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Update: Binghamton University (NY)

One of the Original ‘Public Ivy’ runners-up, Binghamton University is the most selective flagship campus in the State University of New York (SUNY) system. It has a relatively small population—just over 13,700 full-time undergraduates—for a flagship state school, and it houses just over half of them on campus.

It is not easy to get into Binghamton. 40 percent of the students who applied to be part of the Class of 2021 were offered admission. The university waitlisted over 1,500 applicants, and more than 370 were later admitted. SAT scores will be important in admissions. Eighty-nine percent of the Class of 2020 scored over 600 on the Critical Reading section of the test; ninety-four percent broke 600 on the Math. Students interested in business, engineering or the sciences would be expected to score closer to 700 on the Math section of the test. The *minimum expected score* for the class that will enter this fall in Computer Science and Engineering was 670.

Students must indicate a school: Arts and Sciences, Engineering and Applied Science, Management, Nursing or Community and Public Affairs when they apply. But applicants to the most competitive programs are considered against each other. Binghamton uses the online Common Application as well as the Coalition Application and the SUNY Common Application. More than 80 percent of all applicants apply Early Action. If Binghamton is on your list, this is *strongly advised*, especially for consideration for merit awards as well as admissions to the more competitive programs in Business, Engineering and Nursing.

Binghamton retained 91 percent of the freshmen who entered in 2016, excellent for any college of any size. More impressive, over 70 percent of the classes that have entered in 2010 through 2012 have graduated within four years, also excellent. Among flagship state universities of similar size, only the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the University of Virginia have done better at graduating their students.

Binghamton is often shopped versus Cornell, Syracuse and the University of Rochester, among other schools. Syracuse is the most similar school in terms of student body size and academic options. Binghamton costs a lot less than Syracuse, and offers fewer small classes. But it also does better at graduating a class on time.

Costs

Binghamton is one of the best buys in American higher education. New York residents were assessed less than \$9,600 in tuition and fees this past year, about half of Penn State, Pitt and Temple charge Pennsylvania residents to enroll at their main campuses. Non-residents were charged around \$24,500 in tuition and fees, still a great value for the money.

Less than half of the students who graduated in 2017 had to take out Federal Direct Student Loans, although nine percent had to borrow from private lenders. Among graduates who borrowed the average student loan debt was \$27,000. The maximum they may borrow over four years from the Federal Direct Student Loan program is \$27,000.



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Curriculum

Binghamton offers [over 130 majors](#) as well [as more than 50 five-year Bachelor's/Masters programs](#). The university also offers Early Assurance Programs for early admission during the sophomore year into SUNY Upstate Medical University, Buffalo School of Medicine or Dental Medicine, and the SUNY College of Optometry as well as [an Early Acceptance program into the PharmD at the university's new pharmacy school](#).

Within the academic programs, there are some unique options including Leadership/Consulting and Quantitative Finance within the business school; Environmental Chemistry and Korean Studies within the Harpur College of Arts and Sciences and Materials Science and Engineering within the Watson School of Engineering and Applied Science. Also unusual for a state university: students in the liberal arts or business programs can choose a [General Engineering minor](#). The business and engineering programs are quite popular at Binghamton as are the majors in Biological Sciences, English and Psychology.

However, while the Business program is one of the better structured that you will find at a state school, with optional and *required* case competitions, among other real-world problem solving opportunities on campus, there is no business minor available. Prospective freshmen who have interests in business are advised to choose the School of Management when they apply, and enroll, if accepted. It is easier to remain in the business school and add a liberal arts major or minor(s), than it is to get into the business school later. In addition, the average SAT scores for entering students in the School of Management exceeded 1400 (out of a possible 1600), among the highest for any undergraduate business program in the country.

Binghamton's [general education requirements](#) are similar to other selective state universities, with three additional required subjects: Foreign Language (for all excluding Engineering), Aesthetics (Visual/Performing Arts) and Physical Education/Wellness. [Engineering students](#) have a four-course first-year sequence with two semesters of Engineering Communications, a first-semester Engineering Design course and a second-semester Engineering Analysis course. Students interested in engineering and the sciences may also be selected to participate in a [Freshman Research Immersion Program](#) that begins in the first semester. Across all majors nearly one-third of Binghamton seniors will graduate with a research experience.

Big classes will be the norm in most majors at Binghamton, even into the upper division classes. Thirteen percent of all courses taught in 2016-17 had more than 50 students; nearly half of these courses had more than 100. But nearly half had fewer than 20, a better percentage than you will find at that larger flagship state universities in the neighboring states. A high student-faculty ratio (19 to 1) suggests that some of the more popular majors will have larger classes in the upper-division courses. But unlike other selective public universities, Binghamton does not place enrollment caps on any major.

Binghamton students gave their faculty a rating of 3.8 (out of a possible 5) on [RateMyProfessors.com](#). They held their faculty in higher regard than students at



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Rochester (3.7) and Syracuse (3.68), but also in similar regard to their peers at Cornell (3.77).

Community

Being a relatively new university—it has been at its current location since 1964—Binghamton campus does not have an “Old Main” or similar landmark historic building. As one contrast, most colleges feature a tall clock tower as a fixture in marketing materials. Binghamton does too, only the tower, atop the Union, is one of the newer structures on campus. This tower is also used in some versions of university’s logo.

The Binghamton campus is settled into a hill. Residential buildings are situated above academic buildings in a tree-laden setting, through the academic buildings are not. The image for a student is much like walking from an apartment complex to a modern office park. [The major traffic circle, as seen from a map or aerial view, is shaped like the side profile of a human brain.](#) It can also be thought to resemble butterfly wings when you add the routes around the Hinman and Mountainview residential college communities. Curvy roads not only enhance the feeling of a hilltop campus; they also help to slow cars down. With the completion of new residential college buildings, the Engineering and Science Center, the \$27 million Events Center, the renovated University Union and several sleek glass classroom and academic office buildings, there is an ongoing effort to create a strong visual identity and energy sustainability—aka “a green campus.”

There is also a 182 acre nature preserve on campus, of which 20 acres are wetlands. The preserve has numerous educational and recreational uses, including hiking trails and a wooden footbridge. Its habitats include hemlock forest, oak woodlands, a beaver pond, streams, wetlands, shrub-land, meadows and lichen-covered sites. The preserve is also the only campus space that is not Wi-Fi enabled.

The university is transparent about crime reporting compared with similar schools. There are four years of [Clery Reports](#) posted on its Web site. Some good news from the [current report](#): reported drug related arrests trended down each year from 120 in 2014 to 56 two years later. Within the residence halls they dropped from 56 to 33. However, alcohol-related disciplinary referrals, the most reported crime on college campuses, trended up from 200 in 2014 to 236 in 2016. Another concern: reported incidents of rape in the residence halls rose from only one in 2014 to 12 two years later. However, this could be the result of more students coming forward about such incidents. In addition, [two murders took place on campus during the spring semester of 2018.](#) These are being investigated, but the incidents cannot be ignored in a college profile.

Binghamton competes in 21 varsity sports at the NCAA Division I (scholarship) level. All excluding men’s golf, men’s tennis and wrestling are in the America East Conference. Binghamton is the only SUNY flagship campus that does not play football at the varsity level. However, it competes in more scholarship sports than any one of its three sister campuses in Albany, Buffalo or Stony Brook (Long Island) as well as Syracuse, a more “spirit and sports” oriented school that plays in a higher-profile ‘Power 5’ (Atlantic Coast) football conference.



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The campus does not border on a pedestrian-focused college downtown. Instead it borders a commercial highway with numerous chain shopping centers and restaurants that is accessible only by bus or car. Campus security works full-time at the main gate; the buildings are not immediately nearby. The university offers free student-run bus transportation continually redesigns the bus routes around off-campus living patterns. A car is not really necessary at Binghamton, unless you have to do a large shopping spree at the supermarket. Freshmen are not allowed to have cars on campus.

The Binghamton area has very rough weather most of the year, including high rainfall and snow. Binghamton is located at the confluence of two rivers, the Susquehanna and the Chenango. Flooding is a common occurrence. While Binghamton is likened to “Rust Belt” communities that have lost industry and jobs, it also has many amenities one might find in a larger college community such as antique stores, a botanical garden, a performing arts center, a zoo and minor league hockey. The [downtown area](#) also has many eating and drinking places that you are likely to find in any other major college town. Binghamton is also a county seat, offering students many opportunities to work for city, county and state government as well as area non profits.

Comforts

Residence halls are organized into five residential colleges—College-in-the-Woods, Dickinson, Hinman, Mountainview and Newing, each of which has its own community and recreational facilities. All, excluding Mountainview, offer substance-free floors. Dickinson hosts special interest housing, aka “pods,” in computers, robotics and engineering as well as the visual and performing arts. Other residential colleges offer special interest pods in economics, fitness, musical arts and pride and community. In the June prior to coming to campus, freshmen may be assigned to live in any residential college, excluding Mountainview.

The residential college setting promotes leadership and responsibility. Each college has its own student government which, in turn, is represented to the campus government. With faculty involvement, a residential college is more than a dorm club; it becomes an academic setting as well as a social one, and the residents have a say in school policy. Students receive not only tutoring; they can take classes in their college, too. After freshman year, students may change residential colleges; their assignment is partly based on the number of credits that the roommates or suite mates have accumulated. All residence halls are Wi-fi enabled.

The university owns three, four, six and eight-person on-campus apartments that offer spectacular hilltop views. However, these units are available to graduate students as well as upperclassmen. The rental market off campus is less expensive that it is for university-owned housing. It's very easy to find housing options online through a [Housing Registry](#) operated by the university. Rents can be as low as \$400/person/month plus utilities, a bargain in a university town.

[Greek life](#) attracts around 1,800 undergraduates. There are 51 recognized fraternities and sororities, more than you might expect to find at a selective school of this size. The university allows second-semester freshmen to pledge after they have earned a



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minimum of 12 credits with no less than a 2.5 GPA. The university has also reported that there may be [five unrecognized fraternities and two unrecognized sororities](#) operating near campus.

Connections

If you're a New York who wants to be an accountant, and you can get into Binghamton, go. The university is [the largest supplier of talent](#) to Price Waterhouse Coopers New York office among any school in New York State. Students in other majors should fare pretty well, too. While Binghamton is relatively small for a flagship state university, it has two career development offices, one for the [business school](#), the other for all other majors. Over 12,000 jobs were posted for Binghamton students and alumni during the past academic year as well as more than 5,000 internships.

The campus is located within an hour from Cornell and Syracuse, making it easy for employers to recruit when they visit one or both of the other schools. The upcoming [Spring Job Fair](#) will attract more than 120 employers to campus, very good for a school of this size. [Employer site visits to New York City](#) are conducted in January. Motivated students should sign up for the well organized [Passport to Career Services](#) program in their first year to consider their interests, plan their course choices and make connections.

Among the more than 80,000 Binghamton alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), 36,500 are based in or around New York City, likely because most of them are from originally from the area. Nearly 12,000 alumni live in the Binghamton/Ithaca/Syracuse area aka Central New York. There are communities of around 2,000 alumni in and around Washington DC and Boston and more than 1,700 in and around San Francisco, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. This is quite good for a relatively new public university with a large enrollment from its home state.

Conclusions

Binghamton appears to deliver on its academic promises. Much work has been done to improve the quality of student life and services on campus. It's not a "spirit and sports" school like Syracuse. But that is not why students choose to come and stay on to graduate. Binghamton is not a geographically diverse school compared to other flagship state universities. However, it is an ethnically diverse community, given that New York is an ethnically diverse state. Binghamton is located in a region that has lost businesses and jobs. But the state is investing in the region's promise as a center for advancements in health care, including the establishment of a pharmacy school on this flagship campus.

It's going to be harder to get into Binghamton. From 2004 through 2017, applications rose from just over 20,000 to more than 39,000 while the number of freshmen rose from 2,200 to 2,700. With the launch of the Excelsior program as well as the attractive pricing for resident students, the university will attract more interest among New Yorkers, even as more take notice from outside the Empire State. It's hard to overlook the value as well as the opportunity to attend one of America's best public universities.



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Report Card: Binghamton University

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