

Why Princeton? - Princeton University - College Review

Essentials:

Princeton University, at times, can feel insular and students can feel trapped in the "Princeton Bubble". So much of the social and student life is dominated by on campus activities. At Princeton, a cooperative environment develops in part due to this insularity and in part due to the rigor of the academics. Students are almost forced to cooperative and help each other to succeed academically.

Princeton University's mission is to admit a diverse, accomplished and well-rounded student body, however, it still maintains a reputation for attracting many wealthy and privileged students from elite, top ranked private and boarding schools.

Princeton University overall is a school with rich traditions and an undergraduate academic experience second to none. A student lives on a beautiful, historic campus in a peaceful and upscale suburb and receives a degree that will open doors throughout life.

Strength of the School:

Princeton University is the smallest of the Big Three and is renowned for its focus on the undergraduate educational experience. The high level of attention that undergraduates receive from the world class faculty is somewhat unique among top-ranked universities of Princeton's caliber. Princeton professors teach their own classes and are accessible to the students. Overall, Princeton provides the undergraduate an unbeatable educational experience.

Students are expected to conduct independent research in the form of completing a junior year independent paper that leads into the mandatory Senior Thesis. The Senior Thesis is completed in the student's field of concentration and is regarded by many graduates as the most valuable and rewarding academic experience they've had at Princeton.

The overall challenge of completing a degree at Princeton is well known by recruiters and graduate schools. For this reason, graduates are very much in demand by potential employers and graduate schools.

Even with all the hard work and academic demands, if a student maintains a proper balance between their academic and social life, then Princeton offers many opportunities to have a fun, memorable and rewarding four years inside and outside the classroom. The social life at Princeton is dominated by on-campus activities. Traditional events, extracurricular activities, theater, sports, Residential Colleges and Eating Clubs together create an enjoyable environment. The smaller size and scale of the school along with the prevalence of on-campus activities provide the opportunity to make a sizable number of good, close friends. The school experience tends to create, in students, an everlasting bond between each other and Princeton that lasts a lifetime.

Academics:

- Princeton students receive an unsurpassed undergraduate educational experience. It is rigorous and demanding academically with a tough workload. The student body is highly engaged and takes their coursework to heart.

- Princeton's policy of grade deflation makes sure all high grades at the school are earned. This policy is at the center of controversy because of possible adverse effects it has had on students and their academic life. This policy, some students believe, make the student body less cooperative and more competitive. Some students also believe that this grading policy puts them at a disadvantage when applying to graduate school and when applying for jobs as compared to students who graduate from other institutions without a similar policy.

- Princeton has a strict honor code. Exams aren't proctored and students must sign all their tests signifying compliance with the honor code.

- A student at Princeton will have daily contact both inside and outside the classroom with a faculty of leading scholars. Princeton has an outstanding faculty of leading professors that are required to teach the undergraduate students.

- Each department in the school has its own requirements for graduation. Princeton also has a general education requirement. The general education requirement includes 12 courses across different disciplines, a freshman writing seminar and a foreign language requirement for non-engineering students. In addition, there are distribution requirements that are intended for a Princeton graduate to receive a well-rounded liberal arts education.

- Princeton offers many opportunities for research and independent study.

- First-year students at Princeton engage in an upperclassman educational experience with their freshman seminar courses. There are no more than fifteen students in a seminar section. They are held in the Residential Colleges and are taught by leading faculty members. The freshman seminar is intended to act as a good introduction to Princeton academics.

- Completion of a Senior Thesis is mandatory for graduation. The Senior Thesis is a culmination of a student's mastery of their academic concentration. The Senior Thesis process starts the prior year with a significant research project in a student's junior year.

Student/ Social Life:

- Princeton, New Jersey is not a college town. It is a peaceful and upscale suburb with a small walkable town and a sampling of retailers and restaurants located right outside the gates of the University.

- Princeton is easily accessible by public transportation including commuter rail and bus service. Princeton is located almost right between New York City and Philadelphia, each city is no more than sixty to ninety minutes away.

- The vast majority of student life takes place on campus. The campus looks just like what a person would picture as a prototypical Ivy League campus; a beautiful, historic campus with a wide variety of Gothic style buildings mixed in with more modern style facilities.

- The town of Princeton can be characterized as quiet and sequestered. The overall lack of distractions can make concentrating on studies slightly easier. On the other hand, this relative isolation can cause Princeton students to develop an insular view of the world. It is often said that a “Princeton Bubble” exists.

- To enhance the undergraduate living experience, Princeton has instituted a residential college system for freshmen and sophomores. The system is not quite as evolved as the Yale system of which the Princeton residential college system is modeled after. The goal of the system is to provide the student body a sense of home within the larger school. Each of the six residential colleges provide a complete living experience which includes an assortment of dining, living, and social options as well as sporting and academic events. At the end of the sophomore year, a student may continue to live in a residential college for their junior year or make other arrangements.

- Eating Clubs, joined by Juniors and Seniors are unique and distinguishing institutions that play a vital role in Princeton social life and tradition. There are ten Eating Clubs that are housed nearby campus in impressive mansions that line Prospect Avenue, deemed “The Street” by students. Eating Clubs function as dining and social centers for their members. Eating Clubs sponsor a variety of social activities for members and the overall Princeton student community. These clubs are often centers of parties and events that are open to all.

- Five Eating Clubs have open admission and can be joined by juniors and seniors on a first-come, first-served basis. Students can apply with friends on a group basis to all clubs. The other five clubs have a selection process for admittance, current members must sponsor or “bicker” for prospective new members. There is a degree of exclusivity to membership in these

five clubs. Overall, Eating Clubs create a more intimate community from which students can feel more at home in a relatively small community of fellow students.

- Playing and watching sports are taken seriously at Princeton. There is a wide participation by students in varsity, club and extracurricular level sports. Spectators feel welcome cheering on their sports teams at all levels of competition.

Location:

The school is located in a walkable small town of upscale local retailers, fine shops and upscale dining in an affluent suburb, Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton is a place a student may aspire to live in after graduation with a family and, by necessity, a very good job.

The town of Princeton has limitations as a setting for a University in particular for students that desire options for off-campus attractions, activities and places to just hangout. The main advantages of the location, or some, are its safety, relative quiet and lack of distractions. New York, Philadelphia and even Washington DC are not all that far away and can be accessed through a variety of public transportation options, so day trips or weekends away on occasion are a strong possibility.

Don't go to Princeton if:

Don't go if you don't want to complete a Senior Thesis or if you can't handle the most rigorous academic experience in the Ivy League. Overall, a student at Princeton will be challenged in the classroom like nowhere else. While a very rewarding experience, the four years at Princeton will push a student to the limit. In addition, the suburban location creates a distinctive "Princeton Bubble", this makes the school somewhat insular. Tradition and traditional events rule at Princeton, if you are turned off by these don't go.

Princeton Interview- College Specific Questions to Ask the Interviewer:

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- What was your Senior Thesis? Who advised you? Did you enjoy the experience?
- Who was the professor you got to know best during your time at Princeton?
- Can you tell me a little about your Freshman Seminar experience?
- Can you tell me about your housing situation throughout your four years at Princeton?
- What influence did the Honor Code have on your experience?
- Which annual events did you like most at Princeton?

Princeton University Quick Facts:

Princeton General Website:

<http://www.princeton.edu/main/>

Princeton Financial Aid:

<http://www.princeton.edu/admission/financialaid/>

Princeton Campus Maps:

<http://www.princeton.edu/main/visiting/aroundcampus/maps/>

Princeton Nickname: Tigers

Princeton Athletics:

<http://www.goprincetontigers.com>

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Princeton Undergraduates: 5,200

Princeton Famous Alumni:

Woodrow Wilson

James Madison

Alan Turing

Richard Feynman