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The College of New Jersey

With over 6,000 full-time undergraduates, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is the primary public small school alternative to Rutgers-New Brunswick among New Jersey's best and brightest college-bound students. Once considered a commuter school, it now houses 90 percent of its freshmen as well as nearly 60 percent of all undergraduates on campus. Undergraduates make up more than 90 percent of TCNJ's student body and they are always taught by the faculty.

In 2016, the College offered admission to just under half (48 percent) of its applicants. A quarter of the class of just over 1,400 students was admitted through Early Decision. TCNJ also wait listed nearly a fifth (17 percent) of the pool, later offering spots to nearly 300 students after the May 1st deposit date. The average SAT is around 1270, though engineering applicants usually score over 1300 while applicants to the Seven-Year BS/MD program will have likely scored over 1500. However, test scores alone will not rule a very good student who can make a persuasive case for admission outside of the most competitive majors. Less than half of TCNJ's Class of 2020 had SAT Critical Reading scores of 600 or higher; nearly 40 percent scored below 600 on the Math.

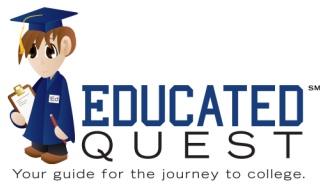
If TCNJ is the school that you want, and you live in New Jersey, apply early to get the most consideration. The nursing and health sciences programs require direct application to the major as well as a strong recommendation to check off a second major when applying. Those who want a seat in the 7-Year Medical/Optomety Program, must apply by December 1st. The same is true for students who are interested in the engineering and health science programs as well as art, music and interactive multimedia. TCNJ is test-optional for students who are interested in one of those three creative fields; the College admissions team will consider talent combined with the student's academic record.

TCNJ has retained at least 94 percent of its freshmen classes for each of the past ten years, excellent for any school of any size. Seventy-two percent of the class that entered in 2010 graduated within four years, also excellent.

TCNJ is cross-shopped not only against larger public universities such as Rutgers-New Brunswick, Penn State-University Park and the University of Delaware, but also mid-sized schools such as Fordham, Lehigh and Villanova, and even Ivies. The yield rate, the percentage of admitted students who decided to come, was a fairly low 25 percent. That rate is not so much a reflection of the quality of a TCNJ education as it is the variety of schools that applicants are considering.

Costs

Among public colleges TCNJ has a very high sticker price for state residents and a very reasonable one for non-residents. New Jersey residents were charged approximately \$16,100, in tuition and fees, the highest of any public institution in the Garden State. Non-resident tuition and fees start at approximately \$27,600. TCNJ charges just over



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\$13,000 for room and board, about average for any college. TCNJ requests both the FAFSA and the CSS Profile of all families requesting financial aid.

The high sticker price, combined with a low endowment for a school of this size (around \$24 million according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers) means that TCNJ does not meet the full financial need for most of its students. According to the College's 2016-17 Common Data Set, financial aid covered, on average, 42 percent of the need for the freshman class and 40 percent of the entire undergraduate student body. The College recently concluded a capital campaign that raised more money for scholarships.

TCNJ offers [Out-of-State Merit Scholarships](#), unusual considering out-of-state students make up only six percent of the undergraduate student body. There are also scholarship opportunities for community service, including the [Bonner Community Scholars](#) who receive a stipend to develop and lead service projects on the campus or in the surrounding community.

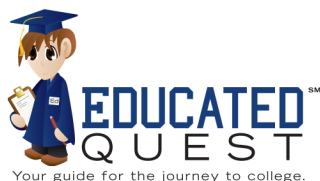
Students who graduated in 2016 owed, on average, around \$35,700. The maximum that they could have borrowed through the Federal Direct Student Loan program over four years was \$27,000. However, nearly 40 percent of the class graduated with no debt at all. This is interesting considering that the school offers no athletic scholarships and less than ten percent of the undergraduate student body receive merit-based scholarships. Combined with the aid numbers, the debt numbers indicate that TCNJ attracts a good number of full-pay students who, more likely than not, come from New Jersey.

TCNJ frequently receives “best buy” or “best value” rankings in the media. If one compares TCNJ to selective private schools, this is understandable. However, a better-endowed private school can make an exceptionally competitive offer to an out-of-state admit who ranks high in TCNJ's applicant pool. Unless TCNJ's financial aid or merit aid budget increases dramatically, the student body is likely to continue to be dominated by New Jersey residents.

Curriculum

With the exception of engineering students, TCNJ operates like a liberal arts college. All students take a four-course load—engineers take five—and must fulfill [Liberal Learning Requirements](#). These are fairly flexible and allow students outside of Engineering or Nursing to consider minors or second majors.

TCNJ was founded as a teacher's college. It is fair to say that given the admissions requirements that TCNJ has many students who enter well prepared for the teacher education programs. Education students will have four placements in classrooms during their sophomore and junior years before they do their student teaching during the last semester of their senior year. TCNJ graduates have achieved a 100 percent pass rate on the PRAXIS teacher exam. The College also offers a unique Bachelors/Master of Arts in Teaching program in Urban Teacher Education to train students to work in city schools at home as well as in other countries. The College also conducts a three-day teacher recruitment fair to help its graduates find positions after graduation.



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TCNJ is one of the smaller public colleges to maintain an internationally accredited business school as well as an internationally accredited engineering school. The College also offers a unique major in Management Engineering that combines coursework from the two. Within the business program Finance and Accounting are the most popular majors. Graduates of these majors are frequently recruited by firms such as Deloitte, JP Morgan Chase and Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, among other firms. There is also a new Engineering Science program with an option in Policy and Society for students who interested in developing technical solutions to social policy and public policy issues.

While smaller classes and the lack of graduate engineering degree programs allow for more personal instruction, there are fewer engineers to be recruited at TCNJ than there would be at schools such as Lehigh, Stevens or Villanova. In addition, while TCNJ has a more personalized program, the programs at smaller schools such as Lafayette or Union are designed to allow students to consider a second major or student abroad while still graduating in four years. But the engineering curriculum at TCNJ, by comparison, mirrors that of a larger school.

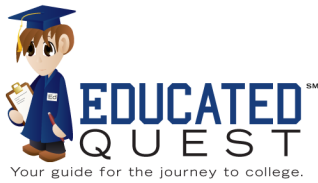
Only *two* undergraduate courses offered by TCNJ in 2015-16 had more than 50 students, according to the College's most recent Common Data Set. However, less than half (47 percent) had fewer than 20 students while half had between 20 and 39. Introductory courses at TCNJ might be smaller than they would be at Rutgers or a similarly large school. However, the courses at the higher level, especially in the more popular majors, might not necessarily be smaller.

TCNJ students gave their faculty a rating of 3.7 (out of a possible 5.0) on RateMyProfessors.com. That was slightly lower than the rating that students at Rutgers-New Brunswick (3.74) and the University of Delaware (3.73) gave their faculty, but about the same rating that Penn State University Park students gave theirs (3.71). TCNJ students had slightly higher regard for their faculty than students at Lehigh (3.68), but held them in lesser regard than students at Villanova (3.84).

Community

TCNJ is located in Ewing, a commuter suburb of New York and Philadelphia that is situated between Princeton, one of the more well-to-do communities in the US, and Trenton, one of the most impoverished. There is little for students to do in the area immediately around campus, unless they live in houses nearby. The College, through a partnership with a private developer and the help of state government, constructed Campus Town, a mixed-use project with the college's fitness center and bookstore, and a mix of restaurants, including Panera Bread. The shopping and dining options are open to the community as well as the students.

Aside from Campus Town, TCNJ looks older than it really is. The College came to its current location in 1935. Yet its first building, the Colonial-style Green Hall, looks as if it could have been built about a century before. With few exceptions, such as the recently renovated Brower Student Center and the newly opened STEM Building for Engineering and Computer Science, the academic buildings as well as several residence halls follow the same colonial design, although many were not built until after 2000. Parking is well



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laid out at the corners and entrance to campus. Students who live on campus can usually park close to where they live. The campus layout, with a main circular road, is very easy for campus police to patrol.

Liquor law violations were the most reported crime on the College's most recent [Clery Report](#). There were more than 270 reported for disciplinary referrals each year from 2014 through 2016. There have also been at least 73 reported arrests for liquor law violations each of these three years. Drug-related disciplinary referrals have trended downward over those three years, 115 in 2014 to 63 in 2016. But reported incidents of Burglary trended up from 1 in 2014 to 21 in 2016. However, the College also opened new residence halls and academic buildings on campus as well as Campus Town, offering burglars more opportunities. There were also nine reported incidents of Dating Violence and four reported incidents of Stalking

About a quarter of TCNJ students are involved in college-recognized Greek organizations (fraternities or sororities), though they have no designated housing on campus. Parties take place in student apartments or off-campus houses, both more crowded than fraternity or sorority houses would be on other campuses, and guests are charged to attend. There are more than 150 clubs and organizations on campus. But Greek life at TCNJ is more prominent than it is at Rutgers and most other state schools in New Jersey.

While Campus Town offers enough places to eat, it really helps to have a car to get to opportunities for entertainment and shopping. Freshmen are not allowed to have cars on campus, except for two-week periods. All other resident students may have cars; the parking permit costs \$280. The College also provides a shuttle bus service on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to downtown Princeton, nearby shopping malls and train service to New York City. But these services are far more limited than they are in a city or a larger college town.

TCNJ's varsity athletic teams are the top combined first- and second-place finishers of all 424 Division III schools in the nation over more than 25 years, although the College is not regarded as a "spirit and sports" school. The College is most successful in women's lacrosse and field hockey as well as wrestling and track and field. TCNJ has also been the host site for New Jersey's Special Olympics, the Special Olympics USA Games, and NCAA outdoor sports championships.

Comforts

Virtually all TCNJ freshmen (90 percent) live on campus. TCNJ assigns most of the first-year students to two of the taller, and older, halls on campus: Travers and Wolfe. Honors students are assigned to a smaller hall, Norsworthy, sharing the hall with upper-class students. Travers and Wolfe are not fancy though residents have the opportunity to paint murals on their floors. The College plans to renovate both of the freshman halls, starting in 2019.

Having virtually all of the freshmen in two halls—they are connected by a common first-floor lounge—helps to bond the class. But it also gives them fewer interactions with upper-class students than they might have at other schools. Given the liquor law



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violations previously discussed, the rules against cars for first-year students and the limited upper-class presence in these halls, the College has to offer good student programming to keep its first-year students engaged. Or it has to expect that these students will want to leave campus when they can. But there are colleges in New Jersey, including Rutgers-New Brunswick, that have better access to bus and rail transit.

Overall, TCNJ can house around 60 percent of the student body in a mix of housing options, including dedicated residence halls, apartments, townhouses, even some off-campus houses nearby. The more independent living options are reserved for juniors and seniors. Sophomores have a choice between corridor (several rooms sharing common lounges and bathrooms) and suite-style (small number of rooms with a common living area and bathroom) options in six residence halls. TCNJ has a two-year residency requirement; any sophomore who requests housing will have a place to live. Assignments are made by lottery. Students who request to live as a group could be placed in adjacent rooms or a suite depending on their success in the lottery.

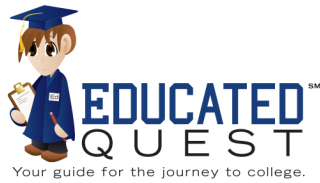
It is also possible for juniors and seniors to rent housing off campus for around \$600 per person per month, including utilities. This is a good option for students who want to take classes during the summer while working nearby or doing research with faculty on campus. But it might not be the best one for seniors who want to leave the area after they graduate.

Connections

Of the nearly 38,000 TCNJ alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com), about 6,500 work in Education. Nearly 22,000 are based in or around New York City, more than 7,100 in and around Philadelphia and just under 700 in or near Washington DC. The alumni base gets really thin after that. But these are three of the most competitive job markets in the US. The demographics show that TCNJ students and alumni are more than willing to knock on doors to find opportunity.

However, the average alumni giving rate for the past two years is just below 7 percent, according to the 2018 *U.S. News Best Colleges* guide, very low for a school with TCNJ's academic reputation. By comparison, the rate for Rutgers-New Brunswick and the University of Delaware are slightly better (both eight percent), and those schools have a much larger alumni base. TCNJ competes in a marketplace against not only larger public schools, but also mid-sized private universities where alumni are quite loyal. For example, TCNJ has about the same number of undergraduates as Elon University, a popular private college destination for New Jersey freshmen that does not have a high-profile athletic program. Elon's average annual alumni giving rate is currently 22 percent, thrice TCNJ's.

TCNJ is quite transparent about [reporting "year out" outcomes](#), even offering visitors the opportunity to compare them over several years. Students were enthusiastic enough about the College's career services to place them #12 on the Princeton Review's list of Best Career Services for 2016. TCNJ hosts Fall and Spring Career Fairs as well as Networking Events. The College even has its own Internship Program, placing students in positions in 22 different departments on campus. Over half of TCNJ students graduate



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with at least two internship experiences. Nearly three quarters of 2016 graduates who found full-time employment within one year after graduation were working in New Jersey.

Conclusions

TCNJ is a very attractive option for New Jersey resident students who want a small school setting at a public college price. Bright students from other states might want to take notice, too. The College administration upgraded academic facilities and housing, spearheaded the construction of Campus Town and completed a major renovation to the student center to better engage the student body. All of this took time, and there is still more work to do, including a much-needed renovation to the two large freshman residence halls.

TCNJ's reputation as an "academically oriented school" has been on the rise for more than two decades. Graduates from the middle Nineties are now starting to enter peak earning years. Hopefully their satisfaction will result in more financial resources to help current and future students. Those who are choose TCNJ, are buying into a college's most recent past as well as its future.

Report Card: The College of New Jersey

Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: A

Freshman Retention: A

Costs: B

Comforts: A

Community: B+

Curriculum: A

Connections: A (New Jersey)/B+ (New York)/C (Elsewhere)