

## Stuart L. Nachbar

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### Monmouth University

Few schools offer easy access to a big city and a big beach. Monmouth University, located on New Jersey's Shore, is one of them. With approximately 4,500 full-time undergraduates, Monmouth is considered to be either a mid-sized college or a small university, depending on how you look at it.

Much like a school like Rutgers-New Brunswick, the Garden State's flagship state university, Monmouth is subdivided into smaller schools based on academic programs: the Leon Hess Business School, School of Education, Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Marjorie K. Unterberg School of Nursing and Health Studies, School of Science, School of Social Work and the Honors School open to undergraduates in most majors. But unlike a larger school, Monmouth offers fewer restricted or "impacted" majors as well as much smaller classes.

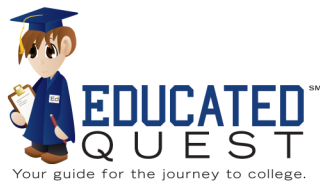
With the exception of Nursing, a direct entry program for freshmen, Monmouth offers achievable admissions for a good to excellent high school student. Last year, 73 percent of applicants were offered admission into a class of nearly 1,100 first-year students. For Nursing applicants, the acceptance rate was 12 percent. The average high school GPA was 3.36. About a quarter of the class came from outside New Jersey. While students do not need exceptionally high SAT scores to be admitted into most programs, except for Nursing and the Honors School, the university considers the Writing section of the SAT to be an important predictor of college success. Students who have a 3.5 unweighted GPA and a combined SAT score of 1250 are considered for the Honors School, though not all are offered admission.

Monmouth's freshman retention rate has fluctuated between 79 and 83 percent since 2010. The university graduated 70 percent of the students who entered in 2010 within six years, including those in Bachelor's/Masters programs and students who reduced their course loads to work more hours at an internship or job. Fifty-five percent of that class finished in four.

Monmouth's graduation rates were comparable, and in most cases better, for this class than they were for some other schools these students were likely to have considered including Montclair State University, Rider University, Rowan University, Sacred Heart University (CT) and Seton Hall University.

### Costs

Monmouth charges approximately \$50,000 for tuition and fees, room and board, quite reasonable for a private university. While obviously higher than New Jersey's state-supported schools, these charges are actually lower than New Jersey residents would pay to attend Penn State-University Park or the University of Vermont, as two examples.



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Students who would fall in the middle of the applicant pool at Rutgers-New Brunswick, Penn State-University Park or the University of Delaware, another popular destination for New Jersey's college-going population, might also qualify for merit scholarships as large as \$17,000/year. The largest awards, which require a 3.0 GPA to maintain, make Monmouth price competitive with in-state costs of state schools. Unlike many other colleges, Monmouth will carry a student who falls slightly below the minimum GPA for one semester, then decrease the award if the GPA does not return to a 3.0 or higher.

In addition, nearly 60 percent of Monmouth students qualified for need-based scholarships from either the State of New Jersey or the university. These awards averaged just over \$12,500 for freshmen who entered in 2016. Monmouth also awarded athletic scholarships that averaged approximately \$26,300 across the university's varsity spots.

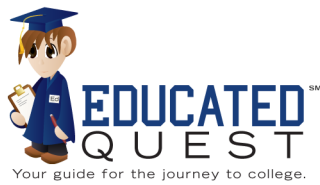
Three quarters of the Monmouth students who graduated in 2016 had to take out loans to pay for their education, including those who reduced their course loads for a brief time or received advanced degrees. The average indebtedness for borrowers was approximately \$29,500, which is \$2,500 above the maximum that they could have borrowed under the Federal Direct Student Loan program.

### Curriculum

[Monmouth offers 27 majors, although 12 also have unique concentrations.](#) Some of the signature and unique programs include: Art with a Concentration in Photography, Biology with a Concentration in Molecular Cell Physiology, Chemistry with a Concentration in Chemical Physics, Fine Arts with a Concentration in Animation, Marine and Environmental Biology and Policy and Music with a Concentration in Music Industry (the students even operate a record label!). Monmouth also offers the only undergraduate business program in New Jersey with a concentration in Real Estate.

Monmouth requires all students to complete [a First-Year Seminar as well as a set of General Education requirements.](#) These represent about a third of the 128 credits required to earn a degree. Approximately 30 percent of incoming freshmen enter undecided on a major. Working through the General Education requirements as well as those of the school within the university, and wisely applying AP credits earned in high school, it is quite possible for most students to double major unless they are interested in Education, Nursing or Software Engineering.

The [Education programs](#) treat their education curriculum as one major, but also require students to pursue a 30-credit subject area, aka an endorsement, essentially a second major. Endorsements in Mathematics and teaching Students with Disabilities are in the most demand. Education students also spend more time in the classroom doing



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classroom observations and student teaching than their peers in larger programs at other schools.

The university also offers [25 five-year Bachelors/Masters programs](#); students may apply to be considered for these programs when they apply from high school. It is common for Monmouth students to use the extra year pursue the masters for, especially in Education or Social Work, where the advanced degree is essential for professional advancement.

Monmouth students are not likely to have a class with more than 40 students, even at the introductory level. Just over 40 percent of all classes offered during 2015-16 had fewer than 20 students. Aside from scholarship awards and location, this may be one of the best reasons to choose this school. Those who might have doubts about their ability to succeed at a larger school such as Rutgers-New Brunswick or the University of Delaware could expect to receive more attention at Monmouth.

Monmouth students gave their faculty an average rating of 3.76 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). They held their faculty in similar regard as students at Montclair State (3.79), Rutgers-New Brunswick (3.74) and Seton Hall (3.74) and in higher regard than students at Fairfield (3.68), Rider (3.68), Rowan (3.72), Sacred Heart (3.7) and the University of Delaware (3.73).

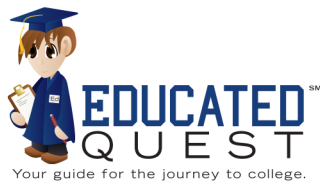
### **Community**

Monmouth is located only one mile from New Jersey beaches in the well-to-do community of West Long Branch. Access to shopping, the Shore, the Garden State Parkway or trains to New York City is quite easy, for those who have access to a car. The Jersey Shore is not only known for beaches; it is also home to renown musicians Jon Bon Jovi, Bruce Springsteen and Stevie Van Zant, among others.

But while the university provides free shuttle services to help students get around, none of the off-campus attractions are within easy walking distance from campus. In addition, Monmouth allows resident freshmen to have cars on a first-come, first-served basis. Only the first 150 freshmen who apply and are approved for a parking permit may bring their car to campus.

The campus is fairly easy to secure, thanks to its layout and walkways. Reported incidents of property crimes have been few, according to the university's [Clery Report](#). Like most other colleges, incidents of drug and alcohol related crimes in the residence halls are the most reported.

While Monmouth is a relatively new school—it did not become a four-year college until 1956, and has been a university for only 12 years—the campus dates back to 1905. The Guggenheim Library was the former summer residence for a very wealthy family and was penned by the same architects who designed the current main branch of the New



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York Public Library. Wilson Hall, the university's main administration building, was built on the site of Shadow Lawn, the estate of former President Woodrow Wilson while he campaigned for reelection in 1916. It was also the home of 'Oliver Warbucks' in the 1982 filming of *Annie*. The campus is relatively easy to navigate on foot; there are even bridges under heavily trafficked roads that connect the first-year residence halls to the rest of the campus. The only students who are likely to cross a busy street to go to classes would be going to the Lauren Woods Theatre.

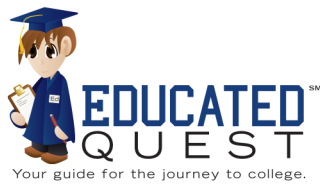
Monmouth recently redesigned the interiors of several academic buildings as well as the student center and dining facilities, including a replica New Jersey diner. Athletic facilities for football and basketball are quite impressive for a school of this size; both seat 4,100 fans. The university has also become the repository for Bruce Springsteen's archives, and hosted the preview for his Broadway show on campus. These upgrades have helped to encourage more students to be on campus during the weekends. Greek life attracts about a fifth of the student body, though none of the social fraternities or sororities own their own houses.

Monmouth has a relatively short athletic tradition, but has had its share of successes in varsity sports. Monmouth competes in 23 NCAA Division I (scholarship) varsity sports, including football. Within New Jersey, only Princeton and Rutgers-New Brunswick have a more visible presence in Division I sports. With the exception of football and women's bowling, Monmouth competes in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, against some very similar schools including Fairfield, Marist and Rider. In 2015-16, Monmouth's men's basketball team earned wins over UCLA, USC, Georgetown and Notre Dame.

The football team recently joined the Big South Conference as it's only member in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic states. Monmouth rivals within the conference include schools in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. But Monmouth also played five of its football games this season against more local rivals in the Patriot League (Bucknell, Holy Cross, Lafayette and Lehigh) and the Colonial Athletic Conference (SUNY-University at Albany), winning all but one. Six Monmouth alumni have played in the NFL, including retired Pro Bowl wide receiver Miles Austin.

### Comforts

Monmouth houses just over 40 percent of the undergraduate student body, including around 80 percent of the freshman class. First-year students are more likely to live in [traditional corridor-style \(several rooms sharing a bathroom\) halls](#). There are also [suite-style living options](#) as well as [quasi-traditional style corridor-style designs](#). The university also owns [three apartment complexes](#) and has some [university-affiliated options near campus as well](#). One is Pier Village, located by the beach in Long Branch.



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Monmouth students are more likely to move off-campus for their junior and/or senior year. According to the [university's listings](#), it is possible to share apartments or houses near campus for around \$600/person/month, including utilities. This will work well for students who have cars; the number of available apartments or housing within walking distance of campus will be limited.

### Connections

Monmouth students will typically graduate with more than one experiential opportunity, whether it is an internship or practicum opportunities required within a major. Career advising starts in the freshman year, initially through workshops as well as the First-Year seminar courses, tied to academic advising.

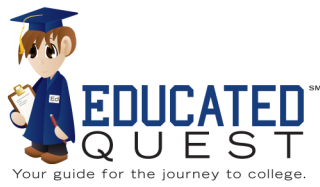
While employers are more likely to hire students who have completed sophomore or junior year courses as internships, first-year students are encouraged to attend and speak with employers at the university's Fall and Spring Career Fairs as well as its Internship Fair. The larger events attract around 130 employers. In addition to the job fairs (including an Educator's Fair for teacher candidates) there are more than 90 career-related events on campus each year for students and alumni. About a fifth of the customers served by the career development center are alumni.

While some majors at Monmouth require an internship, the position is more likely to be local during the school year or it waits until the summer. The commute to New York is too expensive (\$32.50 round trip) and too long (nearly two hours) to make internships practical during the school year.

Among the nearly 32,000 Monmouth alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](#), nearly 22,000 are based in or around New York City, including Central New Jersey. Over 2,500 are based in or around Philadelphia while more than 800 live and work around the Baltimore/Washington Corridor. While alumni regularly participate in on-campus career-related events, and hire Monmouth students, the university is still very much a regional school.

### Conclusions

Monmouth is a responsive and reasonably priced educational opportunity for a good to excellent student, especially one who is attracted to one of the university's many signature academic programs. It also has very good career connections into New York City as well as one of the more prosperous areas of New Jersey. The investments in the athletic program have also helped to raise the university's profile within the New York area. There are similar private schools around New York City, including the New Jersey and Connecticut suburbs. Monmouth is one of the better buys among them.



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**Report Card: Monmouth University**

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: B/B
- Freshman Retention: B
- Costs: B+
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B+
- Connections: B+ (New York/New Jersey)/C (Elsewhere)