

Why Penn? - University of Pennsylvania - College Review

Essentials:

The University of Pennsylvania is composed of four major undergraduate schools each of which has a distinct mission. The world-famous Wharton School of Business with both undergraduate and graduate programs, The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, The School of Nursing and the larger School of Arts and Sciences, called "The College" are these four programs. Penn encourages interdisciplinary studies by granting many majors and minors as well as dual majors between the schools. The first three schools dominate the character of Penn which has a distinctively pre-professional feel to it. The majority of students at Penn are either seriously pursuing a career or attempting to earn the grades necessary to enroll in a leading graduate or professional school. Academics are competitive and grades in particularly rigorous courses are curved downward to add to the challenge.

Work hard and party hard is the Penn way. A high degree of energy is employed by Penn students not only in the classroom, but in pursuing an active social life. Weekends are used for good times on campus or at various venues in the nearby Center City area of Philadelphia.

There is a long tradition of service at the school. Giving back to the community and the world has been a real commitment by Penn and its students. For example, Penn students are very involved in helping the school's immediate West Philadelphia neighborhood by active community service. Penn students can be found engaging in some type of community service all over the world.

Strength of the School:

Penn offers a "state school" social life combined with an Ivy League education. A work hard, play hard mentality offers a balanced approach to college life. Penn offers the potential for a student to experience a suitable balance between high-level academics and an enjoyable and rewarding social life. Penn offers the career minded and self-motivated student the opportunity to work and compete hard to gain an outstanding educational background and to set the student up for success after graduation.

Penn promotes a "One University" concept and encourages students to pursue an interdisciplinary course of study, taking courses at more than one of the four outstanding undergraduate schools

comprising the University. A well rounded educational foundation that includes a strong liberal arts background is a common experience for all Penn students no matter their academic concentration.

The on-campus mix of social life options are numerous including extracurricular activities and parties sponsored by the many Greek life chapters. Philadelphia is a large city of contrasts with many positive and negative aspects. The easily accessible downtown Center City area contains many of the city's attractions.

The campus, located in West Philadelphia in an area called University City, is architecturally distinctive, compact and walkable with outstanding academic facilities. The comfortable size of the campus centered on Locust Walk serves to bring the students together and enhance interaction between students. Living and classroom facilities are all in close proximity to each other and can be reached by a short walk through a picturesque and traditional looking Ivy League campus.

Academics:

- Penn offers a very competitive academic atmosphere. There are many pre-professional and career minded students that want to earn high grades in order to attend a premier graduate or professional school. For example, many graduates go on to medical or law school.
- The University has highly regarded professors, however, with sixteen graduate and professional level programs Penn is a major research university. The school often values faculty research over the ability to teach undergraduates. Even so, overall undergraduate teaching is considered excellent and professors are generally accessible to students.
- The positive aspect of Penn being a major research university is there are numerous opportunities for undergraduates to conduct research and take a sampling of graduate level courses.

- Penn's undergraduate program is centered around four major schools. 60% of the 10,000 undergraduates attend "The College" or The School of Arts and Sciences; the remainder are enrolled in The Wharton School of Business, The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and The School of Nursing.

- Penn very strongly encourages students to take advantage of all four schools and to pursue an interdisciplinary academic path by completing minors and dual degrees. In this way, Penn wants students to experience the wide spectrum of classes offered by all four schools to gain a well-rounded education.

- Penn imposes relatively flexible general education requirements that include a broad menu of course selections that cover thirteen areas of study. However, majors within each of the four major schools have their own extensive core requirements to meet before graduation. Overall, there is adequate flexibility built into the system for a student to explore a number of courses outside their main field of study.

- Academic advising is considered inadequate and is often criticized. Therefore, students are for the most part primarily responsible for navigating their own academic path.

Student/ Social Life:

- Penn's work hard, play hard mentality offers a balanced approach to college life.

- 60% of the undergraduates live on campus. There are eleven college houses on campus, of which the houses comprising the Quad have excellent reputations as better places to live as compared to the high-rise dorms available to upperclassman. It is common for many students to eventually move off campus to cheaper apartments and Greek houses in the nearby neighborhood.

- The West Philadelphia area, while improving still faces many urban challenges and personal safety is definitely an issue not too far outside the immediate vicinity of campus. Students, for this reason, are vigilant about security especially when traveling at night.

- Penn has a stronger school spirit compared to many other Ivy League schools. Students at Penn follow and regularly attend Penn's varsity sports especially basketball and football. Games against the school's traditional rival Princeton are well supported.

- The Palestra, an on campus, compact and older traditional arena for basketball is the host of many games including contests against local Philadelphia college rivals.

- A large Greek life system plays a major role in hosting on-campus parties, one third of Penn's students are members of a fraternity or sorority. Between a wide range of Penn sponsored extracurricular activities, traditional annual events such as Homecoming and Spring Fling, on and off-campus parties plus visits into Center City and attending professional sporting events there is always a wide range of things to do at Penn.

Location:

Philadelphia offers some of the best and worst attributes of a major urban center. High crime and a large homeless population are some of the many concerns. It is a city of extremes; however, Penn is adjacent to the downtown Center City area that does offer a student many amenities including cultural and historic sites. Most students at Penn take advantage of the attractions of Center City.

Penn's location in Philadelphia is very convenient with travel to most of the Northeast's major cities including New York and Washington DC, each a manageable train or bus trip away.

Don't go to Penn if:

Don't go if you don't want a pre-professionally minded school or if you don't want to live in West Philadelphia. Overall, Penn is a pre-professional school, while it does have strong liberal arts, it is not the main focus of the school.

Penn Interview- College Specific Questions to Ask the Interviewer:

- How did the "One University" concept, being able to take classes in any of the college's schools, affect your academic experience?
- How would you describe the academic mindset of the typical Penn student?
- What factors contributed to your sense of school spirit at Penn?
- Penn has an excellent reputation for having a strong balance between academics and social life. How would you characterize social life at Penn?
- How would you rate Penn's location?

University of Pennsylvania Quick Facts:

Penn General Website:

<http://www.upenn.edu/>

Penn Financial Aid:

<http://www.admissions.upenn.edu/costs-financial-aid>

Penn Campus Map:

<http://www.admissions.upenn.edu/visit/directions-and-parking>

Penn Nickname: Quakers

Penn Athletics:

<http://www.upenn.edu/life-at-penn/sports.php>

Penn Undergraduates: 10,324

Famous Penn Alumni:

Noam Chomsky

Andrea Mitchell

Harold Prince

John Heisman

Walter O'Malley

Walter Annenberg

J.D. Power