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University of San Diego

Founded in 1949, the University of San Diego (USD) is a mid-sized Catholic university with approximately 5,600 undergraduates. A Nation Research University, USD has undergraduate schools of Arts and Science, Business and Engineering. It also has graduate schools in Leadership and Education, Nursing and Health Science and Peace Studies as well as a law school. But while graduate and law students represent just over a third of all USD students, they have no teaching responsibilities. All courses are taught by the faculty.

The university welcomes approximately 1,200 freshmen each year. While incoming students from California have also considered University of California campuses located in Southern California (UCLA, UC-Irvine, UC-Riverside, UC-San Diego and UC-Santa Barbara) they are also looking at Loyola Marymount University, Saint Mary's College of California (near San Francisco), the University of San Francisco and Santa Clara University. But while Loyola Marymount, Santa Clara and the University of San Francisco are Jesuit schools, USD is not affiliated with any sect of Catholicism. [Over half of USD students \(56 percent\) attended public schools although 41 percent identify as Catholic.](#)

During the 2016-17 admissions cycle, USD admitted just over half (52 percent) of its applicants; acceptances dipped below half (48 percent) for the class that will enter this fall. The average GPA of admitted students was just below 4.0. The university went to the wait list to admit the class that entered last fall. More than half of the students who accepted a place on the list were later accepted. The middle 50 percent scored between 1110 and 1310 on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the SAT; for the ACT the Composite was between 26 and 30. USD is a less selective school than a few of the state schools, including San Diego State and UC San Diego. However, it also attracts very good students who might have considered them quite seriously.

Just under half of the class (48 percent) that entered last fall came from California but the influx of transfer students means that Golden State residents are just over 60 percent of the entire undergraduate student body. The university is attracting more applicants not only from in-state but also from the East Coast and the Midwest. The deadline to apply is December 15th, early for a private college. But a California resident has likely sent their application to the state schools before then.

Admissions are also "need-blind," although the university meets, on average, just under 75 percent of need. In addition, all students are considered "undeclared" when they enter the university, even if they are affiliated with the business or engineering school. They are not admitted directly to a major.



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USD retained 89 percent of the students who entered in 2015 and 87 percent of those who entered in 2016. Two-thirds of the class that entered in 2010 graduated in four years, just over three quarters (77 percent) needed an extra semester or year. Engineering is a dual-degree program at USD where students receive a Bachelor of Arts *and* a Bachelor of Science degree. It's noteworthy that USD did better at graduating its class than either San Diego State University or the University of California-San Diego, among other California schools.

Costs

Here's one good reason that USD is attracting more students from outside the Golden State: costs and scholarships. The university's direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board), around \$60,000, are about the same as a University of California will be for a non-resident student. In addition, the top 35 percent of a class (29 ACT or 1360 to 1390 New SAT) can qualify for merit scholarships, most between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year. The university requests only the Federal Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA).

Graduates in the Class of 2015 who took out loans owed, on average, approximately \$29,600. This is \$2,600 more than the maximum they could borrow under the Federal Direct Loan program. However, this average will include engineering graduates who require an extra semester to earn their degrees. While the university asks future engineers to stay an extra semester, it also extends their merit award to help reduce their costs.

Curriculum

USD's [Core Curriculum](#) is similar to other Catholic colleges and universities. But unlike several of those schools, all students, regardless of their faith, [must take at least one course in Catholic Christianity](#) to fulfill the theology requirements. While the Core Curriculum has these required courses, the university makes it fairly easy for a liberal arts or business student to double major or carry more than one minor. USD also makes it easy to transfer compared to California's state schools. The university will consider transfer students with as few as 24 credits. By comparison, the vast majority of transfers into the state schools come with Associates degrees from the California community colleges.

USD advertises advantages of small classes and "uncapped" majors versus the public universities in California that have "impacted" programs where admissions are limited. This is a good reason for Californians to consider the school, provided that it can offer the choice of majors that the student wants when it comes time to declare in the sophomore year. No classes at USD had more than 49 students in 2016. Just over 30 percent of all classes had between 30 and 49, which means that introductory courses will be small for a school of this size.



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The university offers more degree options than one might expect for a mid-sized school. The College of Arts and Sciences offers, for example, a BA in Architecture, among with many traditional liberal arts majors. USD also has a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the national liberal arts honor society. The business school offers eight majors but also 12 minors that can be combined with other majors within or outside the business school. There is as much breadth in the business program at USD as students would find at a larger school.

The Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering offers five programs, including General Engineering (good for business consulting). All engineering students receive two Bachelors degrees, a BA and a BS. But their degree is in only the engineering specialty. The school requires all engineering students to take a common core of courses for two years—most engineering programs do this for only the freshman year—before declaring a major.

There are upsides to the USD approach to engineering education. No students are capped out of a possible major within the School of Engineering, provided that they have maintained a satisfactory GPA. Prospective engineers have the opportunity to change their minds about the program, move into another major, and still graduate on time. Those who remain in engineering have much smaller classes than they would have at the state schools. Lastly, the engineering school is almost entirely focused on undergraduates. It grants only one advanced degree: a Master of Science in Cyber Security Engineering.

There is one downside: the completion date for the degree does not always match up well with the interview schedules of employers who recruit engineering students at several target schools. This is a concern within the San Diego area alone: UC-San Diego and San Diego State University have larger engineering programs that operate on a more traditional four-year schedule. One exception is the Industrial Engineering major, not offered by either of the state schools in San Diego, nor at Loyola-Marymount, UC-Irvine, UCLA or UC-Santa Barbara.

USD students gave their faculty a rating of 3.72 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](https://www.ratemyprofessors.com), about the same as students at Loyola Marymount (3.73) and the University of San Francisco (3.75). They held their faculty in higher regard than students at Santa Clara (3.63) but in lesser regard than their peers at Saint Mary's College of California (3.80). USD faculty were held in slightly less regard than faculty at San Diego State (3.78) but in higher regard than faculty at UC-San Diego (3.62).



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Community

USD is located in Linda Vista, outside of downtown San Diego. There are tram connections into the city, though more than a third of the students have cars. Parking is \$275/year in accessible and secure lots on campus. Students who drive can take shuttles to class from the parking lots.

The USD campus is one of the more beautiful settings in American academia, set atop a hill overlooking the city and Mission Beach, where many students live off campus. The university extended the Spanish Mission theme of the original buildings into the more modern ones that have opened on campus. There is a quality look and feel to the campus and the more visited buildings (admissions and career development, academic buildings, student center, library) to help justify a premium price for the education. There The shuttle bus connections are available to those who do not like to walk up or downhill.

USD is a relatively safe campus. [The university's Clery Report](#) shows few incidents of crime for a mid-sized school although there were more recently reported incidents of Dating Violence (4), Stalking (5) and Disciplinary Referrals for Weapons Possession (5) than anyone would like to see. Drug-related crimes dropped to virtually none between 2014 and 2015, although there were over 300 reported incidents for alcohol-related disciplinary referrals in the residence halls.

Social fraternities and sororities are popular at USD, unusual for a Catholic university. They attract just under a quarter of the men and just over 30 percent of the women. These organizations do not own or rent their own houses on campus. Brothers and sisters do not have to choose to live together.

USD participates in 17 varsity sports. It is a member of the West Coast Conference along with basketball powers Gonzaga University and Saint Mary's College of California for all sports excluding football, where the Toreros play in a nationwide Pioneer Football League. All sports, excluding Men's and Women's Rowing, are at the Division I level (scholarship) in NCAA competition. The football program has won nine conference titles since 2005, the first two coming under current University of Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh. The baseball program has also been quite successful, sending 15 players to the major leagues, the most famous being the current Most Valuable Player in the National League: Kris Bryant , the third baseman for the Chicago Cubs.

Comforts

USD houses 94 percent of the freshman class, although less than half of all undergraduates live on campus. While the university requires those who live on campus to live in the residence halls for two years, most students will move off as juniors, unless



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they opt for [university-owned apartments](#). Housing costs are lower than they are for University of California campus, however, freshmen are more likely to be assigned to a triple or quad room. All first-year students who live in [on-campus housing](#) are also assigned to one of five [Living-Learning Communities](#). There are also [special programs for Sophomores](#) who live in the residence halls.

While the university produces a useful [off-campus housing guide](#), it does not operate an off-campus housing office for undergraduates. However, an office for graduate and law students provides [neighborhood information](#). That office advises students seeking an apartment for the first time to give themselves four to six weeks to find housing. Students should plan on spending at least \$700/month for rent, plus utilities, to live near campus.

Connections

USD's Career Development Center serves all students. Accounting and Engineering students will have more support for recruitment events in the Fall semester when employers recruit more aggressively. [These majors had the greatest success in finding employment among graduates in 2016](#). Engineering seniors need the additional help, since they graduate after the Fall semester.

An impressive 92 percent of graduates who sought employment found work within three months after graduation. Almost two-thirds receive a job offer before they had received their diploma. While internships are not required for every major at USD, more than three quarters of a class will graduate with at least one internship experience on a resume. Science and engineering students are more likely to graduate with a research experience than their peers at the state schools, mainly because there are no graduate students in these programs.

Among the over 47,000 USD alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), just under 19,000 live and/or work in the San Diego area while more than 7,000 are based in or around Los Angeles and Orange County and over 3,800 are based around San Francisco. Outside of California, New York City has the largest alumni base with more than 1,100 former Toreros, followed by Denver with more than 900.

Conclusions

USD is a great option for students who want to live in California, but would prefer to attend a mid-sized school. While the university is less than 70 years old, it has had a longer presence in San Diego than the University of California. USD is also more accommodating in terms of access to academic opportunities—especially in Business and Engineering—than California's public universities. As the state university systems face more academic and budget constraints, USD's competitive position becomes even



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stronger. It also helps to be located in a city where so many young people would like to live.

USD is a better value for students who live outside of California than for those from in-state. It cannot discount down to the state university charges for residents, nor can it compete with the state's generous need-based aid programs. The engineering curriculum requires 4 1/2 years for good reasons, but they can finish in four elsewhere. Aside from the points, and some spartan housing for first-year students, it is difficult to fault the school.

Report Card: University of San Diego

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

Freshman Retention: B+

Costs: B

Curriculum: A

Community: A

Comforts: B

Connections: B+