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Gettysburg College

There are older American colleges than Gettysburg but few are so entwined with American history. Founded in 1832 as Pennsylvania College, a Lutheran-affiliated institution, Gettysburg is most noted for its ties to former Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Dwight David Eisenhower.

Four months after Confederate soldiers were driven away, alumnus David Wills, class of 1851, prevailed upon President Abraham Lincoln to deliver what later became known as the Gettysburg Address as well as the Emancipation Proclamation. Nearly a century later, former President Dwight Eisenhower retired to Gettysburg and became a Trustee of the College. He wrote his memoirs in what is now Gettysburg's admissions building, aptly named Eisenhower House. Today his granddaughter, Susan, maintains an influential role in the Eisenhower Institute, the College's political think tank based on campus and in Washington DC.

Gettysburg College has approximately 2,600 students and has become one of the more desired liberal arts colleges in the country. Over 80 percent of a freshman class graduates within four years, better than most US colleges and universities. Freshman retention has consistently exceeded 90 percent. Approximately 1 in 7 Gettysburg students is involved with the Sundermen Conservatory, which merged with the College in 2005.

In 2017 there were more than 6,500 applicants for approximately 700 seats in the current freshman class, and 40 percent, were accepted. While no GPA information is available, the average SAT is just under 1300; the average ACT Composite was a 28. The College did not need to go to a wait list to fill the current freshman class. Just under 40 percent of the class was admitted through Early Decision. Gettysburg, while test-optional—a fifth of the most recent entering class did not submit test scores—requires the SAT or ACT of applicants who want to be considered for the larger merit-based awards, the [Abraham Lincoln Scholarship or the Presidential Scholarship](#). Admissions are “need-blind” for approximately 80 percent of the class, “need-aware” for the rest.

Students who consider Gettysburg also look at other liberal arts colleges including Bucknell, Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall and Lafayette in Pennsylvania. Students who are seeking the conservatory experience also consider Lawrence University (WI), Oberlin College (OH), Ithaca College (NY) as well as the Peabody Institute affiliated with Johns Hopkins University.

Costs

Gettysburg has a high sticker price of approximately \$65,000 for tuition and fees, room and board. Yet it has been able to meet close to the full financial need for nearly 90 percent of the student body who had demonstrated need. [The College also offers merit awards ranging from \\$10,000 to \\$25,000 renewable each year.](#) While these are offered to only ten percent of an entering freshman class, [the GPA standards for renewal are quite reasonable.](#)



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Nearly 40 percent of the students who graduated in 2016 had no student loan debt. However, the average indebtedness of 2016 graduates who took out loans was over \$31,000, over \$4,000 more than a student is allowed to borrow through the Federal Direct Student Loan program.

Curriculum

The Gettysburg curriculum has [general education requirements](#) around four goals: Multiple Inquiries, Integrative Thinking, Effective Communication and Informed Citizenship. All students take a four-course load and may work around these goals to choose multiple majors or minors. The College offers four Bachelor's degree options, depending on the chosen major: Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education. Outside of the music programs, some of the majors offer the choice of a BA or a BS.

Taken in total the liberal arts requirements at Gettysburg appear more demanding than at similar schools. However, it is quite possible to use the requirements to earn a degree with a double major or multiple minors if a student plans well. This starts with the careful choice of a First-Year Seminar, since the seminar instructor will be the student's academic advisor until s/he chooses a major. The Seminar is also used as a basis to assign housing to first-year students.

The most popular majors at Gettysburg are: Organization & Management Studies, Political Science, History, English, Health Sciences, Psychology, Economics, Environmental Studies, and Biology. The College has a large selection of foreign language options for a small school: ancient Greek, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish and offers the option to learn other languages through study abroad. The College also offers degree programs students are not likely to find at other liberal arts schools, including majors in Judaic Studies and Mathematical Economics (which attracts investment banks and management consulting firms to add Gettysburg to their target schools). And, given the community's importance to American history, the College offers a degree in Civil War Studies.

Gettysburg also supports some of its undergraduate programs through on-campus institutes that engage students in research and other projects. These include, but are not limited to:

The [Center for Public Service](#) has study abroad programs that complement the college's major in Globalization Studies. Students may apply to this major after completing introductory courses in Macroeconomics, International Relations, Cultural Anthropology and Globalization. Students then choose a region of specialization through academic courses as well as language study and study abroad. They may also attend conferences and receive funding for travel, even for passports. Unlike other similar colleges, Gettysburg does not operate a "campus" outside of the United State, preferring to review and vet programs offered by outside providers.

The [Eisenhower Institute](#) offers two undergraduate fellowships. One is organized around a theme, this year's being transportation policy; the other, the Fielding Fellowship is a



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deep immersion into foreign policy. While the institute's programming and events are focused around politics and public policy, the fellowships are open to any major. Fellows represent the institute at public events, serve as student advisors and attend programming on campus as well as in Washington DC. The Institute invites speakers—elected, appointed, media and academic—of multiple viewpoints to campus. Neither the College nor the Eisenhower Institute are committed to a specific philosophy of governing; the approach is non-partisan and more encouraging of inquiry and self discovery.

The [Garthwait Leadership Center](#) offers a semester-long leadership course, among other programs focused around civil rights as well as the opportunity for students to become mentors to advise student organizations on campus. This Center has grown to the point where over 1,500 students, considerably more than half of the student body, has participated in at least one leadership program on campus.

You are not likely to see large classes at Gettysburg. More than two-thirds of all courses at the College had fewer than 20 students; virtually none had more than 40. Gettysburg students gave their faculty a rating of 3.68 (out of 5) on RateMyProfessors.com. But students at Bucknell (3.84), Dickinson (3.8), Franklin & Marshall (3.82) and Lafayette (3.82) held their faculty in higher regard.

Community

Gettysburg's 200-acre campus has been redeveloped and developed since the college's founding. The mix of architecture ranging from Pennsylvania Hall, the original college building erected during the 1830s to the 21st century-designed science center and recreation center could be considered eclectic. The campus has several landmarks, and that they are easier to find. It is extremely difficult to get lost on the clean, well-manicured campus which can be walked end to end in ten to fifteen minutes. The college has no "fraternity row." Fraternity houses are scattered on campus or across streets from campus buildings. Student parking is near the school's football stadium. Only freshmen are not allowed to have cars.

Like most colleges, the most reported crimes at Gettysburg are drug and alcohol-related according to the College's most recent [Clery Report](#). While arrests are few, there were more than 300 alcohol-related reported disciplinary referrals in 2016, fairly high for a school with over 2,000 students living on campus, but fewer than 70 reported drug-related disciplinary referrals. These numbers trended upward from 2014 and 2015. Reported alcohol related arrests did drop by half, however, from 52 in 2014 to 24 in 2016. But there were also 14 reported incidents of rape in 2014 and 2016.

Between Presidential visits (23 have come to town since Lincoln), an active historic preservation community and Civil War memories, it could be safely argued that Gettysburg is the most famous small town (just over 7,600 residents) in America. However, it is more of a tourist destination than college town. While the Majestic Theatre, owned by the College, shows current movies and there are enough dining options to support a small college student body, the campus is the more important social center.



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Gettysburg is a “spirit and sports” school. Eighty percent of the student participated in varsity sports in high school. The College accommodates interests in athletics not only through the varsity sports program, but also a large selection of club sports, including men’s and women’s rugby, men’s hockey and equestrian competition. There is no overlap between club and varsity sports; for example, there is no club lightweight football team. Gettysburg competes in the Centennial Conference in 24 sports (more than most larger schools) along with ten other schools including Bryn Mawr (women’s sports), Dickinson, Franklin and Marshall, Haverford, Johns Hopkins, McDaniel, Muhlenberg, Swarthmore, Ursinus and Washington (MD). The College reports that it averages 4,500 fans per game for football, among the highest attendance in NCAA Division III competition.

“Spirit and sports” also extends to fraternity and sorority life. [There are seven sororities on campus as well as nine fraternities.](#) While the College does not allow students to pledge until their sophomore year, and does not allow members to live in the houses until junior year, Greek social life attracts nearly a third of the men and almost 40 percent of the women.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike is within a half-hour of campus on Route 15 and the Maryland border, including the Mason-Dixon Line, the dividing line between North and South during the Civil War, is close by. Baltimore is just over an hour away by car and Washington DC. 90 minutes away. While the College attracts prominent speakers, it is too small to attract noted entertainers who would be attracted to larger performing arts venues in a larger city such as Harrisburg, Baltimore or Washington DC.

Comforts

More than 90 percent of Gettysburg students live on campus (including those who live in the fraternity houses). First-year students live in residence halls on one of two freshman quads. All rooms are equipped with a “micro-fridge,” a combination of a compact refrigerator and small microwave oven and are air conditioned. All residence halls are Wi-Fi enabled.

An online housing lottery system, based on class year and grade point average, determines housing options for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Living options for upper-class students--first-year students live in double rooms or a limited number of triples in traditional corridor-style halls include apartments, suites, singles, and College Houses based around academic or intellectual interests. The college also has an Honors House. The College acquired several motels across Carlisle Avenue, the road leading into downtown Gettysburg, and converted them into student housing. One convenience for students who live in these buildings: off-street parking is close by.

Walk around campus and you will regularly hear Gettysburg students praise the food at “Servo,” the College’s main dining hall. This is one of the few small colleges where you are likely to meet juniors and seniors who have a meal plan. Unlike most small colleges, Gettysburg does not outsource its dining services. The College treats all students to a Thanksgiving dinner at Servo before they go home to spend the holiday with their families and bakes fresh cookies every day (limit two per customer). The College does



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not force first-year students to take the most expensive meal plan, though it offers discounts in Dining Dollars at Ike's, Bullet Hole, the Dive, and the Commons to encourage everyone to purchase one of the four meal plans. The College offers a 7-meal plan to on-campus apartment residents as well as students who choose to live off-campus along with Unlimited, Servo-Plus and 12-meal options.

Connections

Gettysburg proudly advertises on its Web site that 98 percent of the graduates in the class of 2016 found employment or were attending graduate school within a year after they graduated. Approximately 80 percent of 2016 graduates completed an internship (paid or unpaid, for academic credit or non-credit) during their undergraduate program.

Gettysburg's [Center for Career Development](#) offers many programs, including on-campus interviewing, resume and interview reviews and workshops, job shadowing (one day on the job) and networking events expected of a selective liberal arts college. Students who need to work on campus beginning freshman year become acquainted with the Center early; it manages the student employment programs for the College. The Center also programs to help fund commuting budgets (up to \$200) for summer internships, three-day [Career Immersion Trips](#) and a [Career Clothing Bank](#) to lend students professional attire for interviews.

The Center also selects undergraduate students as [Siegfried Fellows](#). Named for a Gettysburg alumnus, the Siegfried Fellows program involves ten students annually in internships that have actual projects including developing intranets, writing code for computer programs, developing a risk assessment tracker, creating newsletter articles, and preparing client presentations. The Center will also assist students in finding hosts for externships, and in some cases will pay for housing. The College also runs a [Summer Entrepreneurial Fellowship](#) program to help students develop skills to launch their own small businesses.

Gettysburg has one of the oldest college alumni associations in the US with over 25,000 members. The college reports that alumni and parents have connected students to more than 8,000 jobs since 2010. Three-quarters of recent graduates have leveraged the college's alumni network to find their first full-time position.

Gettysburg has produced notable alumni on both sides of the political spectrum including Carol Bellamy, the first Peace Corps volunteer to be named director of the organization and former Libertarian presidential candidate and Republican Congressman Ron Paul. The College has also produced a Nobel Laureate, J. Michael Bishop, who won the prize in Medicine for his work in cancer research as well as fashion and style expert, Carson Kressley, host of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Gettysburg's current president, Janet Morgan Riggs, is also an alumnus.

Among the nearly 18,000 Gettysburg alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](#), there are substantial (over 1,000) alumni communities in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Baltimore and Boston. However, the Midwest and West Coast networks are thin with fewer than 250 based in Los Angeles, Chicago or San Francisco.



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Conclusions

Gettysburg is one of the more proactive liberal arts colleges the country when it comes to supporting its students and alumni through their education and life after college. There are more opportunities for experiential learning, study abroad, leadership development research and independent study offered at Gettysburg than a student would ever have time to complete over four years.

But while Gettysburg is a great school for students who want to make connections in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic states and Washington DC, it will take time for the alumni base to broaden significantly beyond there. While the College has many strengths, this and the costs are its greatest weaknesses.

Report Card: Gettysburg College

- 4 Year/6 Year Graduation Rates: A/A
- Freshman Retention: A
- Costs: B
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: A
- Connections: A (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic states and Washington DC)/C (elsewhere)