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### Christopher Newport University

Located in Newport News, Virginia, not far from Colonial Williamsburg, Christopher Newport University came into being as a two-year branch of the College of William and Mary in 1960. While the College of William and Mary is the second oldest four-year college in the United States, Christopher Newport is one of the newest. It gained independence from William and Mary in 1977, and became a university in 1992.

Organized around four schools—College of Arts and Humanities, the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Social Sciences, and the Luter School of Business—[Christopher Newport grew from having just under 3,400 undergraduates in 1996 to just over 5,100 today.](#) During that time the school has transitioned from being a “commuter school” where less than a fifth of the student body lived on campus, to one that houses over 70 percent of its undergraduate population.

[Ten years ago, Christopher Newport lost a fifth of a freshman class.](#) However, 88 percent of the students who entered in 2016 returned for their sophomore year. [The graduation rates for the classes that entered in 2011, 2012 and 2013 have all been around 63 percent.](#) Among Virginia’s public colleges and universities, only the University of Virginia, The College of William and Mary and James Madison University have done better at graduating a freshman class.

Christopher Newport University separates itself from Virginia’s larger public colleges and universities by placing its primary emphasis on undergraduate education. The university grants only three masters degrees, and plans to add only one more, a Master of Accountancy, within the next two years. While applicants to Christopher Newport consider the University of Virginia, The College of William and Mary and James Madison University, George Mason University, Virginia Tech and the University of Mary Washington, some also consider the school versus the University of Richmond, a private liberal arts school.

Currently, the school attracts 90 percent of its undergraduate population from within Virginia. Eight percent come from other states, Maryland and New Jersey being popular sources for incoming freshmen. While the university has no plans to increase the number of undergraduate students, it has the flexibility to admit as much as 15 percent of a freshman class from outside Virginia.

Christopher Newport is not super-selective. Admissions are test optional for students who have a 3.5 GPA or higher in a rigorous college-prep program. The university received 7,000 applications for the class that entered this fall, offering admission to just over 5,000 (72 percent). Over 80 percent of the applicants who opted for Early Decision—just over a quarter of the freshman class of 1,200—were offered admission, and so were over 80 percent of the students who applied Early Action. The average high school



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GPA of entering students was a 3.75. The average SAT was a 1210 and the average ACT Composite Score was a 25. This profile is quite similar to the freshman class at James Madison University.

The university expects to attract 1,000 more applicants for the freshman class that will enter in the fall of 2018. Those who are seriously interested in Christopher Newport are advised to visit during their junior year, and apply Early Action.

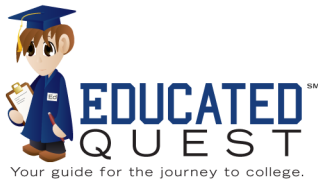
### Costs

Christopher Newport is a good value for the money, and it can be a much better value for students who are awarded merit scholarships. Tuition and fees start at approximately \$13,700 for Virginia residents, and approximately \$25,900 for non-residents. Room and board charges average just over \$11,500.

The university has [six merit scholarship programs](#) that are “stackable.” Incoming students who enter with the strongest academic records may receive as many awards as they qualify. Awards run as large as \$10,000 per year, although the Honors Program scholarships require a student to maintain a 3.3 GPA or higher. The university also combines its health care related scholarships with a [Medical Scholars Program](#) that offers access to clinical and internship opportunities as well as eligibility for early acceptance to joint programs at Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) and Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM).

According to the university, Honors Program students have an average high school GPA of 4.1 and 1340 SAT or 29 ACT. Presidential Leadership students average a 4.0 GPA as well as a 1310 SAT or 27 ACT. Virginians who qualify for these awards will pay far less for their education than they would at the College of William and Mary, the University of Virginia or Virginia Tech although Washington and Lee University and the University of Richmond are more generous than most private colleges when it comes to financial aid. Non-residents who receive the largest awards and hail from New Jersey or Pennsylvania will pay less to attend college at Christopher Newport than they would to attend the flagship state university in their home state.

While Christopher Newport offers generous merit awards, graduates who must borrow take on more debt than expected. While 40 percent of the graduates in the Class of 2016 had no debt upon receiving their degrees, the student loan debts for those who borrowed averaged just over \$30,400, according to the Project on Student Debt. The maximum that a dependent student may borrow over four years from the Federal Direct Student Loan Program is \$27,000. Fifteen percent of the class borrowed from a source other than the Federal Government. By comparison, borrowers in the Class of 2016 at James Madison University (\$28,400), Longwood University (\$28,100), Radford



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University (\$29,100), the University of Mary Washington (\$19,100) and Virginia Tech (\$28,900) owed, on average, less than Christopher Newport's graduates.

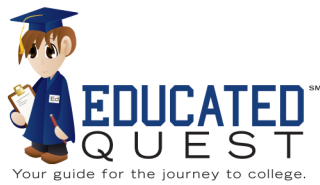
### Curriculum

While Christopher Newport is a mid-sized university, its approach to general education is more like a smaller liberal arts college. Unlike larger schools, including James Madison and Virginia Tech, Christopher Newport admits students to the university, not a major, and considers all incoming freshmen to be undeclared. While there are academic standards for admissions to majors, no major has an enrollment cap.

Third-semester competency in a foreign language is expected of all students, even those enrolled in business, the sciences and engineering. The university's [Liberal Learning Core Curriculum](#) comprises 40 credits, about ten more than similar-size or larger schools, because of the language requirement as well as a three-credit Economic Analysis and Modeling course requirement. [Honors students are only required to take 16 credits of the Core, but they must take cross-disciplinary honors courses as well as pursue an independent study during their education.](#) Currently, ten percent of a freshmen class enters as Honors Students. There is also a Leadership Studies minor in the [Presidential Leadership program](#), which attracts 20 percent of a class and has student obligations outside of the classroom.

The Core and the Honors Program probably helps students who are undecided on a major more than those who want to dive right into a program in business, education engineering. The Luter School of Business does not offer direct admission to freshmen. It requires interested student to take preparatory courses, some that might fulfill the Core requirements, during the freshman and sophomore year. [However, they must earn a 3.0 GPA or higher to be admitted to a business major as a junior.](#) But the university does make it easy for engineering and liberal arts majors to complete a business minor. The university graduates about 150 business minors each year.

Christopher Newport has only [21 academic departments](#), including Military Science for students who are in Army ROTC as well as Teacher Preparation for students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching. The Luter School of Business is its own department as is the Presidential Leadership program which is housed under [Leadership and American Studies](#). Interestingly, this department houses an [American Studies program in Constitutional Studies](#) that might be found in a [Political Science](#) major at other schools.



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There are not many large classes at Christopher Newport. Less than three percent of the classes taught last year had more than 50 students; no class had more than 99. Nearly 60 percent of all classes had fewer than 20 students. For comparison within Virginia, at the University of Mary Washington, which has over 1,000 fewer undergraduates than Christopher Newport, four percent of the classes taught during the 2016-17 academic year had over 50 students; five enrolled more than 100. Less than half (48 percent) had fewer than 20.

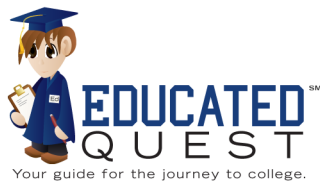
Christopher Newport students gave their faculty a rating of 3.73 (out of 5) on [RateMyProfessor.com](http://RateMyProfessor.com). By comparison, students at the University of Virginia (3.83), Virginia Tech (3.75), The College of William and Mary (3.80) and James Madison University (3.81), the University of Richmond (3.79) and Washington and Lee University (3.90) rated their faculty higher. Students at the University of Mary Washington, the most comparable public college in Virginia, rated their faculty slight lower (3.70).

### Community

Christopher Newport has one of the nicest campuses that you will find among any university of this size, public or private. Representing over \$1 billion in public investment as well as millions in private dollars, the campus has been literally built from the ground up in the 21st century to resemble a Colonial American college that could have opened its doors in the late 18th or the early 19th century. Standing in the main academic quad, the 'Great Lawn' at the center of campus, one gets the impression that Christopher Newport is a larger school than it really is. The only enclosed building of modern design is the Ferguson Center for the Arts, which maintains the Colonial American theme in its facade. The university also carries the colonial theme into the interiors of many public spaces for students and guests, even in the selection of the furniture.

This college was designed to be a campus-based community, versus a campus that anchors a college-oriented downtown, as you are likely to see near the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Spaces for dining, student activities and organizations and physical fitness are extremely user-friendly and well maintained. Greek academic and social organizations are relatively important, engaging approximately 1,400 of the university's 5,100 undergraduates. Just under a quarter of the men, and just over a third of the women are members.

The spectator sports facilities at Christopher Newport are among the best that you will find at a school that does not compete in scholarship varsity sports. The NCAA has often



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selected Christopher Newport to host regional rounds and national championships in basketball, cross country, lacrosse, field hockey, soccer, softball and volleyball. Christopher Newport competes in 22 varsity sports plus Cheerleading and the CNU Storm Dance Team. With the exception of sailing, the university competes against NCAA Division III (non-scholarship) rivals. In 2016-17, the Captains captured their third All-Sports Trophy in their conference (Capital Athletic), and swept all three awards (All-Sports, Mens, and Women's) for the first time. The Captains cheerleading squad captured their first Cheer Ltd Open College National Championship in 2014, and won their second national title three years later.

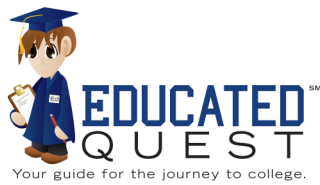
Like most other colleges, liquor law violations that required a campus judicial or disciplinary resolution were the most reported crimes at Christopher Newport, according to the university's [Clery Report](#). There were at least 340 each year from 2014 to 2016. The numbers of reported crimes that were sexually related, including dating violence and stalking rose from 21 in 2014, to 34 in 2015, then to 64 in 2016. Prospective students and their parents should ask if this was due to more incidents or more aggressive reporting and law enforcement that addressed these crimes more seriously. The vast majority of the reported incidents were reported to non-police personnel, most likely at the university.

Although Christopher Newport is a very attractive campus-based community, the surrounding areas in Newport News are not really a college town. Some of the attributes of a college town, including a multiplex movie theatre and waterfront events and recreation, are available close by, but you need to drive or ride a bus to get to them. All students may have cars, but a permit costs \$250/year. However, student parking on this campus is more conveniently located than it is at most other colleges this size.

The Newport News community is geared towards tourism, with [four important state museums](#), as well as the military, shipbuilding and aerospace industries. Newport News is also close to the Virginia, and some might say America's, Historic Triangle, pointed by Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown, with many significant buildings and other remembrances of the founding of the country, the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.

### Comforts

Christopher Newport requires all students who do not come from the immediate area to live in on-campus housing for at least three years. They live in some of the nicest [suite-style and apartment style housing options](#) that you will find on any college campus anywhere. Unlike most colleges, Christopher Newport will assign first-year students to



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suite-style housing with two double rooms sharing a common bathroom—that the students must maintain. The university also takes the unique step of assigning every incoming freshman to a [Living-Learning Community](#) with between 15 and 30 students who share common academic or personal interests.

The [three meal plans](#) that are available to students who live in the residence halls cost the same (just over \$4,300/year), but each plan offers varying numbers of meals in the dining hall and dining dollars that can be used in other on-campus eateries.

Although it is possible for rising seniors to receive permission to live off campus during their last year at Christopher Newport, it makes no sense to be obligated to a lease after they graduate. The exception might be students who will want to live in the Newport News area for an internship during the summer after the junior year.

### Connections

Christopher Newport is relatively transparent when it comes to reporting outcomes of its graduates. You can find a [five-year outcomes \(2011-2015\) report](#) on the Center for Career Planning Web pages as well as [a brochure for the Class of 2015](#). The Center for Career Planning was able to collect responses from no less than two-thirds of the graduating classed between 2011 and 2015, excellent for any career center at any size school.

Most recently, in 2015, 60 percent of the graduating class was employed full time while 25 percent were continuing their education in graduate and professional schools. The Center also reported that 127 employers employed at least two graduates each year from 2011 through 2015 with local firms such as Ferguson Industries, Newport News Shipbuilding, Riverside Health Systems, Northrup Grumman, and the university itself, employing several. Booz Allen Hamilton, an international consulting firm, has also hired graduates each year.

In 2015 the largest group of graduates (34 percent) moved on to employment in the Washington DC metro area, though the Hampton Roads area (Hampton, Newport News, and Norfolk) was close behind (33 percent). Only thirteen percent of the class was employed outside of either the Washington DC metro area or the state of Virginia. Outside of those places North Carolina was the most popular state of residence, followed by Florida.



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Among the nearly 21,000 Christopher Newport alumni registered in [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com), more than 15,000 are based in or around Norfolk, Washington DC, Richmond or Charlottesville. Outside of Virginia and the Washington DC area, the largest groups, just over 300 each, were based in or around New York City and Raleigh, North Carolina.

For those who chose to continue their education, Christopher Newport was the most popular destination by far, enrolling over 400 recent graduates of the classes who finished in 2011 through 2015. Other popular destinations were Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond), The College of William and Mary (Williamsburg), George Mason University (Alexandria) and Old Dominion University (Norfolk).

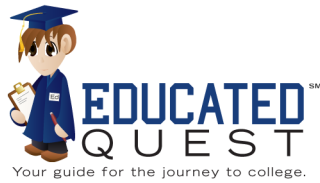
### Conclusions

Christopher Newport University tries to balance a rigorous liberal arts education with some of the pre-professional programs, specifically Business, Computer Science and Engineering that are offered by a much larger school. The academic demands of the Core and Honors curricula, especially in combination with the Presidential Leadership Program, are greater than most students face at other colleges, even more selective ones. But Christopher Newport may be better school for an undecided student than most others, especially larger universities. The curriculum is designed to encourage exploration, but also to use the first two years wisely before committing to a major.

Christopher Newport offers two other major pluses that virtually every college-bound high school student likes to see when they and their parents take a campus tour: an attractive and impeccably maintained campus and very livable residence halls. However, the campus culture is more supportive of Greek social life than some prospective students might like, given that Newport News is more of a tourist community than a college town.

The Christopher Newport administration and faculty have done an impressive job at recruiting, retaining and graduating progressively stronger freshman classes. It is quite possible that the university will become an addition to many personal and published 'Public Ivy' lists in the not too distant future, especially because of the focus on a rigorous undergraduate education. However, this is still a very regional school, where the vast majority of recent graduates will live and work in one of the larger metro areas in Virginia.

A bright student, especially a Virginian, who is admitted to Christopher Newport under the Honors Program *and* the Presidential Leadership Program—this is ten percent of an



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entering class—as well as a school such as the College of William and Mary has a difficult decision to make. Do you go to a school that has a long history behind it, or choose one where you can help add to the history ahead of it, and take more responsibility for carrying on its name?

### Report Card: Christopher Newport University

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: A/A
- Freshman Retention: B+
- Costs: B+
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: A
- Connections: A (Virginia and Washington DC)/C elsewhere