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Duquesne University

Founded in 1878 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Duquesne University is one of the largest Catholic universities in the United States. Until 1950, when the university opened its first residence hall, Duquesne (pronounced “duke-cane”) was a local school, primarily attracting students from the Pittsburgh area. Today the university has just under 6,000 undergraduates as well as nearly 4,000 graduate and professional students. Duquesne is the second-largest private university in Western Pennsylvania after Carnegie Mellon. It has nine undergraduate, graduate and professional schools, more than any college in the region, excluding the University of Pittsburgh. While Duquesne is a Catholic university—and it is the only Spiritan college in the United States—only half of the student body is Catholic. Ten percent are Jewish.

Duquesne is crossed shopped not only against its cross-town neighbor, the University of Pittsburgh, but also against other Catholic universities that offer a similar mix of academic programs, especially in business and the health professions. One quarter of Duquesne’s senior class graduated with a degree in the health sciences in 2014, according to *College Results Online*. Among schools with undergraduate student bodies of similar size, only Quinnipiac University (CT) had a class that graduated a higher percentage of students in these fields; that university also has a medical school while Duquesne does not. About a quarter of the same Duquesne class earned a degree within a business program. By comparison, more than half of the 2014 graduates at Saint Joseph’s University, Philadelphia’s Jesuit University (and a school of similar size) earned a business degree.

Duquesne is not an exceptionally selective school, outside of majors for which the number of seats are limited including music and the health-related fields. Overall, over 80 percent of the students who applied were offered admission. But the percentage means little considering that approximately one third of the incoming class, approximately 500 students, were enrolled in the more competitive programs in the Health Professions, Nursing and Pharmacy while an additional 75 students were in the Music programs. Collectively, these students outnumbered the incoming freshmen in the College of Liberal Arts as well as the freshman enrollment in the business school. Duquesne is test-optional for students interested in the liberal arts, music or business and have a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher. The university is test mandatory for the health related fields. Business students are expected to be ready to take calculus during their first year, then take statistics shortly after.

In 2014-14 Duquesne’s freshman retention rate was 85 percent.. Most recently, 65 percent of the students who entered in 2009 graduated within four years; over three-quarters had graduated within six. Duquesne and the University of Pittsburgh (aka “Pitt”) overlap with most majors, aside from engineering where Duquesne has only the



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Biomedical Engineering programs as well as a Binary Engineering and Physics program. However, four-year graduation rate for the Pitt class that entered in 2009 was the same as Duquesne after four years, but higher (over 80 percent) after six. Pitt does a slightly better job at freshman retention; the rates are always higher than 90 percent.

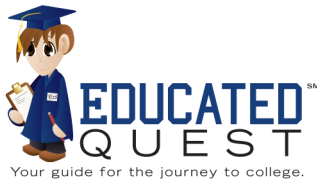
While its possible to state that the larger university does a better job—Pitt has nearly triple the number of undergraduates as Duquesne—at graduating a class, it also starts out with a class that has a higher average high school GPA and higher standardized test scores. Pitt also draws a much larger share of its students from outside of Pennsylvania (40 percent versus less than 30 percent for Duquesne). When considering only high school numbers as well as the geographic mix of a freshman class, it would be fair to state that Duquesne does a very good job at graduating the student body that the university attracts.

Costs

Last year, Duquesne estimated a Total Cost of Attendance of approximately \$49,000 for a resident student, including direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) as well as \$3,600 for books, personal expenses and transportation. Room and board represents just over \$11,000 of all charges, quite reasonable for a city-based school. Cost increases have been between three and four percent.

Students in the health sciences and pre-pharmacy (first and second years) were asked to pay approximately \$5,200 in additional tuition and fees while music students were asked to pay approximately \$7,500 more. Those students who advanced from pre-pharmacy to the PharmD had to pay approximately \$9,200 more in tuition and fees for their third year in their degree program. These students would be considered as graduate students when applying for student loans.

Duquesne, on average, filled just over three quarters of the financial need for the freshmen who entered in 2014. Just over a quarter of the class, approximately 350 students, received merit scholarships that averaged nearly \$13,000. An incoming freshman who came from outside of Pennsylvania and received the average merit award would have paid less to attend Duquesne than s/he might have paid to go to Pitt before taking student loans, a job or need-based aid into account. According to The Project on Student Debt, Duquesne students who graduated in 2014 and needed to take out loans borrowed, on average, \$2,000 less than Pitt graduates (\$34,500 vs. \$36,500). For both schools this included students who earned advanced degrees in the health professions although they began school as undergraduates.



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Curriculum

In addition to the requirements set by the student's college and major, Duquesne requires all students to take three credits in theology as well as three credits in Faith and Reason. Neither of the courses is required to be in Catholicism. Duquesne does not require a freshman seminar, though the College of Liberal Arts has distribution requirements in humanities, social sciences, mathematics and natural sciences as other colleges do. However, there are also fewer liberal arts majors to choose from than students might find at a larger school such as Pitt. Those who choose a major in either communications or psychology will benefit in the internship search due to the university's connections and strengths in business, education and the health professions.

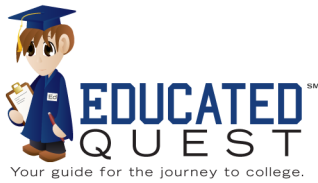
Students who are accepted to the Honors Program—this is 100 members of a freshman class—follow an Honors academic path instead of the distribution requirements. Interested students have ACT SAT scores in the upper tenth of the class, at or below a 29 (out of 36) or a 1300 (out of 1600) respectively. A mid-pack student in the liberal arts at Pitt might qualify for the Honors Program at Duquesne.

Aside from the music and health-related programs, which are direct admission programs for first-year students, it is quite possible to enter Duquesne undecided on a major then transfer, if interested, from the liberal arts into a business or education program, even some music programs, and still graduate on time. They also have the option to study abroad at several locations, including the university's own campuses in Dublin and Rome.

Duquesne also has a large number accelerated bachelors/advanced degree programs for a school of its size. Student may pursue accelerated bachelors/masters programs in biotechnology, business, education, environmental sciences, the liberal arts majors, and music, among others, as well as a 3+3 degree program with the university's law school. With the exception of the programs in athletic training and health management systems all of the health professions programs are graduate programs that being at the undergraduate level. These include Occupational Therapy, Physician's Assistant Studies, Physical Therapy, Rehabilitative Sciences and Speech-Language Pathology.

[Bloomberg Business Week ranked the undergraduate business program 55th among the national and regional universities it surveyed.](#) Duquesne ranked ahead of larger target schools such as Purdue, the University of Florida and Virginia Tech in the evaluations of recruiters and students. It ranked not far behind Pitt (#49). [The health science and pharmacy and speech-language pathology programs also earned high rankings in US News](#) for graduate study; this reflects very well on the accelerated programs.

Duquesne's academic strengths for its students depend in part on their willingness to do the work as well as leverage the assets around the campus. Unlike Pitt, which is three



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miles from the downtown business center, Duquesne is on a bluff right above it. Depending on the chosen major, internships may be paid, but not credit bearing, or the opposite. The student teaching program within the education programs offers a greater scope of placements than prospective teachers would find in other cities, in well-to-do neighborhoods and well as more challenging city settings. Students who choose programs in the health professions are likely to find clinical assignments within walking distance or a very short bus ride from campus, as are the more motivated business students.

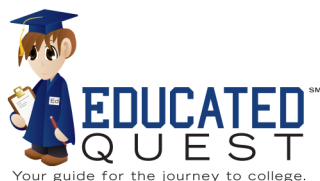
Students will take some large classes at Duquesne. Approximately 12 percent of all of the undergraduate courses at the university had more than 40 students, although 40 percent had fewer than 20 enrolled. Introductory lecture courses in subjects such as Biology, Chemistry and Psychology are likely to have larger enrollments because they are required for several liberal arts and pre-professional majors. The same will be true for introductory courses in Economics. However, discussion groups are limited to 30 students, labs to 20 students.

Duquesne students gave their faculty a rating of 3.66 (out of a possible 5.00). Pitt students, by comparison gave their faculty a rating of 3.74. The higher rating for Pitt is significant given that Pitt is a larger school that has many majors that overlap with Duquesne's offerings. The students at Quinnipiac University (CT), the most similar school to Duquesne in terms of size and the scope of academic offerings, gave their faculty a rating of 3.7. St. John's University, located in Queens, New York, also offers a similar mix of majors as well as a city location, though that school has a larger student body. Their students gave their faculty a rating of 3.79.

Comforts

Duquesne houses over 90 percent of its first-year students, and over just over half of the undergraduate student body, on campus. The university guarantees housing for four years and there are living/learning communities in the halls. Freshmen and sophomores are allowed to pledge from a choice of [over 30 fraternities and sororities](#). These most recently attracted just under a fifth of the men and just under a quarter of the women. They do not have their own houses, though some have spaces in Duquesne Towers, the largest residence hall.

The Duquesne campus is located in Uptown across bridges from Pittsburgh's South Side. The Mount Washington neighborhood is also a popular living option. The [university's off-campus housing office publishes guides](#) to help students learn about these three neighborhoods, a nice support tool. However, Duquesne does not offer free bus service to these neighborhoods. It's possible to pay between \$500 and \$600 per person per month, even slightly less further from campus. But the costs of the bus pass will rise as well.



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Given the academic strengths of the school in majors that require clinical assignments, internships or student teaching, it might be better for a Duquesne student to live outside of the residence halls after the freshman year. These assignments often extend into breaks or summers when the on-campus housing is closed. At the same time, Duquesne students who prefer to live off campus should try to live within walking distance, if they can.

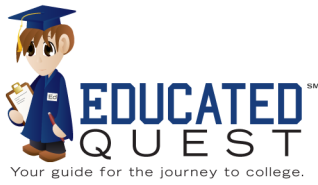
Community

The Duquesne campus is on a bluff overlooking downtown Pittsburgh. The grounds are 50 acres, a very small footprint for a school that has nearly 10,000 students on campus during the day and night. However, the campus is clean and well-maintained as well as very easy to navigate. The Power Center, the newest non-academic building, combines the campus recreation center with the bookstore and conference spaces into a very attractive and modern facility. Interestingly, the university has its football stadium as well as the Palumbo Center, a 4,400 seat faculty for indoor sports, on this very small campus.

Most recently, women's basketball and women's soccer have been the most successful athletic teams though Duquesne is not really a "spirit and sports" school like Pitt. Duquesne has also developed a strong reputation for community service. The university has been selected to the [President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll](#) for seven consecutive years, with the additional honor of being named to the [Honor Roll of Distinction](#) for 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Pittsburgh is one of the best college towns in the US and Duquesne is one of the more centrally located schools. While Pitt students need to ride a bus to get to a Penguins or Pirates game, or even their own football team's home games, Duquesne students can walk to all of this. This past season the Duquesne community could watch the Penguins' NHL playoff games broadcast on a big screen from campus, across the street from Consul Energy Center while the team was playing inside. However, Duquesne students need to pay for public transportation or cabs to travel towards the Pitt and Carnegie Mellon campuses as well as Schenley Park, one of the largest and best maintained urban parks in the nation.

Drug and alcohol-related disciplinary referrals are the most commonly reported incidents of crime on the Duquesne campus, as they are at most other residential colleges. The university's Clery Report showed that [reported incidents of crime had trended down from 2013 to 2014](#). It helps that there are activities on the campus at all times during the school year given the numbers of graduate and professional students who, like the undergraduates, have options to take courses during the daytime or at night. It also helps that the campus is located across from the Consul Energy Center. Sports and entertainment venues are more brightly lit and receive more attention from police when events are taking place.



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Connections

Nearly a fifth of Duquesne's recent graduates find work based from the internships or other experiential opportunities that they pursued while they were in school. Over half of a senior class will have typically completed at least two internship experiences; over 60 percent of these internships were paid positions. Note that this does not include students who did clinical assignments or student teaching as requirements towards their degrees. Such students typically make connections through these experiences.

Duquesne does a good job at encouraging all students to gain experience through the academic programs as well as career development services. For example, a course called Liberal Arts in Action, conducted by the career center, has three sections with approximately 55 students each where students are assessed and given instruction in the job search, interview, networking and resume development. An alumni network called Career Champions also interacts with the students on and near campus.

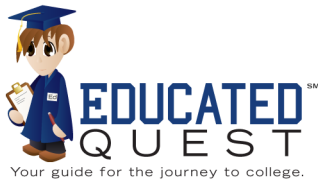
Over half of the over 43,000 Duquesne alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) live and/or work in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. At least 1,600 alumni live and/or work in or around these metropolitan areas: New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC. Given the university's location, available of graduation and professional degree programs and the base in Pittsburgh, a diligent and motivated Duquesne student should be able to make connections and find employment in or around the city. The alumni network also includes regional clubs in Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington DC.

Conclusions

Duquesne is a good choice for a student who is interested in one of the signature programs in business, education, the health fields or music. The accelerated programs are also quite worthwhile.

The university leverages its strengths with the assets of the professional communities in Pittsburgh quite nicely, probably as well as Pitt across the same majors. Duquesne does a very good job of graduating a freshman class considering that it gets a freshman class that is less accomplished in high school than Pitt's

Pittsburgh is also one of the best college towns in the United States as well as one of the more livable cities in the country. Housing costs are more affordable than in other college-oriented cities such as Boston, New York or Philadelphia. Costs are reasonable compared with Pitt for students who qualify for one of the more generous scholarships. However the uncharges for the music, health science and pharmacy programs are pretty steep.



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But while Duquesne is located in the same city as Pitt, it is not as high profile a school. Its campus is smaller and far more urban, although most of the students live on or across the bridge from campus. It has fewer students and alumni as well as a smaller athletic program. Those who are looking for a “spirit and sports” experience might prefer to attend Pitt if they like the city and can gain admission to both schools. Those who want the city setting but also desire more attention from a faculty might prefer Duquesne.

Those who are considering a major that is offered at both schools—and there is considerable overlap—should visit both and tour Pittsburgh. The city is not only going to be your home as a student, it is quite likely to be your home after you graduate.

Report Card for Duquesne University

Four-Year/Six Year Graduation Rates: A/B+

Freshman Retention: B+

Costs: B+

Comforts: B+

Community: A

Curriculum: A

Connections: B+