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### Misericordia University (PA)

Founded in 1924 by the Sisters of Mercy in Dallas, Pennsylvania, Misericordia University has approximately 1,800 full-time undergraduates as well as more than 500 who work and attend part-time. The university is organized into three schools: Arts and Sciences, Business and Health Sciences and Education. Founded as an all-female college offering programs in education and nursing, Misericordia became co-ed in the 1970s. Today the university is 60 percent female. Formerly named College Misericordia, the school was granted university status by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2007.

At first glance, Misericordia does not appear to be an extremely selective school. This year 65 percent of the students who applied were offered admission. But the university also received deposits from 35 percent of them, excellent for a small private school. The average SAT was 1100. The average ACT was 23.

The major draw of the university appears to be academic options. But Misericordia also recruits against the other Scranton/Wilkes Barre area schools for athletes. Interestingly, only 11 percent of this year's entering class chose to enter undecided on a major. Seventy-five percent of the undergraduate student body comes from Pennsylvania. But the university also attracts students from neighboring states, including New Jersey and New York.

Misericordia retains between 79 and 83 percent of a freshman class each year. While some students remain more than four years to pursue an advanced degree, the most recent four-year graduation rate was 64 percent. These numbers are quite good considering that over 40 percent of the undergraduates are pursuing a demanding business or health-related major. This is also a school where students are less likely to change their major after they have settled into the academics.

Misericordia is one of several private colleges located within the Scranton-Wilkes Barre metropolitan area in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Others that are also considered by students who are interested in Misericordia include Kings College, Marywood University, Wilkes University and the University of Scranton. These students also consider nearby state schools in Northeastern Pennsylvania including Bloomsburg University, East Stroudsburg University and Kutztown University.

#### Costs

Misericordia will charge approximately \$31,600 for tuition and fees this year. This is a very reasonable sticker price for a private college, nearly \$5,000 less than what Penn State will charge non-residents. But there is a trade-off: the largest merit-based scholarship is only \$13,000. Room and board with a double room and the Unlimited meal plan will be just under \$14,000.

This will be a very reasonably priced school for the students at the top of the admit pool, quite competitive with resident tuition and fee charges assessed by larger Pennsylvania public schools. But other schools in the Scranton area, notably Marywood and the University of Scranton, offer larger scholarships.



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Misericordia met, on average, 75 percent of financial need for students determined to have need in 2015. The average need-based scholarship was approximately half of tuition and fees. But the average indebtedness for students who graduated in 2015 was just over \$36,300. Some of this could be attributed to the added costs of an advanced degree for some members of the class (undergraduates receive scholarships for undergraduate education but not graduate school). However, the maximum that a student may borrow from the Federal Direct Loan program towards a four-year degree is \$27,000.

### Curriculum

Misericordia has 37 undergraduate majors, 25 minors and 13 undergraduate certificate programs. Twenty-five majors are in pre-professional subjects with 11 in the health professions. The university has recently launched [a Medical and Health Humanities major](#) that combines pre-health requirements with the liberal arts.

It is rare to find a school this small that offers so many options in health related fields. Misericordia students have degree paths towards careers in Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Physicians Assistant and Speech Pathology and Audiology, among other fields. The university also launched a [Health Science program in Patient Navigation](#) co-developed with an area health care network.

The business school offers seniors the opportunity to take 12 credits towards the MBA as an undergraduate then enter the MBA in the fifth year. It extends the same option to students in other majors, provided that they have completed some pre-requisite courses. It also offers a five-year Bachelors/MS in Organization Management to students who major in Digital Medical Sonography, History and Medical Imaging. The Mass Communications and Design program combines coursework in Business and Communications. The Sports Management program, which also combines Business and Communications courses, is one of the university's most popular majors. Other popular majors are Accounting, Psychology and Social Work.

You won't find large classes at Misericordia. No class offered during the 2015-16 academic year had 50 or more students. Over 40 percent had fewer than 20.

Misericordia students gave their faculty a rating of 3.76 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). That's a lower rating than students at the University of Scranton (3.86) gave their faculty, but higher than students at King's College (3.71), Wilkes University (3.71), Bloomsburg University (3.66), Kutztown University (3.74) rated theirs. Marywood University and East Stroudsburg University students (both 3.78) held their faculty in similar regard.

### Community

Misericordia was built on a hilltop in Northeastern Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley. The 120 acre campus is very easy to navigate as spokes from the center that lead to academic and administration buildings as well as the residence halls. Campus grounds and buildings are very well maintained though the dining hall appears small for a school of this size.



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Although Misericordia is a Catholic university, the campus is not dominated by religious symbols outside of Mercy Hall, the main administration building. While five campus buildings have been constructed since 2009, most others appeared to built in the 1960s or 1970s, but most have been recently renovated or updated. The university also boasts the only Shakespeare garden in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The university's [Clery Report](#) showed few reported incidents of crime, with the exception of alcohol-related disciplinary referrals. Burglaries and robberies are a concern. But these trended down from 2014 and 2016.

Aside from new buildings, the mix of men to women in the student body has changed over the past six years, partly due to a decision to add football as a sport. The addition of football increased the male population of the university by about 100 students although the total full-time undergraduate enrollment remained about the same. Misericordia competes in 22 varsity sports at NCAA Division III (non-scholarship) level. About half of the undergraduate student body plays a varsity sport.

Scranton has several festival events throughout the year that attract college students, including "First Fridays." The metro area also offers many opportunities for outdoor recreation, especially skiing in the winter. It is also home to the Scranton-Wilkes Barre RailRiders, the New York Yankees top minor league baseball team as well as the Wilkes Barre/Scranton Penguins, the minor league affiliate of the National Hockey League's Pittsburgh Penguins. The Pavilion at Montage Mountain hosts a full calendar of concerts during the warmer months. There is a lot for young adults to do, even bars and clubs for those of legal age to drink. But it really helps to have access to a car to get around. The university does provide shuttles. But local mass transit, while free to students, is more limited than college students would find in city or a more traditional college town.

### Comforts

Misericordia houses approximately 1,000 undergraduates. Anyone who wants to live on campus can have housing for four years. However, juniors and seniors usually move off and live within five miles of the campus. Off-campus apartments in Dallas rent between \$500 and \$700 per person per month for a two bedroom unit, including utilities. The choice to live on versus off campus depends on summer employment opportunities on or near campus. The university has neither fraternities nor sororities.

### Connections

Among the more than 7,100 Misericordia alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), over 3,200 are based in or around the Scranton-Wilkes Barre area. There are nearly 850 based in or around New York City and over 650 within the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Outside of New York City, the geographic base of the alumni gets really thin outside of Eastern and Central Pennsylvania. The academic mix of the university, however, makes its students attractive candidates for internships in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area, especially in the health care industry.

Since 1999 Misericordia has offered a Guaranteed Placement Program, one of the first introduced by a college career development center. Through the program freshmen sign a



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contact to agree to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher, attend workshops and work closely with academic and career advisors to plan a direction that might also include internship or shadowing opportunities to help them to build their resumes. Those meet their obligations and earned their Bachelors degree or their advanced degree in Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy or Speech Pathology and Audiology but are neither employed nor in graduate school within six months after graduation are offered the opportunity to complete a paid three-month internship.

To date the university's career development office has not needed to place a student in the internship. However, the Guaranteed Placement Program has successfully served other purposes. It demonstrates a *written commitment* by the university to help each student to succeed through a contract as well as student services. It also motivates the students to seek direction and choose an academic program as early as possible, and the majority do.

### Conclusions

Misericordia is an attractive option for students who are interested in Business, Education or the health professions but also prefer to attend a smaller school, especially if they come from the eastern half of Pennsylvania. Misericordia also appears to be a very good school that really helps its students to succeed. But it is also a very regional one. The university has a lot to offer students from anywhere. However, its alumni do not venture far from their alma mater.

### Report Card: Misericordia University

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