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### University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I) offers more than 150 majors in 10 undergraduate colleges that serve over 32,000 full-time undergraduates.

The U of I welcomed just over 7,600 freshmen in 2016, up from just over 6,900 only two years before. Over 38,000 applied to be part of this freshman class. Just under 23,000 were offered the opportunity. The university also wait listed over 2,800 applicants. While nearly 2,200 accepted a place on the wait list, only 350 were invited to enroll for their freshman year. The middle 50 percent of the class scored between 1280 and 1480 (out of 1600) on the SAT. The ACT Composite ranged between 26 and 32. [For the class that entered in the fall of 2017, the ACT range rose to between 27 and 33; the middle 50 percent who took the New SAT scored between 1360 and 1480.](#)

It's going to get harder to get into the U of I, [especially for admissions into popular programs such as Business and Engineering.](#) It is the only flagship state university in a state that has nearly 13 million people, and it has also become more popular with non residents. They make up 14 percent of the undergraduate student body as well as international students who are 16 percent of this population. Among state universities, only Arizona State enrolled more international students, undergraduate and graduate, than the U of I did in 2016-17. [Chinese students alone represented 10 percent of the freshmen who arrived on campus.](#)

Within Illinois the largest contingent of students come from the Chicago area, specifically Cook County and the adjacent counties, DuPage, Lake and Will. This is also a fertile market for the rest of the Big Ten. Indiana, Purdue, [Iowa, Iowa State](#) and Nebraska all market aggressively in the state. Popular private college options among Illinois residents include DePaul University, Loyola-Chicago, Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and Notre Dame.

Seventy percent of the U of I freshmen who entered in 2010 graduated within four years, excellent for a very large state university, as did 71 percent of the class that entered the year after. Among flagship state schools with over 30,000 undergraduates, only UCLA has done better at graduating a freshman class. Ninety-four percent of the freshmen who entered in 2016 returned for their sophomore year, excellent for any college of any size.

#### Costs

Tuition and fees at U of I vary by undergraduate program from \$16,000 to \$21,000 for residents, and between \$32,600 and \$37,600 for non residents. Room and board charges average approximately \$11,300, low for a flagship state school. [In some cases, an Illinois resident who is accepted to the U of I might also receive a scholarship offer that makes it more attractive to attend a university in one of the neighboring states.](#)

However, the tuition and fees for non-residents are lower than they are at Indiana, Michigan, Michigan State, UC-Berkeley and UCLA. Non-resident tuition and fees and room and board at the U of I total *less than the University of Michigan will charge non residents for tuition and fees alone.* [But there are virtually no merit scholarship dollars for non-residents.](#)

U of I graduates in 2016 who took out loans owned, on average, approximately \$25,200, according to the Project on Student Debt. The maximum that they could have borrowed over four years through the Federal Direct Student Loan program was \$27,000. Nearly half of the class



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(47%) had no debt at all. But among those who borrowed, nearly a fifth (18 percent) took out a loan from a source other than the Federal Government.

### Curriculum

U of I's [general education requirements](#) are quite similar to those of large flagship state schools. But each school has its own ways of helping its students to adjust to the rigors of an undergraduate education. The College of Engineering, for example, [has a project-based introductory course](#) and [allows up to 100 entering freshmen to be undeclared](#), but admissible to any engineering major if they are in good academic standing. Business students take a [Business 101 course](#) that emphasizes professional development, ethics and business ethics. For those who enter undecided between majors offered by different schools, the university has a [Division of General Studies](#) that manages exploratory programs, including one in [Pre-Engineering](#). Each school also has its own policies and practices to help students find internships and research opportunities with faculty.

Approximately one-third of U of I undergraduates are enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Nearly 7,600 are prospective engineers while more than 3,100 are business students. Among the smaller colleges, the College of Agriculture grew from just under 3,000 undergraduates in 2010 to nearly 3,400 in 2016 while the College of Education declined from just under 1,800 to just over 1,400.

There are some *very large* classes at U of I. Nearly ten percent of all undergraduate classes offered in 2016-17 had *over 100 students*; more than 20 percent had 50 or more. Forty percent had fewer than 20. Those who are offered admissions to honors programs or are invited to become James Scholars should seriously consider accepting the invitations to get into smaller introductory courses in their chosen school. Another option is to choose a [Living-Learning Community](#) within the residence halls, to find collaboration within a major or special interest.

U of I students gave their faculty an average rating of 3.69 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). Within the Big Ten, they held their faculty in lower regard than students at the University of Michigan (3.78), the University of Wisconsin-Madison (3.80), Indiana University-Bloomington (3.70) and the University of Iowa (3.73) and about the same esteem as students at Purdue (3.70). They also held them in lower regard than students at UC-Berkeley (3.78) and UCLA (3.73) among schools of similar reputation and size.

### Community

U of I's main academic quad has a "movie set" look, flanked by [Foellinger Auditorium](#) at one end and the [Illini Union](#) at the other. Altgeld Hall and Lincoln Hall, which also face Wright Street, one of Urbana's main retail avenues, are two of the university's landmark buildings. Students always set up tables outside the Illini Union to raise money for causes, clubs and local artists, much like the community at UC-Berkeley and other campuses popularly known for activism. U of I offers a choice of over 1,000 student organizations, more than most other schools of its size.

Outside of the main academic quad and the South Quad, much of the campus and community is quite open. Retail shopping, dining and residences, university and privately owned, blend together. This means that campus and local police must cooperate closely on [reporting](#) and addressing criminal activity. The numbers for reported incidents of domestic violence against women—44 for Stalking alone in 2016—are fairly high for a university community. There was also good news: reported disciplinary referrals for drug and alcohol-related offenses dropped each



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year from 2014 to 2016. The number of reported alcohol-related violations on campus dropped by more than 50 percent from 593 to 259.

Because the campus is no less than 90 minutes from a large city (Indianapolis), and nearly three hours from Chicago and its suburbs, the university takes on the responsibility of being the cultural center for the larger community. The [Krannert Center for the Performing Arts](#), one of the best entertainment venues on any college campus, was designed by Max Abramowitz, lead architect for Lincoln Center in New York City. Assembly Hall, which seats 15,000 for concerts, entertainment and sports, was also designed by Abramowitz. [It has played host to such performers as The Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, U2, and The Harlem Globetrotters since it opened in 1963.](#)

Big Ten schools bond around football and men's basketball success. But the U of I community has not experienced as much of it as conference rivals in Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin, and most recently Northwestern. While Michigan fans will fill their football stadium, aka 'The Big House', in good years and bad, the [Fighting Illini most recently averaged less than 40,000 fans per game in Memorial Stadium, a venue which seats over 70,000. Only Northwestern, which has nearly 25,000 fewer undergraduates, and a much smaller stadium, drew worse.](#) The men's basketball program drew [below the average per home game in the Big Ten last season](#), according to the NCAA. [However, from 1970 through 2014, when the U of I put more competitive teams on the court, the Fighting Illini ranked in the nation's top 10 in attendance 15 times, most recently in 2011.](#) The U of I community will support a winning team, but pay less attention in a losing season.

While the twin cities of Champaign-Urbana have more than 200,000 residents, the campus community, surrounded by farmland, is more rural than students are likely to find in Ann Arbor, Berkeley or Madison. Each city has its own downtown. Urbana is the more college focused community. It has virtually any dining, drinking or entertainment option that a college student could possibly want within walking distance of the academic buildings and the Illini Union, mainly along Green Street and Wright Street. Downtown Champaign and its outskirts are where students are more likely to meet their parents when they come to visit.

This is not the best campus community to have a car, unless you can park by private housing or you are a member of a Greek organization. Parking lots and streets are metered, and the meters are aggressively enforced. The Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District operates an extensive network of buses throughout the twin cities, and makes iCards available to students to ride them at all hours. [The university collects a transportation fee as part of student fees, but also allows the students to vote on proposed fee increases.](#) The campus is flat, easily navigable by bike, and one of the nation's best for handicapped accessibility.

### Comforts

Incoming freshmen have the option of living in the university's [residence halls](#) or in [Private Certified Halls \(PCH\)](#) approved by the university's housing office. Like university-owned halls, PCH living options have their own resident advisors, programming and dining facilities. University-owned housing and the PCH living options currently house half of the undergraduate student body, fairly high for a state university.

Its possible to pay less than \$500/month per person with utilities to live private rental apartments or houses in the twin cities. Rents will be lower for those who live further from campus, but



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students have to use the bus system to commute or carry enough change to feed the parking meters.

Greek life is relatively important at the U of I. There are 96 fraternities and sororities on campus, and 74 have their own houses. Just over a fifth of the men are in fraternities; nearly 30 percent of the women are members of sororities.

### Connections

Career services at the U of I, while quite extensive, are also decentralized. Each school has their own specialists to help their students and alumni to find internships and jobs. This has advantages when the specialists have contacts and understand the hiring practices of their industries and employers.

U of I also has a central [Career Center](#) that serves all students, regardless of their major, located on Wright Street, directly across from the main academic quad. The Career Center at Illinois not only provides counseling to students and alumni; it also manages the major fall and spring career fairs, the university-wide graduate school admissions fair, and the Educator's Fair for teacher candidates. The Center also facilitates on-campus visits and resume searches by employers, especially useful for firms that want to recruit candidates from more than one school within the university.

Among the nearly 285,000 U of I alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), over 105,000 are based in and around Chicago, around 32,600 have stuck around close to campus. Outside of these places, the largest networks are in and around San Francisco, New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. Outside of the university itself, Google is the listed as the largest employer, followed by Caterpillar, Microsoft, Deloitte, Intel and IBM.

### Conclusions

U of I offers virtually everything that you will find at UC-Berkeley or the University of Michigan. But the student body is larger, the sports fan base more "fair weather," and the campus more isolated. These concerns may be less important for Illinois residents, but they may factor into consideration for non-residents who are shopping between public and private options. But those who want to attend a large state school will find that the positives of the U of I far outweigh the negatives.

### Report Card: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- 4-Year/6-Year Graduation Rates: A
- Freshman Retention: A
- Costs: C (Residents)/B (Non-Residents)
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B+
- Connections: A