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Millersville University (PA)

Founded in 1855 near Lancaster, Millersville University is one of 14 schools in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Founded as the first teacher's college or "normal school" in the Keystone State, Millersville has evolved into a mid-sized university with 7,200 undergraduates and around 900 graduate students as well as 110 possible majors and 50 minors.

While Millersville is a popular regional university for high school students in the Lancaster—York—Harrisburg area, it also attracts about a fifth of the undergraduate student body from other states, especially Maryland and New Jersey. The campus, while in rural Central Pennsylvania, is about 90 minutes from either Philadelphia or Baltimore.

Millersville welcomes a freshman class of approximately 1,300 students. In 2015 the university offered admission to 70 percent of all applicants. Admissions are rolling; a decision can be made within four to six weeks after all materials have been submitted. SAT scores of 1000 or higher and a high school GPA of 3.2 or higher are usually enough to gain admission. The averages are 1050 and 3.5 respectively. An SAT of 1200 or higher, combined with a GPA of 3.75 or higher may result in an invitation to apply to a very personalized Honors Program. This is the student who is usually in the middle of the admitted pool at a school such as Penn State-University Park or Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

Within Pennsylvania, the schools considered most often against Millersville are West Chester University, also a PASSHE school, Penn State's main campus as well as the Commonwealth campus in Harrisburg, and York College of Pennsylvania. New Jersey's college-bound students consider Millersville most often versus Rutgers University-New Brunswick, Rowan University, William Paterson University, The College of New Jersey and New Jersey Institute of Technology. The cross-shops are based mainly on academic interests, and in the case of students in the Lancaster—York—Harrisburg area, location and costs.

Millersville retained 77 percent of the students who entered in 2015, a better performance than all but two of the PASSHE schools (West Chester and Slippery Rock). However, the four-year graduation rate for the students who entered in 2010 was only 36 percent, with a five-year graduation rate of 60 percent. These rates suggest either a high transfer-out rate or students who might be changing status from full-time to part-time, common at many state schools. Millersville also



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has cooperative education, which provides opportunities for job training but may also extend the time required to complete a degree.

Millersville is working to improve the overall customer experience to help improve retention and graduation rates. Admissions officers are cross-trained in academic advising and financial aid to help new students become better oriented to the school. The university has placed all of the key departments, outside of academics, where students will always interact (Bursar, Registrar, Financial Aid, Academic Advising) in a single welcome center on campus. Millersville appears to be less bureaucratic and less intimidating than other public colleges, a plus within a state that has so many public options.

Costs

Compared to Penn State-University Park, Millersville is a bargain for Pennsylvanians. The base tuition and fees for this current academic year for residents were \$11,500, \$6,400 less than the charges assessed at Penn State-University Park. Room and board charges were just under \$13,500. Non-resident charges were approximately \$20,900, still a good value for students from New Jersey.

The university uses a tuition reduction program to attract very good to excellent students from outside Pennsylvania. Admitted non-residents who have a 3.75 high school GPA as well as a 1200 New SAT (or 26 ACT Composite) or higher receive a \$5,000 annual discount. Those who have a 3.5 or higher, but also a lower New SAT or ACT score (1000 to 1190 or 21 to 25) receive a \$3,000 discount. The higher discount makes Millersville attractive to New Jersey students. They pay about as much to attend Millersville as they would pay to attend a state university at home.

Aside from the tuition reduction program, Millersville offers few scholarships. The Honors Program was given a limited number of grants for the current academic year, but these are an annual decision by the university administration.

Because students needed more time to complete degrees, Millersville graduates in 2015 who took out loans borrowed, on average, approximately \$33,400. The maximum that a student may borrow over five years under the Federal student loan program is \$31,000.



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Curriculum

Millersville's [general education requirements](#) are standard fare for a mid-sized public college although courses taken to fulfill them can easily be applied towards the major or [minors](#). The school requires, among other subjects, nine credits each in the Social Sciences, Humanities and Natural Sciences. While it is easy to enter Millersville undecided on a major, it helps to have two or three ideas of what that major could be. Many majors will have a math and/or science requirement that should be completed early.

Millersville [offers many majors](#) for a school of this size, including some such as Applied Engineering and Technology Management (nine concentrations), Technology and Engineering Education, Meteorology, Applied Disability Studies, Music Business Technology, Ocean Sciences and Coastal Studies and Sports Journalism that you're not likely to find at most other colleges, even very large state universities. Several liberal arts majors have their own unique concentrations, too, although there are only three foreign languages (French, German, Spanish). There is virtually every [education program](#) from Early Childhood through Special Education and Secondary School. The education, business and theatre programs are the most popular.

Those who are interested in the "hands-on" aspects of engineering but do not want to take the two years of Calculus, Chemistry and Physics required of an engineering degree may find the [Applied Engineering and Technology Management](#) programs to be quite appealing. These were designed in partnership with local employers and the combine academics with internships.

Millersville has a small (around 40 incoming students) [Honors College](#) but it offers many benefits including research/thesis options, honors coursework in smaller classes, special honors-only events and very nice living space in a converted Best Western hotel, among others. While application for admission to the Honors College is open to all majors, it tends to attract science and education students more than others. Honors students are currently required to complete 30 honors credits as well as engage in community service.

Students are less likely to see very large classes at the introductory level as they would find at Penn State-University Park or Rutgers University-New Brunswick, and they're more likely to be taught by the faculty instead of graduate students.



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But classes do not always get small in every major. Less than 30 percent of all Millersville classes offered in 2015 had fewer than 30 students versus nearly 40 percent of the classes at Penn State's main campus. The Millersville faculty will teach more classes and be better known to their students over four years. And there are not as many teachers or course offerings at Millersville as there are at larger schools, so the ratio of students to teachers is higher.

Millersville students gave their faculty a rating of 3.69 (out of a possible 5.0) on RateMyProfessors.com about the same as students at Penn State-University Park (3.71), Rowan University (3.72) and the College of New Jersey (3.70) rated their teachers but lower than students at West Chester University (3.75), York College of Pennsylvania (3.76) and Rutgers-New Brunswick (3.74) rated theirs.

Community

Millersville students live and go to school on a very attractive and well-maintained 250-acre campus. At the center is a pond with resident swans Miller and S'ville. The university acquired and renovated much of the housing on North George Street, the main street through campus, then expanded its footprint to add residence halls and construct a new student center and library. Millersville is a far less intimidating place than larger schools such as Penn State, Rutgers-New Brunswick or West Chester. [Reported incidents of crime on campus](#) were fairly low considering that 2,000 students live on campus.

But aside from a pizza place across from the football field and a coffee shop, there is virtually no place for students to go "off campus" unless they ride university shuttles into Lancaster and the Park City Mall or they have access to a car. Millersville allows all students to have cars; the permit fee is \$110/year. Resident parking is also quite plentiful, for those who live in university housing.

With just over 59,000 residents, nearby Lancaster, accessible by free shuttle services for campus, is the eighth largest city in Pennsylvania. The city's economic fortunes are tied to health care (Lancaster General Hospital), tourism (Wheatland, the estate of President James Buchanan, Pennsylvania Dutch Country), retail shopping and dining (Gallery Row, Park City Center and the Lancaster Farmer's Market, the oldest continually operating farmer's market in the US), manufacturing businesses and higher education. Downtown Lancaster is an emerging arts community with Friday Night festival events, but the audience is more adults than college students. [Lancaster is also served by Amtrak connections to Philadelphia as well as private bus services to New York.](#)



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Comforts

Millersville has some of the nicest university housing that you will find on any college campus. Freshmen and sophomores are required to live on campus for the first two years, unless they commute from home. All residence halls are suite style, two double rooms sharing a common bathroom, excluding Reighard Hall, a former Best Western hotel that was converted to house the Honors College, which has large double rooms.

There are also university-affiliated (but not university owned) apartment complexes. But these require students to commit to 12-month leases or sublet their apartments when they go home. This is fine for those who plan to work in the area or on campus over a summer. However, its best to run the lease from May through May to be able to leave after graduation.

Connections

Millersville allows students with as few as 24 credits to apply for credit-bearing internships during the academic year as well as paid co-op positions (Business, Chemistry and Marine Biology, for example). Teacher candidates not only do student teaching in the senior year; they also have field placements every year before then. While the university helps to partner students with classmates who have cars, it is easier to pursue these opportunities when you have your own.

The university hosts fall and spring career fairs as well as separate events for Accounting and Finance and Teacher Recruitment. Millersville is also a member of the Central Pennsylvania Employment Consortium, a group of 16 colleges that co-manage a regional job fair in February as well as a virtual job fair from April through July. The university's Career Week, held in late February and early March, has a series of timely programs for continuing students who are about to consider career options as well as apply for their first internship or co-op position.

Millersville advertises that it has 65,000 alumni. Among the nearly 32,000 registered in LinkedIn, just over 8,900 live or work around Lancaster, more than 7,500 are based around Philadelphia. The York, Reading and Harrisburg areas each have a sizable base. After that there are approximately 900 alumni in and around Washington DC as well as New York City. The largest group, approximately 5,000 work in Education.



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Conclusions

Millersville offers many interesting academic programs as well as many amenities on campus for resident students at a very reasonable price. It's very hard to fault a school when it tries hard to do all three, especially for those who want to live in Central Pennsylvania or around Philadelphia after they graduate.

If the Millersville campus bordered on a downtown with ample entertainment options such as State College, West Chester or even Lancaster it would be a much more popular, and likely a more selective, college than it currently is. As it stands, it's a good school for someone who already knows the area or comes from a similar place but a hard adjustment for students who are more used to city life. This may be one reason why the retention and graduation rates are not what they could be, given Millersville's strengths.

Millersville will do the most for any student who can take advantage of not only the academics, but also the Lancaster area whether it be for gaining work experience or having fun. That requires a car. But Millersville charges a lot less than Penn State and many other schools, so the car may be more affordable.

The Report Card for Millersville University

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates C/C
- Freshman Retention: C+
- Costs: B+
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B
- Comforts: A
- Connections: B/B+ for Central Pennsylvania and Philadelphia