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University of the Sciences, Philadelphia PA

The University of the Sciences (USciences) was first founded as the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1821 as the first pharmacy school in the United States.

Today USciences has approximately 2,100 full-time undergraduate students enrolled in three bachelors degree-granting schools: the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, Samson College of Health Sciences, Misher College of Arts and Sciences. USciences' niche is its focus on the health sciences and health professions, although it also offers minors in business, humanities and social sciences.

USciences accepted 60 percent of the students who applied to join the first-year class in 2016. However, admissions to some programs, including accelerated paths to the Doctor of Physical Therapy, Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Occupational Therapy and into schools of dentistry, medicine and osteopathy, will be more selective than the university as a whole.

The average SAT scores were 1210 (out of 1600) with the middle 50 percent of the class scoring between 1070 and 1260; for the ACT it was between 23 and 28. While most of the degree programs are in high-demand fields or "hard" sciences, the yield rate, the percentage of accepted students who decided to deposit, was only 14 percent, an indicator that USciences was not the first-choice school for most applicants.

Given USciences' location near Drexel and Penn, the school is cross-shopped against many colleges of varied sizes, mainly throughout Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. For example, there are three other pharmacy schools within Philadelphia alone (Penn, Temple and Thomas Jefferson) while Rutgers-New Brunswick is less than 90 minutes away. There are also small schools within Pennsylvania that offer similar degrees. Misericordia University, located in the Scranton-Wilkes Barre metro area, is one examples of small private schools that are well invested in the health professions.

USciences practices "rolling admissions." The university can render a decision within one week after receiving all materials (application, grades, test scores, recommendation letters). However, it also insists on a minimum high school GPA of 3.0, accepting AP scores of 4 or 5 towards degree credits. While there are enrollment limits on individual degree programs, which are met by the traditional May 1st deposit date, the university will accept applications until August 15th.

USciences retained 85 percent of the first-year students who entered in 2015, quite good considering the rigor of the degree programs. Sixty-three percent of the class that entered in 2010 graduated within four years. Seventy percent finished within six, likely including students who were pursuing a bachelors degree, then an advanced degree.



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This, too, is quite good considering the rigor of the programs as well as the limited number of majors.

Costs

USciences has decided to reset its tuition and fees to \$25,000 for the first-year class that will enter in the Fall of 2018, a drop of \$14,000 from the charges for this year. Tuition and fees for the accelerated, 6-year doctoral programs in pharmacy, physical therapy, or occupational therapy will be lowered, too. The reset will make USciences tuition and fees less expensive than most large and mid-sized private universities that grant similar degrees, and lower than the non-resident charges for many state schools. Room and board charges are approximately \$15,700.

The reset will likely lead to changes in the university's financial aid policies and practices. The average need-based scholarship for students who entered in 2015-16 was just over \$8,300, though in that year the school met, on average, less than 25 percent of need. That year, the average merit-based award was approximately \$15,300, slightly more than the current tuition and fees and the reset price. The university also competes in NCAA Division II varsity scholarships athletics. Under the reset, athletes are likely to fare the same as are the highest achievers in a first-year class though the scholarships are likely to be smaller. Most other students will pay less; those who qualify for the Federal Pell Grant and Pennsylvania's state scholarship programs will fare better.

Students who graduated in 2016 who needed to take out student loans borrowed, on average, approximately \$24,200, quite reasonable for a private university, especially in the health fields where even public schools charge a premium for the later years of a degree program. Less than a fifth had to borrow from private sources.

Curriculum

Many of USciences' [degree programs](#) are subject to professional accreditation standards but all students must also complete a set of [general education requirements](#) that are quite similar to a liberal arts college. While the math and natural science requirements will also fulfill major requirements, all students must also take courses in Communication, Social Sciences and the Humanities (though Spanish is the only foreign language). They must also take two Multi-Disciplinary Inquiry courses (much like Freshman Seminars at other colleges) and one unit of Physical Education. Students also have [the option to take up to nine credits in the visual and performing arts](#), including private voice lessons, at the University of the Arts.

UScience students will have some large classes, especially in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Psychology, all required in several majors. Just over 12 percent of all



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classes taught in 2015-16 had more than 50 students. Sixty-one percent had fewer than 20.

USciences is unique in offering more than one route towards degrees in the health fields. In addition to [“early assurance” programs](#), the university also has pathways to enable students to transfer into programs such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy or Pharmacy. It is common for other colleges to admit only first-year students into similar pathways.

USciences students gave their faculty a rating of 3.55 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). That’s a lower rating than students at Misericordia (3.76), Temple (3.7) and Thomas Jefferson University (3.83) gave their faculty through about the same as Drexel students gave theirs (3.59).

Community

The university campus is located in a neighborhood called Spruce Hill, not far from Drexel or Penn. While much of the campus is a laboratory/office park setting, it also surrounds Clark Park, a well-maintained public park. The campus is easily accessible to Center City Philadelphia; it has its own stop off an above-ground trolley line. UScience students may also ride the free bus connecting the campus to Drexel and Penn after 6:00 PM. Given the easy access to mass transit it is unnecessary to have a car.

The university’s [Clery Report](#) showed virtually no reported incidents of crime on campus from 2014 through 2016. However, the campus is also patrolled by Philadelphia police because Woodland Avenue, the major street and the trolley route, cuts through the center.

There’s no shortage of entertainment options for college students in Philadelphia. This, combined with the demands of the academic programs, produces a less social setting than the larger universities that offer more academic options. This might be one school where students might benefit from joining a social fraternity or sorority, at least to form study groups and find a circle of friends to bond and explore Philadelphia. [Currently these organizations engage a fifth of the undergraduate student body.](#) There are also 90clubs and organizations on campus, about the same as a more traditional liberal arts college with around the same number of students. This is surprising given the academic demands on virtually every student.

Comforts

USciences requires first and second-year students to live on campus, unless they already live in or near Philadelphia. Students should plan on spending anywhere from [\\$750/person/month to over \\$1,000/person/month](#) to live near campus in the Spruce Hill neighborhood.



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Connections

USciences is very [outcomes driven](#), to the point where the outcomes data can be accessed directly from the university's home page. Among the outcomes publicized by the school:

- 96% of USciences students are employed or accepted for an advanced degree within six months of graduation.
- The US. Department of Education's College Scorecard ranks USciences No. 7 in the US for highest earnings with a median annual income of \$95,800 a decade after students enrolled, when compared with graduates from four-year US colleges and universities.
- 94 percent acceptance rate to *accredited US medical schools*.

It's quite easy to tout statistics like these when the university offers so many pre-professional programs where a student might be gainfully employed within three months after completing a six-year Bachelors/Masters program. [In addition to career-related programs for students, the university also runs an alumni career fair.](#)

Among alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), nearly 5,100 are based in or around Philadelphia; more than 1,700 are in or around New York City. These are two of the largest and most lucrative job markets for health care professionals in the world.

Conclusions

USciences is a great school for someone who is strongly motivated towards a career in the health professions and wants the opportunity to build a resume within one of the largest health care communities in the United States. The tuition and fee reset also makes the university a great value for the money.

USciences might be a better school for fields such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy or Pharmacy than for a pre-professional student in other health-related fields. The university can manage the outcomes for these programs from the beginning of the first year of undergraduate study through the last year of the professional phase of their education and aid the students in successfully finding work during and after their education. In addition, students who are interested in dentistry, medicine or osteopathy have a more limited selection of academic programs than they would have at even a small liberal arts college. It is becoming more and more common for pre-medical, pre-dental and pre-osteopathy students to major in subjects such as Economics, English or History as well as Computer Science or an Engineering discipline.



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USciences is very much about the academics, and less about the “creature comforts” and social scene found on campus at more traditional colleges and universities. The City of Philadelphia is the social campus; the race to the finish line for the degree becomes the bond by which students form their friendships.

Report Card: University of the Sciences

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: B+/B+
- Freshman Retention: B+
- Costs: A
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B
- Connections: A