ten years after completing their bachelors.

## **Conclusions**

Conn is an excellent selective liberal arts college that has also developed a very proactive approach to career development. The college has encouraged students to combine skills with the liberal arts through the pathway system as well as the academic centers and certificates. It may be also be an excellent choice for students who are interested in learning a foreign language as part of their education. Conn has a strong alumni base in Boston, New York, Long Island and Washington DC for students to make connections and reach them by car or mass transit. This is also one of the most attractive liberal arts college campuses in the U.S. Conn also offers a nice housing mix for a small college. A funded internship is also a nice benefit that few other colleges can offer to a large cross section of their undergraduate student body.

It's hard to fault Conn unless a student can gain admission to one of the more selective liberal arts colleges that have similar resources but also have more scholarship dollars to award to their students. Costs aside, the decision to attend Conn over other selective liberal arts colleges comes down to academic and social fit as well as the campus setting.



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## Report Card for Connecticut College

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