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Rowan University (NJ)

Since 1992, when industrialist Henry Rowan bestowed a \$100 million gift, Rowan University has undergone one of the most dramatic transitions in US higher education from a largely commuter-oriented teacher's college formerly named Glassboro State College, into a comprehensive public university larger than the flagship institutions in several states. Rowan also has schools of allopathic and osteopathic medicine. Many similar and larger universities, public or private, do not. Today, Rowan has approximately 16,000 students, up from 9,500 in 1992, with more than 13,000 undergraduates.

While Rowan has undergone rapid expansion of its academic programs, facilities and residence life since 1992, it largely remains a New Jersey school. Only five percent of the student body comes from outside the Garden State. Among New Jersey residents, the New Jersey students are divided almost evenly from the North, Central and Southern regions of the state. Rowan is often considered against Rutgers-New Brunswick, The College of New Jersey, New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), the University of Delaware, Temple University and Drexel University and other Pennsylvania private colleges.

Students who can get into any of the mentioned schools will likely be offered admission to Rowan—and likely pay less to go there. Approximately 13,000 students applied to join the freshmen class that entered last fall, just over half were offered admission to the 2,500 member class. The mean SAT scores, Critical Reading and Math, were 1070 in 2015-16; they rose closer to 1150 for the following year. Expect scores to rise as the Honors College adds students and business/science/health/engineering enrollments increase over time. Students who would be in the upper quarter of a first-year class at Rutgers-New Brunswick and the other schools mentioned previously would be competitive candidates for the Honors College. The university also administers the community colleges in New Jersey's Burlington and Gloucester counties, both in Southern New Jersey, gradually building seamless transfer pathways into Rowan's four-year degree programs.

Rowan retained 87 percent of the freshmen who arrived in 2015, a rate which will also improve as the high-demand academic programs and Honors College expand. The four-year graduation rate, while better than Drexel and NJIT (where students need five years if they participate in extensive cooperative education programs), for the class that entered in 2010 was 43 percent. This, too, should improve.



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Costs

Rowan charged approximately \$13,100 for in-state tuition and fees for the current academic year; these fees were just under \$22,000 for non-residents. The sticker price is the lowest versus the university's strongest competitors for students, and merit awards are also available. Those who begin their education at the Burlington or Gloucester campuses and qualify for NJ STARS—be ranked in the top 15 percent of their high school class—receive scholarships provided that they maintain a 3.25 GPA. The first two years, STARS I, are tuition free, the second two years, STARS II, carry an annual \$2,500 merit award. On average, the university met 69 percent of need for its undergraduates in 2015.

Rowan graduates in 2015 who took out loans, on average, borrowed just under \$31,700, more likely because they needed a fifth year to complete their degree. The maximum that an undergraduate may borrow from the Federal Government over five years is \$31,000.

Curriculum

Rowan has more undergraduate colleges than Rutgers-New Brunswick and offers some programs that you cannot get there. The university is more invested in Communications and Education than the flagship state university and also has its own College of the Earth and Environment.

Henry Rowan's gift came with a condition: that the university create and grow upon a high-quality college of engineering, which the school did not have at the time. The first 100 engineering students were admitted in 1996. Today there are 1,300 engineering students with new facilities completed to help increase enrollment past 2,000. For comparison, Rutgers-New Brunswick has about 3,800 engineering undergraduates but also offers more engineering degree programs. In addition to its investments in the engineering curriculum, Rowan has developed strong programs in business, communications, environmental sciences, health professions, health sciences, music and theatre while maintaining its long-standing commitments to teacher education.

But the university faces a challenge: to add academic programs, increase the research opportunities for the faculty, add students and become more residential without becoming too impersonal, like a much larger university. Students are less likely, for example, to see huge classes at Rowan. Less than one percent of Rowan's classes have over 50 students, versus more than a fifth of the classes on Rutgers main campus. Students are far more likely to be taught by experienced faculty than by teaching assistants in the introductory courses. But they are not always more likely to get small classes after advancing into the major, mainly because Rowan has fewer faculty in most programs where the two schools overlap.



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Rowan students gave their faculty a rating of 3.72 (out of a possible 5.0) on RateMyProfessors.com about the same rating as students at Rutgers-New Brunswick (3.74), The College of New Jersey (3.70), Temple University (3.70) and the University of Delaware (3.73) gave theirs. Rowan students held their faculty in higher regard than their peers at Drexel (3.59) and NJIT (3.55).

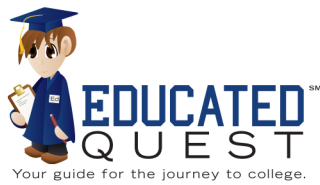
The university is building on an impressive Honors Program that welcomes 140 freshmen each year. In addition to special honors courses, Honors students are offered opportunities to be research assistants not only to faculty on campus, but also scholars at schools such as MIT and the University of Southern California through summer programs. Honors students have the options of being in living/learning communities for the freshman year, then receive first priority for upper-class housing in apartments in the modern, attractive Whitney complex. Admission to this program as well as a desire to have smaller classes over the first two years are probably the best reasons to choose Rowan over its closest competition.

Community

Rowan's main campus is located in Glassboro, and the university has been the major player in the city's redevelopment. It invested over \$300 million to build the retail district called Rowan Boulevard, including one of the largest Barnes and Noble bookstores in New Jersey. The campus is a mix of architectural styles from various eras with no common theme. The engineering complex and new business and science buildings being the newest, stand out on the campus tour, as do the residence halls. The academic and residential sections of campus can be covered in about 20 minutes from end to end, a less intimidating setting than Rowan students would find at larger schools. But parking is a major problem for resident students. Next year, freshmen and sophomores will not be allowed to have cars on campus.

Liquor law violations are by far the most reported crimes on campus, according to the university's [2015 Clery Report](#). This is true of most colleges of Rowan's size, especially one that has the majority of the full-time students living on or close to campus. The arrest figures for alcohol, however, versus disciplinary referrals, were high though they trended down from 46 to 32 from 2012 to 2014. And, there were actually more reported drug-related arrests, with 54 in 2014, unusual for any college. There were also reported incidents of sexually related and weapons related crimes during that year. There is a very visible police presence where the campus borders the community around Rowan Boulevard and the newer apartment-style housing. That will help to allay safety concerns over time.

Unfortunately, Glassboro and Rowan have not developed a college town setting to equal that of downtown New Brunswick or downtown Newark, Delaware. In addition, the university does not have a major assembly hall to attract popular speakers and



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entertainers as those larger schools do. There are plenty of clubs and organizations as well as impressive outdoor athletic facilities on the campus, but the surrounding community offers little around it. Greek life is not overly popular, involving only nine percent of the undergraduate student body; none of the organizations have houses. Students can take university shuttles to grocery shopping as well as to nearby Deptford Mall and there are also trips to Philadelphia and Atlantic City. They can also sign out rental cars, when they are available. But the “no car” policy for the first two years might lead some prospective students to look elsewhere.

Comforts

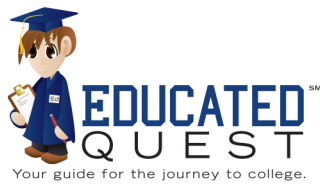
Rowan requires freshmen to live on campus for the first two years, unless they commute from the home of a parent or legal guardian. The university has some of the nicest undergraduate housing that can be found on a college campus, especially [Holly Pointe Commons](#), which opened for the current academic year and is home to mostly freshmen. Interestingly, Holly Pointe resembles a more traditional corridor-style hall while the older halls are suite-style. In Holly Pointe, the halls are curved, with each curve called a “pod.” There is also an impressive selection of [apartment living options](#) on campus.

However, when a university expands its on-campus housing, rents for off-campus housing become more competitive. Rowan’s charges for upper-class apartments, mainly for juniors and seniors, [ranged between \\$7,700 and \\$10,300](#), excluding a meal plan. [But off-campus housing can be rented for as little as \\$500 per person per month plus utilities.](#) Research is required. The off-campus options may not be as nice, and may likely require a longer lease. But when it comes to committing to housing in college, money often talks.

Connections

Rowan offers separate career fairs for Accounting and Finance and Education, a Career Exploration and Internship Fair and a Federal Jobs Fair. The university also has a [Spring Career Fair](#) that filled to capacity for the current academic year. Rowan advertises that over half of its recent graduating classes had either offers for full-time employment or acceptances to graduate and professional schools before they had received their Bachelor’s degrees. This is impressive considering that some of the degree programs, teacher education, for example, require licensure for employment.

Given the “no car” rule, undergraduates are more likely to work on campus if they need spending money or work experience during the first two years, then be in internships, practicums, clinical assignments or student teaching after the sophomore year. Fortunately, Rowan also encourages students to assist faculty in research more than



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they might at a larger school that grants more advanced degrees and assigns doctoral students to do the same work.

Among the more than 47,000 Rowan alumni registered on LinkedIn, over 27,000 live and/or work around Philadelphia, while over 11,000 are based around New York City. The base drops substantially after that to 600 in and around Washington DC. Nearly 7,000 work in Education. There are as many alumni who work in the media as there are in engineering (approximately 2,300 in both) while more than 2,600 are entrepreneurs.

Conclusions

Rowan University is a good value for the money. It offers many of the same options as larger schools, and some they do not offer, within a campus community where students are less likely to feel intimidated or lost. The university is also building for a long term future more than any state school in New Jersey aside from Rutgers or NJIT, which can attract more research dollars. The alumni base that entered Rowan in the early years of Henry Rowan's gift is entering its peak earning years, and the gift helped to attract millions from other supporters. This is especially true for alumni in the sciences and engineering.

Rowan's major downsides are the limited off-campus shopping and entertainment options in the surrounding community, parking problems and a "no-car" policy for resident freshmen and sophomores. While the university keeps working to improve the on-campus experience, New Jersey is a state where college students like to have their cars.

The Report Card: Rowan University

Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: C/B

Freshmen Retention: B+

Costs: B+

Curriculum: A

Community: B

Comforts: B+

Connections: B+