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Lycoming College

Founded in 1812, Lycoming College is one of the oldest liberal arts colleges in the US. Located in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, its founding predates not only the public institutions in the Keystone State. It also predates other private liberal arts colleges including Gettysburg (1832), Haverford (1833) and Swarthmore (1864). Lycoming has approximately 1,300 undergraduates. The college grants no graduate degrees. Its current president, Dr. Kent Trachte, a political scientist, was appointed three years ago. He was formerly Dean of the College at Franklin & Marshall, another selective liberal arts college in Pennsylvania.

Lycoming is cross shopped most often against nearby Pennsylvania private colleges including Albright College, Juniata College, Lebanon Valley College and Susquehanna University as all as Pennsylvania's public universities. It is also similar in size and academic offerings to St. Vincent College, Ursinus College and Westminster College within the state.

It is not exceptionally difficult to be accepted to Lycoming. In 2015 the college offered admission to just over 1,200 of the more than 1,800 students who applied to join the freshman class of 347. The yield rate, the percentage of accepted students who decided to come, was 28 percent, about average for a liberal arts college.

Lycoming is a test-optional school (for students who rank in the upper half of their high school classes) that practices rolling admissions. The middle 50 percent of the students who entered in 2015 and submitted SAT scores scored between 920 and 1140 (out of 1600) on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the test. Among those who submitted ACT scores, the middle 50 percent of the Composite was between 20 and 25. While the college mentions that larger awards are tied to SAT scores as well as academic performance, students who do not submit scores are also considered for merit awards.

The college is working to recruit more aggressively outside of Pennsylvania, which has more private liberal arts colleges than any US state. It is one of the most active partners with national charter school management organizations including the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), YesPrep and Say Yes to Education, among others. This has helped the college to attract new students from as far away as California and Texas. It also works closely with charter schools in the larger cities in Pennsylvania and neighboring states. Today, approximately half of Lycoming's students come from Pennsylvania, the rest from other states as well as 15 countries. Approximately 30 percent of Lycoming students are men and women of color.

Lycoming graduated 57 percent of the class that entered in 2009, according to the college's 2015-16 Common Data Set, up from 52 percent for the class that entered the year before. The school retained 79 percent of the class that entered in 2014. The college has retained over 80 percent of the freshmen in prior years. The graduation rates do not compare well with the private colleges cross-shopped most often, excluding Albright College, which did not graduate half of its 2009 freshman class on time. They also compare less favorably against the more similar Pennsylvania liberal arts colleges. However, Lycoming's four-year graduation rate is far better than any of the 14 Pennsylvania State System schools that were originally founded as teacher's colleges. Only West Chester University and Bloomsburg University graduated at least 40 percent



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of the students who entered in 2009 within four years. Only West Chester and Slippery Rock did slightly better at retaining their freshmen than Lycoming. This information is noteworthy considering that Education programs are among the most popular offerings at these schools, as they are at Lycoming. The more personalized program at the smaller school could save time and possibly money.

Costs

Lycoming's direct charges, including tuition and fees, room and board, will be approximately \$48,000 in 2016-17, about that amount that liberal arts colleges such as Bucknell or Franklin & Marshall will charge for *tuition and fees alone*.

During 2014-15 the college met 84 percent, on average, of financial need for incoming freshmen who had successfully demonstrated need, according to its 2015-16 Common Data Set. Scholarships represented over 80 percent of the financial aid award dollars. The average was 82 percent for the full student body. The average need-based scholarship awarded to freshmen was approximately \$29,400, quite generous for a small school. Merit-based scholarships were awarded to 44 of the 347 freshmen. These averaged approximately \$23,800, and covered nearly half of the direct charges during the 2014-15 academic year. In addition, approximately one-third of 2014 qualified for a Federal Pell Grant, according to the Project on Student Debt. [Institutional Awards for 2015-16 ranged from \\$17,000 to \\$22,500.](#)

Unique to any college, Lycoming offers recipients an invitation to [interview for an upgraded award](#) for its three largest scholarships: the [Dean's Scholarship; the Faculty Scholarship, and the Trustee Scholarship.](#) Recipients of the Faculty Scholarship as well as the Trustee Scholarship also receive invitations to be part of the college's [Scholar's Program.](#) This has many benefits including the opportunity to audit a fifth course—Lycoming has a four-course load—for no charge.

It is quite possible for a student who would appear in the middle of the admit pool at the major Pennsylvania research universities: Penn State, Pitt and Temple to receive enough aid from Lycoming to make the college a lower-cost option. This is especially important for students who would prefer a small college and/or a liberal arts education to the offerings of a larger school. Pennsylvania, unlike neighboring Maryland, does not have a public liberal arts college, while in-state tuition and fees for the research universities are among the highest in the US.

There was no student debt information available for Lycoming from the Project on Student Debt or *Big Future*, the College Board's search site. However, while just over 80 percent of the Class of 2014 had to borrow to cover educational costs, only 11 percent had to borrow from a source other than the Federal Government, quite low for a private college.

Curriculum

Lycoming offers [36 majors as well as more than 50 minors. Majors are also broken down into concentrations.](#) The college makes it easy for students to double major or carry multiple minors. [General education requirements are similar to other liberal arts colleges, though the Lycoming Scholars Program offers some challenging alternatives.](#)



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One unique example is Accounting where students may pursue a [150-credit program](#) or a [128 credit program](#); this depends on certification requirements in the state where the graduate would practice. The 150-credit program requires an additional semester. However, professional associations in several states, including New York, consider this the industry standard. The alternative to Lycoming's approach is to pursue a master's degree in Accounting or Business, which carries more costs as well as credits. Another example is Astronomy which offers concentrations in Astrobiology, Astrochemistry and Astrophysics that are not likely to be found at a school of this size. The Communications program has five concentrations including Digital Media and Corporate Communication. The Theater program has six, including one in Design/ Technical Theater and another in Theater History and Literature.

Lycoming takes a more aggressive approach to premedical education than most schools of its size. The college has a Pre-Med Advisory Council comprised of representatives from the science faculty. They handle interview preparation for medical school as well as offer an additional recommendation for admission to students who qualify. Students also have access to a human cadaver lab for anatomy classes, rare for any college or university. They also have access to internship opportunities through the Susquehanna Health System.

The college and its environs offer multiple opportunities for students who are interested in environmental studies. It offers a unique minor in Environmental Sustainability that can be combined with the science majors. Lycoming also operates the [Clean Water Institute](#) which combines service to local watershed and environmental groups through internships, education programs and research through the college's water testing laboratory.

Education is one of the more popular programs at Lycoming. About a fifth of the junior and senior classes pursue education degrees. In addition to secondary school certification which is combined with a liberal arts major, the college also offers offer dual certificates in Special Education PreK-8 or Special Education 7-12 that can be completed within four years. Early childhood teachers major in Psychology while completing requirements to be certified. There are six high schools, eight middle schools and over 20 elementary schools within a 20-mile radius of Lycoming, allowing all student teaching placements to be close to campus.

The college is very well invested in the Archeology major. Students may participate on excavations abroad with two college-supported field schools, the Lycoming College Expedition to Idalion, Cyprus and the Tel Gezer (Israel) Excavation and Publication Project, as well as work in other countries. Or they make stay close to home to aid faculty in the Muncy Canal Project. Lycoming also offers courses in ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Latin for those who plan to go on to graduate school in this field.

The college is also attempting to design multi-disciplinary classes, much like those offered by larger schools. One course on the politics of fair trade involves faculty in political science, economics and chemistry who study trade through the world of coffee growers in Costa Rica. In addition to the academic experiences at home and abroad, the course launched the college into a partnership to market Warrior Blue fair trade coffee, giving the grower a larger share of revenues than he would receive from consumer food companies. While the coffee is sold only on campus



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at this time, there are plans to extend sales into restaurants, coffee shops and retail grocery stores in the Williamsport area. These will likely be student-driven with faculty engagement.

Lycoming places Accounting, Business and Economics programs within an Institute for Management Studies that offers cross-disciplinary business courses. During the current school year, this institute will offer students a [European Business Experience](#) focused on globalization and global business. The Institute also offers its own [Management Scholars Program](#), as well as a 4+1 agreement that allows students to earn a MBA in one year at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

You will not find many large classes at Lycoming, unless you take Astronomy courses, which require the use of the college's planetarium. Only five classes, among the 294 offered in 2015-16 had more than 50 students. Sixty-five percent had fewer than 20 students. Most introductory courses, even in the sciences, Economics and Psychology, had 35 or fewer students.

Lycoming students have high regard for their faculty. They gave them a rating of 3.82 (out of a possible 5.0) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). Among the schools most cross shopped most often against Lycoming only Juniata students (4.0) held their faculty in higher esteem. Among the Pennsylvania schools most similar to Lycoming, only Ursinus students (3.85) rated their faculty at least equally.

Community

Lycoming's crown jewel is the Lynn Science Center, opened in 2015. The laboratory and classroom spaces in the facility are impressive for a small college. Long Hall, where the senior administration works, is the signature building. Aside from the library, which was constructed during the 1970's, and most of the housing, buildings are colonial style designs that have worn well and recently received interior renovations. The grounds are well-maintained. There is a good perception of community and safety on the Lycoming campus, which is open on all sides. There is only one street that runs through the campus where students must cross, and traffic is limited to campus vehicles and admissions visitors. The college allows all students to have cars, provided that they pay a \$150 fee for the parking permit.

This is one school where students might want to have a car or at least have access to one. While Williamsport has many of the cultural amenities as well as eating and drinking places that college students would find in a college town, the city's downtown is not immediately next to campus. Lycoming shares the area with Pennsylvania College of Technology, a 6,000 student campus of Penn State. There is interest on the part of both schools in expanding shopping and community service opportunities to students. The college is partnering with the local business community on a development plan that will better tie Lycoming's campus with the downtown as well as provide new businesses and employment opportunities for students and residents. This will make the campus environs more pedestrian friendly and encourage students to make more use of the community as well as participate in service projects.

Williamsport is also a county seat as well as home to Federal courts; it can be an attractive laboratory for students interested in law and government. It is also the headquarters city Little



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League Baseball, including the Little League World Series. While Williamsport has only around 30,000 residents, its downtown has a more urbane feel than most small towns, partly because there nearly 8,000 colleges students as well as the faculty and staff at those schools.

Lycoming currently works with over 150 local and regional organizations as well as the schools to engage students in community service. The college was named to President Obama's Honor Roll for Community Service in 2010, 2013 and 2014. Lycoming was also named one of the Best Colleges to Work For in 2015 by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a positive testament to the quality of the staff and faculty.

Drug and alcohol-related disciplinary referrals trended dramatically upward between 2012 and 2014, according to the college's [Clery Report](#). There were 144 alcohol-related disciplinary referrals on campus in 2014, almost the same as the previous two years combined. There were 80 drug-related referrals, there had been only one in the previous two years. It is fair to ask if the numbers are a result of more aggressive reporting and enforcement. The college reported very small numbers of incidents of fondling, domestic violence and dating violence as well as one hate crime each year in 2013 and 2014. This can be attributed to Pennsylvania laws that required more thorough reporting on these crimes as well as enforcement.

Lycoming competes in 17 varsity sports at the NCAA Division III (non-scholarship level). Because the student body is small, and the college competes in football, about a quarter of the student body are varsity athletes. The college shared the Mid Atlantic Conference title in football in 2013 and won the men's basketball and men's soccer championships in 2015.

Comforts

Lycoming houses nearly 90 percent of the student body on campus though students who have family nearby are allowed to commute. The college has renovated three halls since 2013, mostly recently turning one into a residential college model where classes are given in the building. The college has eight residence halls, small homes broken into 1 to 3 bedroom apartments and a relatively new apartment complex that houses 85 upper-class students. Freshmen and sophomores live in the residence halls. Four are corridor-style halls where several double rooms share a common bathroom and lounge, three are suite-style where a small number of rooms share a common bathroom and lounge and one is a blend of the two with upper-class student suites on the top two floors.

Lycoming assigns housing by credits completed as well as GPA. While it is possible for sophomores to live in apartment-style housing, as it is possible to accommodate juniors, seniors will receive priority because there are not enough apartments for them. The college also allocates \$40 a semester for laundry (students don't put coins in the washers and dryers) more than enough to cover washing and drying.

The college has Greek life though neither fraternities nor sororities have their own houses. Thirteen percent of the men were members of fraternities while a fifth of the women were involved with sororities. There are rules requiring that parties be registered with the college in advance,



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though students of proper age are allowed to drink alcoholic beverages in the upper-class residence halls.

Lycoming requires all freshmen to take the unlimited meal plan for the dining hall which includes \$100 in flex dollars that can be spent at Jack's Corner (in the student center) or Cafe' 1812 (in the library lobby) on campus. All others living in the residence halls also have the option of choosing a 14 meal plan with \$250 in flex dollars. Apartment dwellers and commuters may purchase a commuter plan that covers five meals along with \$250 in flex dollars.

Connections

Among the over 6,700 Lycoming alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com), the largest group, just under 1,200, reside in and around Philadelphia. There are also more than 1,000 alumni based around New York City. Collectively, over 2,000 live and/or work around Central Pennsylvania.

Notable alumni include Steve Harrison, Chairman of Lee Hecht Harrison, one of the world's largest global career management services companies; Brian Kaufman, Associate Producer of "The Simpsons"; David Schock, Chief Financial Officer of the Ford Motor Company, and Dr. Marina Vernalis, first female Chief of Cardiology at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and first female Cardiovascular Consultant of the Army Surgeon General, among others. About a fifth of Lycoming alumni made a contribution to their alma mater of the past two years, according to data that the college submitted to *US News*.

Lycoming engages career development with academic advising as early as the freshman year. Career counselors are embedded within the academic programs, a practice more commonly found at larger schools. As a student gets closer to declaring a major, the career counselor will work closely with the academic advisor, then later the major advisor on course selection as well as in finding opportunities around and off campus, including internships, service, study abroad and research with faculty.

The college runs its own summer internship program called the [Williamsport Internship Summer Experience \(WISE\)](#) in partnership with local businesses. The career development center selects between 35 and 40 students for a 10-week paid internship. WISE has an application packet, much like a college admissions packet, that includes a personal statement, letters of recommendation, a resume and transcript. The difference is that candidates must also go through a group interview. The internship is tied to frequent observation and mentoring meetings throughout the summer. Students may apply for an internship as early as the second semester of their freshman year.

The college also offers credit-based practica during the school year for students who major in Accounting, Biology, Business, Communication, Criminal Justice, Economics, Education, [Institute for Management Studies programs](#), Psychology, and Sociology. Lycoming allows students to take up to 16 credits in practice, almost a full semester's courses, with faculty approval.



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Conclusions

Many good things are happening at Lycoming around academics, facilities, student life and student services, most of which have been upgraded over the past three years. The college is a good fit for a good-to-very good student who would prefer a small school over a much larger one. Lycoming is also an excellent school when it comes to community service. The college also does an excellent job at incorporating career development into a student's academic direction. It has also taken a leadership role to help make the surrounding area more of a college town.

Lycoming could be a better value for Pennsylvania students over the public universities, for those residents who qualify for scholarships. Costs start at a much lower sticker price than more selective liberal arts colleges though the results will be similar for the students who are willing to work. The merit-based awards are quite generous and will be combined with need-based aid for the neediest students. But Lycoming is also one school where students who have cars might want to have them on campus. While the campus will become more connected to the downtown in the future, access to a car is helpful in the present, especially at a school that is becoming more engaged with its community.

Lycoming has fallen little short on the numbers in terms of graduation rates compared to private liberal arts colleges in Pennsylvania, the state that has more than any other. However, the graduation rates are better than any public institution in Pennsylvania, with the exception of the main campuses of Penn State and Pitt. Graduation rates will likely improve as the community continues to respond well to student needs. The most noticeable reason that the graduation rate has gone up is that services to students, including academic support, academic enrichment options and community connections (service and employment) have gotten better. So have residence halls and science facilities.

All colleges, no matter their name, are a collection of services performed by people much like a small or mid-sized city. Any college can build and maintain buildings and grounds. But the people leave the memories, whether they are friends or faculty or staff who care. Lycoming has good people with good ideas who will make a good college better over time. This is one school where incoming freshmen will surely see many positive changes by the time they receive their degrees.

Report Card for Lycoming College

- 4-year/6-year graduation rates: C+/C+
- Freshman Retention: B
- Costs: A
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B+
- Connections: B