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Towson University

Located less than ten miles from downtown Baltimore, Towson University is the second-largest public university in Maryland after the University of Maryland-College Park. The university has just over 17,000 full-time undergraduates; another 2,100 go part-time. Approximately 20 percent of the undergraduate population comes from outside Maryland, including 25 percent of the freshman class.

Towson ranks 11th as a college destination among [students from New Jersey](#) who want to go to college out of state, ahead of schools such as the University of Pittsburgh and James Madison University (VA), further north and south.

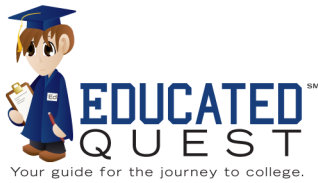
Towson attracts a 3.5+ GPA/1050+ SAT student who is also likely to consider the flagship state university in their home state, or in the case of Maryland, also consider Salisbury University as well as the University of Maryland-Baltimore County. Admissions are not exceptionally competitive. The university accepted over 9,800 of the approximately 15,000 applications it received last fall to get a freshman class of approximately 2,700 students. It also accepted everyone who was first offered a place on the wait list. [If you like Towson, especially the Honors College](#), it is best to get the application in before December 1, not only for admissions, but also scholarship consideration.

Towson retains approximately 85 percent of its freshman class. The university graduated 46 percent of the students who entered in 2010 within four years, and 47 percent of those who arrived in 2011. It is realistic to expect Towson to graduate over half of a class in later years as admissions to oft-considered schools such as Penn State-University Park, Rutgers-New Brunswick and the University of Maryland-College Park continue to become more competitive.

The most similar schools to Towson in terms of academic programs, undergraduate student body size, retention and graduation rates are Montclair State University in New Jersey and West Chester University in Pennsylvania. Like Towson, these schools have relatively compact residential campuses close enough to major cities to make internships during the school year a realistic option. But Towson is a more residential campus than either of these schools, and competes in NCAA college athletics at the Division I (scholarship) level. Given that Towson has greater resources than either Montclair State or West Chester, it might be an aspirational school for both.

Costs

Towson is one of the better buys off the sticker price for residents and non-residents. This year Maryland residents will pay less than \$10,000 for tuition and fees; non-resident charges are a reasonable \$23,200. The average price for



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room and board is estimated to be \$12,300 for a double room. Towson's Total Cost of Attendance, is estimated to be [just under \\$27,000 for residents, just over \\$40,000 for non-residents](#), before scholarships are considered. [Honors College Scholarships](#), though small (\$1,250/year), are "stackable." They may be combined with other merit and need-based awards. However, there are not many such awards for new freshmen. Only eight percent of last year's incoming class received one.

Members of Towson's Class of 2016 who took out loans borrowed, on average, just over \$27,000, the maximum that they could borrow over four years from the Federal Direct Student Loan Program, and a fair number of that class had gone to school for five years. One concern, however, is that just over ten percent needed to borrow from private lenders. These graduates carried an average debt of approximately \$31,800.

Curriculum

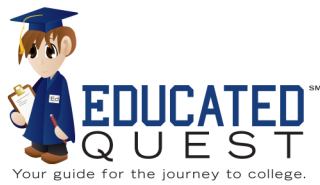
Towson was founded as a school to train teachers, and it grants more education degrees than any school in Maryland. The university also has signature programs in Athletic Training, Business Systems and Processes, Communications, Dance, E-Business, Forensic Chemistry, Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology and Audiology. The [business programs](#) are the most popular among the undergraduates.

Towson separates itself from the larger flagship state schools by admitting students to the university, but not a specific major. They might be admitted to a "pre" status with an eye towards entry into a major as a sophomore or junior, even into the signature programs.

Towson has 25 ["screened majors,"](#) where students must earn a minimum GPA and meet other requirements before being formally accepted into the major. This is a fairer approach than flagship state schools offer their students. Those schools often require direct admission for freshmen into an intended college, such as business or education, or an intended major such as a health field.

All students, regardless of major, must complete a [14-course core](#). Four of these courses may be applied towards the chosen major, and some might be applied towards a minor. Students who are considering majors that require either Calculus and/or Statistics should take the courses in these subjects that will leave them with the most choices.

The [Honors College](#) offers a more flexible curriculum as well as small classes, service learning and research opportunities. Unlike schools such as the University of Maryland-College Park and the University of Delaware, admission to the Honors College is by application, and not tied to a minimum GPA or standardized test scores. A student who is competitive for admission to Penn



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State-University Park, Rutgers-New Brunswick or the University of Maryland-College Park should consider applying for the Honors College if they see an academic fit within the university's offerings. It will offer a more personal educational experience.

Community

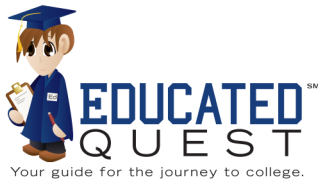
Towson's academic campus is largely modern and red brick, with the exception of Stevens Hall and Newell Hall, the oldest buildings that opened in 1915 and 1916. The Liberal Arts building, in particular, is one of the nicest classroom and study centers that you will find on any college campus. Another feature is the Freedom Square where students can post any message that want on large open blackboards.

The academic center of campus is built up a hill. A walk from end to end, while short for a school with so many undergraduates, might feel longer and more tiring than some prospective students might expect, especially with new construction in progress. The campus is relatively well lit and easy for campus police to secure. The university constructed a bridge over Osler Drive, a fast thoroughfare that separates the West Village residences from the academic center of campus, to make it easier to go from home to class.

Parking is relatively tight at Towson, mainly because the campus is small for the student body it needs to serve, and two-thirds of the students commute from home or off-campus housing. Towson and James Madison University, a school that many Towson students also considered, for example, serve about the same number of undergraduate and graduate students. But James Madison's campus is more than twice the size, and has more room for surface parking and decks. The university does not allow resident first-year students to have cars. The permit at \$350/year is expensive for sophomores, juniors and seniors.

One community difference between Towson and a school such as the University of Maryland-College Park is that it is harder to bond a campus community where two-thirds of the students do not live on campus, and the location tempts them to find entertainment elsewhere. The campus is about a mile from Towson Center, a multi-level enclosed upscale shopping mall and movie theatre, and other shopping options immediately surround that complex. Students may walk there or ride free shuttle buses. Towson is also one the route for the Baltimore Collegetown Network, a free bus service that connects students to several other campuses in the metro area. The university will also shuttle students to the light rail stations where trains leave for the Inner Harbor.

Reported incidents of drug-related crimes on campus doubled from 2014 to 2016 according to the university's [2016 Clery Report](#), but the shift in reported arrests and disciplinary referrals was dramatic. In 2014 there were 52 drug-related



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arrests; two years later there were eight. There were 41 disciplinary referrals in 2014, but 97 two years later. Reported alcohol-related arrests dropped from 29 in 2014 to none in 2016. Disciplinary referrals dropped by over 100, from 288 to 197.

Towson competes in 19 sports in the Colonial Athletic Conference (CAA), one of the more competitive conferences in the NCAA. Since joining the CAA in Towson has won 16 league championships, including titles in football, baseball, men's lacrosse, women's lacrosse, men's golf, women's swimming and diving, and volleyball. The women's gymnastics program has also been dominant in regional competition. Interestingly, among Towson's 19 varsity sports, only six are available to men. While the university has programs in women's soccer, track and field and tennis, it has no men's teams in these sports. The SECU Arena, completed in 2013 is one of the nicer venues for a mid-major indoor sports program. It not only hosts Towson's indoor sports; it is also home to the Baltimore Blast of the Major Indoor Soccer League. The football stadium is named for NFL legend Johnny Unitas, whose children attended the university.

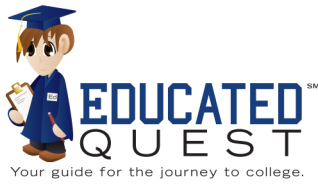
Less than a fifth of the undergraduates belong to Greek social organizations. Unlike their peers at the University of Delaware or the University of Maryland-College Park, among other schools, Towson Greeks do not have their own housing.

Comforts

Towson houses over 80 percent of the freshmen class, and about a third of the undergraduate student body in its [residence halls and apartments](#). If you are offered the opportunity to live in the Honors College Housing, West Village or the Residences take it. These halls are either fairly new or recently renovated. The Glen Complex, the most central, is also the oldest and least attractive living area on campus.

About a third of the undergraduates live off campus in nearby houses or apartments. Towson has one of the more user-friendly [off campus housing sites](#) around. Given the university's proximity to Baltimore, off campus living might be a better option for students who have the opportunity to do internships, research or clinical/practicum assignments during semester and summer breaks. It should be possible to keep rent and utilities to less than \$550 per person, per month, less than the charges for living on campus, and low for a suburb of a major city.

Unlike the housing markets at schools such as the University of Delaware or the University of Maryland-College Park, renters do not need to compete on price vs. fraternity or sorority houses to find sub-tenants during the summer months.



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Connections

Towson's location near Baltimore makes it quite easy for students to find internship opportunities and part-time employment while they are pursuing their degrees. The university is also close to hospitals and schools, an asset for those in the health and education-related majors. The university helps incoming students get started early by hosting a Part-Time and On-Campus Job Fair in late August. There are also Fall and Spring Career and Internship Fairs in late September and late March that complement the other [career services](#), including a credit-bearing career development course.

Among the more than 99,000 Towson alumni registered on [LinkedIn.com](#), nearly 60,000 are based in the Baltimore-Washington area. More impressive, there are over 5,600 alumni in and around New York City and just under 2,900 in and around Philadelphia, though the base gets much smaller after that. Towson alumni are well represented within the major employers in the Baltimore-Washington area including T. Rowe Price, Under Armour, Stanley, Black & Decker, and McCormick and Co.

Conclusions

Towson is a reasonably priced option for students who want to attend a larger university near a city, but do not want to live in one. It gives students a fairer chance to succeed within several academic programs than a larger state university. Towson is not as "spirit and sports" as Penn State's main campus, or the University of Maryland-College Park. But its graduates are no less prepared for employment after college, and the alumni network is large enough to support them for life.

Report Card: Towson University

- Four-Year/Six-Year Graduation Rates: C+/B
- Freshman Retention: B+
- Costs: A
- Curriculum: A
- Community: B+
- Comforts: B+
- Connections: A (Baltimore/Washington)/B+ (New York Philadelphia)/C+ (Elsewhere)