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Drew University (NJ)

Founded in 1861, Drew University is New Jersey's only National Liberal Arts College. Drew has approximately 1,500 undergraduates and around 600 graduate students. Through future admissions the university will slowly grow the undergraduate population to 1,800 students. It aims to welcome 375 new first-year students this coming fall.

While Drew was founded as a Methodist institution and operates a graduate school in theology, it is a non-denominational university. With the exception of Barnard College, an extremely selective women's college located in Manhattan, there is no National Liberal Arts College that is more accessible to New York City by car or mass transit than Drew.

Because of its liberal arts focus and location, Drew is cross shopped against many small and large, public and private colleges. Approximately half of the undergraduate student body comes from New Jersey, a state which has two public colleges with strong retention and graduation rates, the College of New Jersey and Ramapo College of New Jersey, as well as Rutgers, one of the nation's better flagship state universities. A freshman class at Drew will have around 375 students, smaller than the entering class for the Honors College at Rutgers.

Drew is also cross shopped against Fordham and NYU as well as other liberal arts schools in New York and Connecticut that are further from the city. It is also considered versus schools such as Dickinson (PA), Franklin & Marshall (PA), Gettysburg (PA) and Hobart & William Smith (NY) that are in more isolated locations and have Greek life and more of a "spirit and sports" culture. Drew is also cross-shopped against Muhlenberg (PA).

For those who are considering liberal arts college without Greek life, Goucher College (MD) is probably the liberal arts college most similar to Drew. Both have about the same number of students, are located close to major cities, have similar strengths on international studies, the arts and the sciences and are set in well-forested campuses. But Goucher, founded as a women's college in 1885, has a student body that is more than two-thirds female versus 60 percent for Drew.

Juanita College (PA), Washington College (MD) and Wheaton College (MA) are also similar schools in terms of student body size, lack of a Greek community and academic programs. But they are also located in more isolated places than Drew. Coincidentally, Drew, Goucher and Washington have appointed new presidents over the past two years, and Wheaton over the past three—and all have moved their colleges forward in terms of adding resources and academic programs to attract and retain students who best fit their campus community.



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Drew retained just over 87 percent of the students who entered as freshmen in 2016, a major improvement from six years before, when the retention rate was only 79 percent. The higher freshman retention rate in 2016 will likely reflect positively on future four-year graduation rates. Only 57 percent of the student who entered in 2010 graduated on time.

It is reasonable to predict, based on the successes of the colleges most similar to Drew, that the four-year graduation rates for the current first and second-year classes as well as those going forward should reach, or even surpass, 70 percent. This would be considered a very good performance for a small private liberal arts college.

Like Goucher, Juniata, Washington and Wheaton, Drew admissions are test optional though ACT and SAT scores are required for admission to the seven-year BS/MD program with Rutgers-New Jersey School of Medicine as well as the Baldwin Honors Program (\$25,000/year) and the Presidential Scholarship (\$20,000/year).

Drew is becoming a more selective school. Last year Drew accepted 57 percent of the students who applied for admission. The university wait listed 194 more, with 84 accepting a place on the list; of those 58 were offered admission. But as recently as 2014, the university annually accepted more than 70 percent of the students who applied to join a freshman class. The middle 50 percent of the class that entered in 2016 scored between 1030 and 1250 (out of 1600) on the New SAT. For those who submitted ACT scores the range for the middle 50 percent for the Composite was between 23 and 28 (out of 36).

But while the school has become more selective, admission to Drew is a realistically achievable goal for a student who prefer to attend a small liberal arts college over a flagship state university such as Rutgers.

Is Drew a good value for the money?

Drew has a high sticker price for a private liberal arts college. Tuition and fees are close to \$48,000 for this year; the room and board charges will add another \$14,000 considering laundry charges and micro-fridge or refrigerator rentals. Students who plan to come into New York for work or play should also allow money for train fare (\$22 round trip) in their budgets.

The university reports that 80 percent of the undergraduate students receive merit and/or need-based scholarships from its own funds. About a third of the students qualified for Federal Pell Grants while New Jersey also offers a fairly generous Tuition Aid Grant program (approximately \$9,100 for this year) for resident students. The students who graduated in 2016 who took out loans owed, on average, less than \$25,000—and less than graduates of The College of New Jersey, the state's most selective public school.



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This is a positive: Drew students are allowed to borrow a maximum of \$27,000 for four years from the Federal Government, and most borrowed less.

With scholarships Drew may be a better value for a student who might be in the middle of the pool for a more selective liberal arts college that has had more name recognition such as Franklin & Marshall. However, the university is not able to meet the full need for the very best students who have the greatest financial need while schools such as Franklin & Marshall can. Prospective students and parents who are seriously interested in Drew should take advantage of an opportunity to obtain a preliminary financial aid estimate, a rare offering among colleges, to find out if the school will be affordable for them before they apply.

Drew concluded a successful \$85 million fundraising campaign in 2016. A portion of the funds raised will be used to fund 38 scholarships, 16 student research fellowships and 12 internship funds. More significant: over half of the university's undergraduate alumni made a contribution.

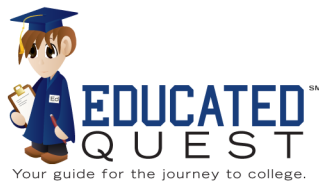
What are some of the academic options at Drew?

While Drew is cross shopped against so many colleges large and small, it is best suited to a student who truly wants a liberal arts education. Drew offers 31 majors and 23 minors. Nearly all of them would be considered liberal arts subjects, with the possible exceptions of the Business major as well as the minors in Arts Administration, Museology, Photography and Public Health.

The university offers [combined degree programs](#) to ease students into pre-professional study at the master's level as well as in the law. Drew also offers a [3+2 BA/BS in Engineering with Columbia University](#). In this program students may graduate from Drew with a science, Math or Computer Science major—many other 3+2 programs limit students to a Physics major—and also have the option of a 4+2 schedule.

Drew makes it relatively easy for students to double major—about a quarter of the students who have declared a major do it—or complete more than a single minor. Drew's [general education requirements](#) are typical of most liberal arts colleges. The decision to accept AP or IB credits or community college credits taken in high school is left to the faculty in each academic department. The science departments have asked for more than a '4' or '5' on an AP examination to be exempt from an introductory course. However, even students who enter as freshmen with large numbers of AP or IB credits are expected to stay for the full four years.

The only required course is a Freshman Seminar. Each incoming student chooses up to three seminar options based on the topics available for the first semester. Faculty who teach the seminar also serve as the academic advisor for each student in their class.



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They teach a topic that is a focus of intellectual interest, possibly ongoing research, and use the content to help students develop college-level writing and research skills. The seminar professor, who contacts each student before s/he arrives at Drew, monitors academic progress in their other classes. That professor will usually serve as the student's academic advisor until the student has declared a major.

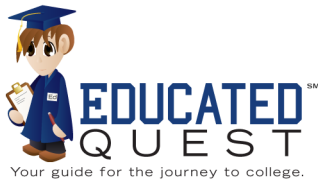
The university also makes tremendous use of New York City as well as nearby Morristown, a county seat and Newark as venues to extend learning outside of the classroom. Drew's oldest New York semester is in [International Relations](#) with students commuting to New York twice weekly [to attend classes and programs in and around the United Nations](#). The university also offers options [to study abroad](#) over semesters and the January break as well as the summer.

Drew's [undergraduate theatre program](#) was ranked seventh-best in the US by *The Princeton Review*. It was also the highest-ranked program that does not require prospective students to audition. The university supports the program not only with a New York semester, but also with connections to internships with the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, located on campus, as well as for-profit and non-profit theatre companies in the Big Apple. Following the addition of the Arts Administration and Museology minor, [a New York semester in the visual arts](#) has launched, too.

The university offers a Business major as well as an eight-credit semester program on Wall Street, but the [major program](#) is light on accounting and finance coursework; there are more courses in entrepreneurship (including a 'Shark Tank' competition) and marketing than there are in accounting and finance. A student interested in a finance career might be better off pursuing the [Economics major](#) with additional courses in Math then [taking advantage of the combined degree program with Wake Forest University \(NC\)](#) which takes only ten additional months and offers scholarships to help reduce the costs. Drew also offers New York semester programs for students who are interested in [Social Entrepreneurship](#) and [Communications](#), including advertising, journalism, marketing and public relations.

Approximately one-fifth of Drew students major in the sciences. The very best are selected as [RISE Associates](#). RISE, which stands for Research Institute Scientists Emeriti, pairs scientists, faculty fellows who have retired from corporate settings with promising students in the sciences on research projects of mutual interest. One RISE scientist, [Dr. William Campbell](#), was the recipient of a Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2015. The RISE program has been offered at Drew for nearly four decades.

Drew students are not likely to have many large classes Only eight of the 286 courses offered during 2015-16 had more than 39 students; more than 200 had less than 20. Drew students hold high regard for their faculty, giving them a rating of 3.84 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). Among the more comparable liberal arts colleges



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(Goucher, Juniata, Washington and Wheaton), students at Juniata (4.0) and Washington (3.87) held their faculty in slightly higher regard. Drew students held their faculty in higher regard than students at Ramapo College of New Jersey, Rutgers-New Brunswick and The College of New Jersey. They also held their faculty in about the same regard as Franklin & Marshall students but in higher regard than students at Dickinson, Gettysburg and Muhlenberg.

What about the campus community?

Drew's campus has approximately 190 acres and is located in Madison, a well-to-do community in Northern New Jersey. The campus has a mix of architectural themes ranging from Colonial and Gothic to late 20th century/early 21st century designs for the Dorothy Young Theatre and Gallery, residence halls, the library, the dining hall and the Ehinger Student Center. The campus has its own arboretum and is, according to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, set in a state forest. It's relatively easy to walk the campus from end to end in less than 15 minutes.

The university has preferred to renovate the interior spaces of existing buildings to new construction. The most recent renovations include the lobbies of the freshman residences, the dining hall, the student center, the fitness center, Science Hall and the Kean Reading Room in the library (named for New Jersey's former governor and Drew's past president, Thomas Kean).

Ninety-four percent of Drew students live on campus. First-year students are grouped together in living-learning communities in three halls (Tolley, Brown and Welch) around their choice of freshman seminar, but have [numerous options](#) after that. However, Drew offers fewer independent (apartment or townhouse) living opportunities than most comparable schools. Drew maintains the same pricing for double rooms, regardless of the housing, though there is an up-charge for a single room. [Upper-class students](#) are more likely to live in traditional or suite-style housing than a townhouse, and they, like the freshmen, are required to purchase a meal plan. There are only three [meal plan options for resident students](#); two are "block" plans, the third is All-Access with unlimited swipes for the dining hall and campus cafes and stores. The All-Access plan costs only \$84 more each year, and is the far better buy. The university changed meal plan providers after completing the renovations to the dining hall.

Drew has no Greek life and is not a "spirit and sports" school like Franklin & Marshall or Gettysburg. Students are more likely to bond around shared interests as well as travel into New York City. Downtown Madison, only a five-minute walk from campus on foot or by shuttle bus, is beautifully maintained, much like a downtown on a Hollywood movie set. However, it is more of a family oriented place than a college town. It's a great place to grab lunch, a nice dinner or dessert off campus. But there are no college themed bars, clubs or movie theaters. Drew allows only juniors and seniors to have cars, though



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exceptions are made for students who must have one to commute to a job or internship off-campus.

Drew's campus is relatively safe, according to the most recent [Clery Report](#), though there were reported incidents of domestic violence, rape, fondling and aggravated assault between 2013 and 2015. There were relatively few reported drug and alcohol-related arrests during this time while drug and alcohol-related disciplinary referrals trended downward.

Can students find work after Drew?

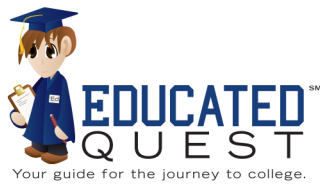
The New York semester programs as well as RISE make it possible for Drew students to make connections that would enable them to graduate with more than one internship or career-related part-time job on their resume. So do numerous [career services events and programs](#) on campus. The university also offers [funded internship awards](#) to provide [stipends for qualified credit-bearing internships](#). The commute to New York is \$22 round trip on NJ TRANSIT trains, reasonable for the region though high for people who are not used to riding a train into the Big Apple.

The university's career development center reported that 93 percent of recent graduates were employed or enrolled in graduate and professional schools within a year after graduation. For the Class of 2015 this was based on an [outcomes survey](#) with a very high (68%) response rate. Sixty-seven percent of this class was employed while 26 percent was enrolled in graduate school, law school or medical school. The career development center did a thorough job of collecting [employment information by major](#).

Among the nearly 13,000 Drew alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), more than 6,700 live and work around the New York area. The drop off from there is high. The next largest group, fewer than 900, are based around Philadelphia. There are also more than 600 alumni in Boston and Washington DC. Over 2,100 alumni work in Education in some capacity, just under 1,700 work in Community and Social Services. There are also more than 1,100 entrepreneurs in the alumni base and nearly 1,000 alumni who work in media or communications. The majors of more than 1,000 alumni were Political Science, Economics, Psychology and English.

Conclusions

The very good to excellent students who want to pursue a liberal arts education at a small college and also take advantage of easy access to New York have two options: Drew or Barnard. However, Barnard's student body is all female, its campus is far more urban and its admissions process is far more selective. No other private liberal arts college in the US makes it similarly practical to commute into the city for internships or the university's credit-bearing New York Semester programs. The RISE program in the



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sciences is another opportunity that stands out well against more selective liberal arts schools.

Drew, to its credit, has also made many positive strides in academic support, financial aid, facilities, experiential learning and customer service over the past two years. Those who join a future freshman class will be attending an even better school, especially if their life after college is likely to take them into a career in the New York area.

Prospective students should visit Drew after receiving an offer of admission to see if the school is an academic and social fit. It is not a "spirit and sports" school that offers Greek life and football. Nor is Drew one of the more famous names among liberal arts colleges. If neither of these things matter, Drew could be an excellent choice.

The Report Card: Drew University

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: C/C but short-term improvement is expected
- Freshman Retention: A
- Costs: B+
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B+
- Connections: B+ New York area/C+ elsewhere