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Lebanon Valley College (PA)

Founded in 1866 in Annville, Pennsylvania, Lebanon Valley College (LVC) has approximately 1,600 undergraduates as well as more than 300 graduate students. While closer in size to a liberal arts college, this school also grants masters degrees in Athletic Training, Business, Music Education, Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education and Speech-Language Pathology as well as a doctorate in Physical Therapy.

For undergraduates LVC sets itself apart in several unique degree programs as well as opportunities to combine liberal arts majors with pre-professional skills. Just over 80 percent of LVC students come from Pennsylvania, though the college is located close enough to Maryland and New Jersey to attract students from those states as well. The campus is located approximately a half-hour from Harrisburg and less than 20 minutes from Hershey in the center of the Keystone State.

LVC accepted about two-thirds of the applicants for the 428-member freshman class that arrived last fall. With the exception of the accelerated path to the doctoral program in Physical Therapy, the college does not admit students to an intended major. Admissions are rolling; a decision can be made within four weeks after all materials are received. Admissions are also test-optional, though most admitted students submitted SAT scores. The range for the middle 50 percent for those who submitted SAT scores was between 970 and 1240 (out of 1600). Their average GPA was 3.7.

LVC retained 82 percent of the students who arrived in 2015, respectable for a small private college. Seventy-one percent of the students who entered in 2010 graduated within four years; this excludes those who stayed to pursue advanced degrees. This, too, is quite respectable for a small private college that does not have extremely selective admissions.

LVC is located within a region and state that has several similar private liberal arts colleges that also offer some overlap in academic programs. Within the Harrisburg-Hershey-Lancaster-York area, students who are interested in LVC might also consider Alvernia College, Albright College, Elizabethtown College, York College of Pennsylvania and Susquehanna University. The nearest public options are Millersville University, Shippensburg University and Penn State-Harrisburg.

Costs

LVC's direct charges for tuition and fees, room and board were approximately \$51,500 for the current academic year, a reasonable sticker price for a private college. The college met over 80 percent of the need for its most recent freshman class.

Eighty-five percent of the class received need-based scholarships; the average award was just under \$27,000. Fourteen percent received merit awards, averaging just over \$21,000. The largest renewable merit award for the current year was the John Bowman Allwein Scholarship which covers full tuition as well as a \$2,500 annual research stipend. The larger awards make LVC a good value compared to resident charges for public universities in New Jersey or Pennsylvania.



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LVC also has a “four-year guarantee” tuition policy. Students who enter as freshmen are guaranteed to complete their degree within four years as long as they remain in good academic standing, be of good conduct and follow proper procedures towards completing a major. Essentially, the college is promising that all of the courses required to complete the degree on time will be available in each major.

Average student debt figures, for students who took out loans were high for the classes that graduated in 2015 and 2016. The average indebtedness for 2015 borrowers was nearly \$38,000, for 2016 it was over \$46,000. This will include students who pursued advanced degrees and borrowed as graduate students. Within this class there were, for example, 40 students who have continued their education towards the doctoral degree in Physical Therapy.

Curriculum

LVC advertises itself to be a liberal arts college. However, only 19 of the listed 40 majors would overlap with one. The school sets itself apart with several pre-professional programs as well as hybrid majors that combine the liberal arts with skill-based education. The general education requirements for all majors, called Constellations, make up 40 credits towards the 120 required for a bachelor’s degree. The most popular subjects are in Education, Business and the Health Sciences.

Offerings in Education are extremely comprehensive for a small school as are the options in Digital Communications, Mathematical Sciences, Music, Visual Arts, and health-related fields. There is also an Applied History major which applies hands-on research skills with the reading and study of history which would be a self designed program at other colleges.

While the college does not ask incoming students to commit early to any program, excluding Physical Therapy, this is one school where it helps to have some leanings towards a major, especially if you are interested in Accounting, Actuarial Science, Education or one of the health or Music programs. These majors will have specialized courses that must be taken over the first two or three semesters in order to be able to declare at the end of the sophomore year.

The Mathematical Sciences, for example, have a Math Analysis course which is reading and writing intensive as well as rich in problem solving exercises. The intentions in these subjects (Actuarial Science, Analytical Finance, Computer and Data Sciences and Mathematics) are to teach students how to read and use technical material as well as to solve complex math problems. Interestingly, this department attracts nearly ten percent of the students with declared majors at the college.

Students are not likely to be in many large classes at LVC. Only 12 percent of all classes offered during 2015-16 had more than 30 students; only 16 classes *total* had more than 40. LVC students gave their faculty a 3.69 (out of a possible 5.0) on RateMyProfessors.com, the very same rating as students at nearby Millersville University and Susquehanna University gave their faculty and about the same as students at Shippensburg University (3.70) and Penn State-Harrisburg (3.67) gave theirs. LVC students held their faculty in higher regard than their peers at Elizabethtown



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College (3.62), but in slightly less regard than their peers at Albright (3.76), Alvernia (3.74) and York College of Pennsylvania (3.76)

Community

LVC takes very good care of its 350-acre campus, with a new \$20 million health and science building under construction and scheduled to open in 2018. Aside from this building, the college has prioritized interior renovations over new construction. Walk into most buildings and you will see that interiors are far more modern than exterior appearances. The campus grounds are spotless and felt safe. Aside from disciplinary actions for liquor law violations, there were very few reported incidents of any crime during 2014 and 2015, according the college's [Clery Report](#).

LVC borders a small, but aging, downtown, but most activities are likely to be on campus. The college competes in 23 varsity sports, including football, at the NCAA Division III (non-scholarship) level, a large number for a school with only 1,600 undergraduates. There are also nearly 100 clubs and organizations,. Greek life is not overly popular, attracting only 14 percent of an already small student body. In order to venture into Harrisburg, Hershey or Lancaster, it will really help to have access to a car.

Comforts

Nearly 80 percent of LVC students live on campus, including close to 90 percent of the freshman class. Exemptions are mainly for commuting students whose families reside 30 miles or less from campus. Starting this year, LVC assigned freshmen to reserved housing, with students grouped around [a common first-year learning experience](#). [One hall, Vickroy, is exclusively for first-year students, another, Funkhouser, is split between first-year and upper-class students](#). Outside of traditional halls, the number of [residential and special interest living options](#) (including a house for Greek life) is extensive for a small school.

Connections

According to the college's career development center, eighty-six percent LVC's of 2014 graduates surveyed were either employed or attending graduate school within one year of graduation. Nearly one-third of May 2015 LVC graduates were enrolled in graduate and professional schools, including nearly one-fifth in doctoral programs. The college receives excellent responses to its outcome surveys. The Actuarial Science program advertises a 100 percent placement rate for graduates who sought employment.

In addition to running its own career events and programs LVC is 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 college also sends Education students to Millersville University's Teacher Recruitment Day.

Among the nearly 8,200 alumni registered on LinkedIn, approximately 3,700 are based in the Lancaster-Harrisburg-York area; about 1,200 live and work in or around Philadelphia. Just over 600 are based around New York City.



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Conclusions

LVC has several interesting academic options as well as a very nice, but somewhat isolated, campus setting. Considering the demands of many of the academic programs, especially in the Mathematical Sciences and the health fields, the college does a very good job of supporting their student body towards their degrees. Those who have some ideas towards a major and enter with one of the more generous scholarships will find LVC to be a good value for their money, especially if they want to remain in Central Pennsylvania or Philadelphia after they graduate.

The Report Card for Lebanon Valley College

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