



## Stuart L. Nachbar

College Counselor

Member: HECA, NACAC, NJACAC, PACAC

322 Windsor Court

Ewing, NJ 08638

(609)406-0062

stuart@educatedquest.com

www.educatedquest.com

### University of Richmond (VA)

Founded in 1821 in Richmond, Virginia, the University of Richmond (UR) is a 3,000 student liberal arts college that also has two graduate schools (Business and Professional Studies) as well as the T.C. Williams School of Law.

UR is a relatively selective school with an SAT midrange between 1380 and 1500 and an ACT midrange between 31 and 34. The university accepts approximately 30 percent of the applicants for a class of approximately 800 students. Around 40 percent of the class has been admitted through Early Decision. This school has historically maintained a large (over 1,000 person) wait list, although most should not expect to be admitted. UR admits “need blind” for all students, though it reserves the right to admit “need aware” from the wait list, a right that has never been exercised.

Those who can gain admission to UR tend to stay. Ninety-four percent of the freshmen who entered last year returned for their sophomore year. Over 80 percent of a class graduates in four years, excellent for any college of any size.

The UR student body is quite diverse ethnically as well as geographically for a very selective liberal arts college. Approximately one-third are men and women of color; nearly one-ninth are first-generation college students. Virginia is the most represented state, although its residents as well as those who reside in Southeastern states, represent less than one-third of the student body. Walk around this campus for an hour and you are likely to run into anyone from anywhere.

While UR is classified by ranking sources as a National Liberal Arts College, its academic offerings and endowment are closer to those of a larger school. The university offers over 100 undergraduate programs and has an endowment in excess of \$2.1 billion according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Among liberal arts colleges only Williams College (MA), a smaller and far more selective school, is better endowed.

On the East Coast, UR has an academic mix more similar to American University (DC) and Elon University (NC) although these schools serve more than twice as many undergraduates. There is really no small school on the East Coast that is strikingly similar to UR in terms of academic options. You have to look westward to Willamette University (OR) to find another National Liberal Arts College that also offers graduate business and law degrees.

UR is considered not only against schools such as American and Elon but [also versus larger research universities](#) across the country that place varying emphasis on undergraduate education. Washington and Lee University, also in Virginia, is also a likely cross-shop for students interested in the law and politics. Like UR, it has a law school



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but also hosts a national political convention for the party out of power during the US presidential election year. However, Washington and Law is a smaller (less than 1,900 undergraduates) and more geographically isolated school.

Virginia has excellent state schools that have historically been considered by applicants to UR including the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, Virginia Tech and James Madison University. The university shares the city with Virginia Commonwealth University, which has over 31,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

There will be some changes in admissions practices at UR going into the next admission cycle. Non-binding Early Action will be an option for the first time. The university will continue to maintain two Early Decision review periods as well as an opportunity to apply through Regular Decision. Those who are seriously interested in UR should apply Early Decision or Early Action to be amply considered for the two largest scholarship programs: the Presidential Scholarship and the Leadership Scholarship.

The option to apply Early Action is quite likely to attract more Virginians who might be applying to the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary or Washington and Lee as their first choice through Early Decision. It is also likely to attract more applications from candidates who come from other states that have flagship state universities that charge reasonable resident tuition and fees, but have exceptionally selective admissions. Such states include California, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas, among others.

One major policy that remains unchanged: students are considered for admission to the university. There is no need to check off a preferred major when undecided.

### **Costs**

This year direct charges at UR were approximately \$62,000. However, the university is one of the few that has the resources to meet the full need for students who seek financial aid and adds generous merit-based programs on top of that.

The university offers Leadership Scholarships and Presidential Scholarships to the upper eight percent of the class; the awards range from one-third of tuition to full tuition. It also runs the largest office for the [Bonner Scholars program](#) in the US. Approximately 100 students receive stipends as well as a credit towards their student loans plus aid to meet the balance of their financial need. The university also participates in NCAA Division I scholarship athletics as well as Army ROTC. Richmond also offers the Virginia Promise to resident students from families that have a combined income of \$60,000 or less. They pay no direct charges at all, nor are they required to take out student loans.



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All students, regardless of need or academic stature, are eligible to apply to receive the Richmond Guarantee, a \$4,000 stipend to work with faculty on research or to accept employment with an approved business or non-profit organization. Prospective students should also know that the Guarantee is taxable income vs. a scholarship award.

Students who graduated in 2015 and had to borrow owed slightly less than \$27,000, the maximum that they could have borrowed over four years from the Federal student loan program. *Not a single borrower in the class* needed to take out loans from a source other than the Federal Government. Less than half (42 percent) of the class had to borrow at all.

UR will be a better value for non-residents than either the University of Virginia or the College of William and Mary, both of which charge similar out-of-state rates for tuition and fees, but are less generous with merit-based and need-based financial aid.

### Curriculum

UR has traditional liberal arts requirements (Mathematics, Social Science, Laboratory Science, Foreign Language, Writing) as well as a two-semester [Freshman Seminar](#). Courses are “units,” with 35 required to complete a degree. UR students will carry a four or five-course load depending on the major, though at least one course, possibly in service or study abroad, will likely be taken over a semester break.

There is [a larger number of majors and combinations of majors with either concentrations or minors](#) than you are likely to find at most other schools of this size. International Business, Psychology and the Biological Sciences are the most popular majors. The university makes it easy for students to use the general education requirements so that they can graduate with a double major or more than a single minor or concentration.

UR is one of the few colleges that offers dual major programs in foreign languages and International Business. It also has a unique set of leadership programs, some majors, some concentrations or special programs, offered through a separate leadership school: the [Jepson School of Leadership Studies](#). It is relatively easy for a UR student to combine a liberal arts or business major with a leadership development program. Students can also combine most majors with minors or concentrations in Arts Management, Business, Education and International Studies (including geographic area studies programs). There are also 3-2 engineering agreements with Columbia University and the University of Virginia.

The university also has some interesting programs for pre-law and pre-med students. The College of Liberal Arts offers not only the traditional political science and philosophy majors; it also has a blended program in [Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the Law](#)



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where students may take courses from law school faculty. The [Healthcare Studies](#) program is a cross-disciplinary major or minor in the biological sciences and social sciences. The [Integrated Inclusive Sciences program](#) allows students to pursue a blended science minor that also meets requirements for medical school admissions while pursuing any other major the university offers.

You won't see large classes at UR. Most likely, you will not have a class with more than 40 students, even in the most introductory courses. UR students gave their faculty a rating of 3.79 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). This was about the same rating that students at the University of Virginia (3.82), the College of William and Mary (3.80), James Madison University (3.81) gave their faculty and slightly higher than ratings given by students at Virginia Commonwealth University (3.76) and Virginia Tech (3.75). However, Washington and Lee students held their faculty in notably higher regard (3.90). UR students also held their faculty in higher regard than students at American University (3.68) and Elon University (3.68), the most academically similar private universities.

### Community

Located in a well-to-do section of Richmond, the UR campus is exceptionally well maintained. Architecture mainly follows a gothic design theme that you're likely to see at schools such as Duke, Princeton and Yale, although the buildings are mostly newer than you will find at those institutions. The campus center is a lake that once separated the men's college (Richmond) and the women's college (Westhampton). The [major crimes reported on campus](#) have been largely alcohol-related disciplinary referrals; these trended down from 335 in 2012 to 186 in 2014. However, there were also reported incidents of dating violence in 2013 and 2014.

The two colleges still exist as "coordinate colleges" with their own deans, student governments and past traditions although UR has been a single co-ed university since 1971. This is probably the major difference between the campus culture at UR versus other schools that have always been co-ed or have made a similar transition from single-sex campuses to a single co-ed campus community. The "men's" and "women's" traditions at other schools have often been cast aside for the newer students going forward. The traditions have remained to reinforce history and identity among the student body. Prospective students, men or women, should visit and learn as much about UR's unique campus culture before committing the deposit.

While the campus has no "Greek Row," fraternity and sorority life is more important at UR than it is at many other selective liberal arts colleges as well as other mid-sized and larger universities that its students might have considered. Forty percent of the men pledge academic and social fraternities while 60 percent of the women opt to join sororities. While the social organizations do not maintain residences, fraternities may



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rent spaces in “lodges” and sororities may rent spaces in “cottages” to host social and philanthropic events. They also sponsor ticket events in downtown Richmond where students sign up in advance and pay a \$5 admission charge.

The university allows all students to have cars on campus. The permit fee is a reasonable \$75/year. While the majority of students do bring cars to campus, the university also provides shuttles into the downtown as well as ZipCar rentals. Access to a car or shuttles is quite helpful because the campus is not within walking distance into the city or shopping near campus.

Once the capital of the Confederacy and still the capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the City of Richmond has over 220,000 residents. While Richmond is smaller than other cities that host other universities that students consider, it has a thriving arts, cultural and culinary scene as well as First Friday festivals each month and ethnic festivals throughout the year. [Departures magazine called Richmond America's Next Great Food City in 2014](#) and was named [a top world food travel destination by National Geographic](#) two years later. The metro area is large enough to attract major concerts and entertainers as well as host minor league baseball and a major NASCAR race.

UR is one of the smallest schools in the US to compete in NCAA Division 1 (scholarship) athletics. The students and alumni are the only Spiders at any level in college sports. The football program won the National Championship in the Playoff Subdivision in 2008 and has made the playoffs four seasons after that (2009, 2014, 2015, 2016). Its rivalry with the College of William and Mary is the fourth-oldest in college football and the oldest among Southern schools. The women's swimming and diving program is also one of the more successful in the country. The aquatic Spiders have won 14 conference titles since 2002. The men's basketball program made the NCAA Sweet 16 in 1984, 1988 and 2011 and has advanced twice to the quarterfinals of the NIT since then. In 1991, the Spiders were the first #15 seen to defeat a #2 seed in NCAA tournament play defeating Syracuse 73-69.

### **Comforts**

Nearly 90 percent of UR students live on campus. Historically, first-year men and women have been assigned to single-sex halls. However, first-year halls will be co-ed by alternating floor beginning with the class that enters in 2018. First-year students will be assigned to traditional corridor style rooms where several rooms share a common bathroom. Single-room, suite-style and apartment-style options are available to upper-class students though sophomores are less likely to receive apartment assignments. The university has done an excellent job at managing renovations and adding new beds as well as at providing dining services.



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UR does not require students to live on campus, nor does it formally guarantee housing after the first year. However, anyone who is good academic standing who requests housing after the first year will likely receive no worse than their third choice. Students also share houses off campus. This makes sense only for those who plan to live in Richmond during the summer.

### Connections

UR has more than 50,000 living alumni. Among the approximately 27,000 registered on [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com), just over a quarter live and work around Richmond. The New York area ranked second with nearly 3,400 alumni while the DC metro area is home to close to 3,100. Interestingly, there are more UR alumni based in the United Kingdom than in Baltimore or Atlanta.

Students who are interested in the arts, government, social services, education, health care, financial services or the law should have few problems finding internship opportunities in Richmond. While the metro area is not as high profile a technology center as the Baltimore-Washington Corridor, it does have an advancing sector in pharmaceuticals and medical devices. UR students will not face the same competition for these positions that is likely to occur in larger East Coast cities.

The opportunity to apply the Richmond Guarantee to fund an internship or a summer research position is also a major help to gain experience before graduation. But unlike other colleges, UR students do not usually opt for internships for degree credit. The more common practice is to use the Guarantee for one paid position, usually during the summer after the sophomore or junior year, then search for other paid positions or take advantage of funded research or study abroad. Sixty percent of UR students do at least one study program abroad over a break, within a class, or during a semester or a year.

Career services at UR are excellent for a school of this size. In addition to fall and spring job fairs, the university sponsors several industry-based workshops and panels that cover areas such as case-based interviews for management consulting as well as the rigorous interview processes of investment banks. Over 2,900 full-time positions and nearly 1,400 internships were posted at UR during the 2014-15 academic year, an impressive volume for a small school. Nearly 200 employers conduct on-campus interviews or participate in on-campus job fairs.

[Richmond students have attained successful outcomes over the past two years.](#) Nearly every graduate who responded to outcomes surveys had found employment, was engaged in service or attending graduate or professional school full-time. Three-quarters of the Class of 2015 and 78 percent of the Class of 2014 who were surveyed were employed full-time, very high for a liberal arts college. Finance is the most popular field for graduates in both classes.



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### Conclusions

It's very difficult to fault the University of Richmond, a school that does more to aid its students academically and financially than most other US colleges and does an excellent job at helping its students towards a direction after graduation. The Jepson leadership programs as well as the Integrated Inclusive Science program are very special options that other schools would do well to emulate as are the international studies opportunities. Having a very attractive campus to show off doesn't hurt.

The decision to come here is more about preferences in campus and community life as well as the academic offerings. Greek life and the traditions of former men's and women's colleges are parts of the campus culture that may not appeal to some prospective students who can gain admission into similarly selective colleges.

While the undergraduate educational experiences are exceptional, UR is also not the school to choose if you want early exposure to graduate classes with an eye towards doctoral study. While the academic options are impressive for a liberal arts school, mid-sized and larger schools will always offer more.

But if you prefer a school where undergraduates are the higher priority and want to be in a diverse and interesting city, UR is well worth consideration.

### Report Card: University of Richmond

Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: A

Freshman Retention: A

Costs: A

Curriculum: A

Community: A

Comforts: B+

Connections: A