

# Why Harvard? - Harvard University - College Review

## **Essentials:**

More than most schools, undergraduate education at Harvard University is what you make of it. Upon entering Harvard, students are expected to be self-reliant and open to inspiration. This inspiration will derive from the truly exceptional people that surround you on a daily basis, both students and faculty. The most successful students at Harvard are the ones who take full advantage of their ability to be able create their own path at the school. There is a divergence in opinion about the "Harvard experience". Harvard is not an undergraduate focused institution, and some students believe this affects the quality of the undergraduate educational experience.

## **Strength of the School:**

A Harvard University student ready to take ownership of their student life has an abundant variety of first-class resources at their disposal, including world-class and famous faculty, an exceptionally talented and inspiring student body, excellent living and classroom facilities and a beautiful, historic and traditional campus in an unrivaled college location. These factors combined can make for an outstanding four years. Most importantly, a Harvard degree carries a special and honorable distinction. A Harvard degree can open many doors in life, even more doors than its closest rival institutions. A person with a Harvard degree stands out and is recognized by others as an outstanding achiever.

## **Academics:**

- The school wants its students to attain a well-rounded liberal arts education, so there are distribution requirements.
- 40% -45% of courses are within a student's concentration, 30% -35% are within the general education requirement, the remainder are electives.
- The general education requirement consists of mandatory courses across eight different categories in addition to a writing course and a language requirement.

- There are 45 concentrations and there are requirements within each concentration.
  
- Many classes meet in large lecture halls.
  
- Harvard is a school that relies on lecture based learning, not discussion based learning. However, some teaching assistants lead small classroom discussions. Some students find the lecture based learning method less stimulating.
  
- Some students complain there is a lack of undergraduate teaching focus.
  
- Professors at the school are doers and world leaders and frequently appear in the news. However, you may see them more in the news than in your class; you may only see a professor a few times during a semester.
  
- Students have to work to build relationships with professors.
  
- Students at Harvard say their fellow students are incredibly inspiring and can even be intimidatingly smart and driven.
  
- There are plenty of opportunities for undergraduate research.
  
- Harvard has state of the art academic facilities.

- The course work is challenging but doable.
- Overall, even with some limitations, students still receive a world class education, rivaling that of any school.

**Student/ Social Life:**

- Most social life takes place on campus.
- Freshmen live together in several dormitories near historic Harvard Yard.
- Much of the basis of the Harvard social life is the Residential Housing System for Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors.
- There are twelve residential houses that act as fully functional, self-contained communities.
- Students generally do not feel an overarching, unified sense of community, but do with in their own social groups and residential houses.
- People socialize through extracircular activities so social groups are based on common interests.
- Harvard students have to work to find their social niche in the school.

- Finals Clubs are similar to other school's social fraternities, but more exclusive and historic. Finals Clubs are indigenous to Harvard and are fully independent, private organizations. Membership is select and exclusive and there are eight all male clubs and five all female clubs. They do not provide housing. They do, however, provide elaborate clubhouses with catered dining halls, dining rooms, libraries and game rooms. They are a famous part of the social scene.
- Harvard has Fraternities but they are not a major factor at the school compared to Finals Clubs.
- Two thirds of Harvard students come from public schools.
- Students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a vast variety of interests. But they tend to all be very intelligent, entrepreneurial and demonstrate leadership ability.

**Location:**

- Cambridge, upscale but offbeat.
- Boston is young, livable, assessable, walkable, cultural, a center of business, finance and high tech, a city with great food, shopping, sports and entertainment.
- Boston, the ultimate college town.

**Don't go to Harvard if:**

Don't go if you aren't a self reliant person or a person who needs a personal or working relationship with their professors. Harvard is not a school where your hand will be held, it is up to

you to find your path at Harvard. Also, a criticism of the school is the number of TAs who teach courses and the large lecture hall style classes. More so than many of its peers, you and the influence of your fellow students will be responsible for your education.

#### **Harvard Interview- College Specific Questions to Ask the Interviewer:**

- How did your fellow students inspire you during your time at Harvard?
- What were relationships like with your professors?
- How did you like living in Cambridge and Boston?
- Who are some prominent people who visited the school during your time at Harvard?
- In your opinion, what distinction does a Harvard degree provide you?

#### **Harvard University Quick Facts:**

Harvard General Website:

<http://www.harvard.edu>

Harvard Financial Aid:

<http://www.fao.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

Harvard Campus Map:

<http://www.harvard.edu/maps-directions>

Harvard Nickname: Crimson

Harvard Athletics:

<http://www.gocrimson.com/landing/index>

Harvard Undergraduates: 6,700

**Harvard Famous Alumni:**

Theodore Roosevelt

Franklin Roosevelt

John Adams

John F Kennedy