

Five Ohio Colleges

College of Wooster
Denison University
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Wittenberg University

Counselor Visit April 2015

College of Wooster (Wooster, OH)



The College of Wooster is anything but generic. It is one of the most impressive small colleges in the Midwest. While not immediately familiar to most Minnesotans, it is a hidden gem that is included in the book *Colleges that Change Lives*, whose author called it, “The original best-kept secret in American higher education.” Though not extremely selective (the admission rate in 2013-2014 was 59 percent), Wooster is renowned in academic circles for its intellectual seriousness and its requirement that all students complete a two-year independent study project in order to graduate. Along with Princeton University, College of Wooster is consistently listed among the best colleges for undergraduate research and best senior capstone experience.

The College of Wooster enrolls 2,100 students on a comfortable 240-acre campus in the small city of Wooster, Ohio (pop. 25,000). While perfect credentials are not necessary to earn admission, Wooster offers the assurance of a meaningful, rigorous experience for all students. It is also a college community that clearly exhibits a lot of pride, but without any trace of pretension. With athletic teams known as “The Scots” and a deep tradition of celebrating Scottish arts – including a famous Pipe Band – much at Wooster is done with a memorable Tartan flair.

Academic life is of the highest quality and is very personal. All students take a first-year seminar, and the instructor of that course also serves as a student’s first academic advisor. Typically a first-

year student's largest class will have 40 students. Science classes, which typically have the largest enrollments on most campuses, are still quite small at Wooster. The Center for Advising, Planning, and Experiential Learning (APEX) is a huge factor on campus. A one-stop shop for academic advising and career planning, it is expected that students will engage with the APEX office as soon as they enroll at Wooster. APEX fellowships included mentorship and funding to support unpaid internships and career exploration experiences.



Wooster attracts students from near and far. Thirty-eight percent of students come from Ohio and seven percent are international students. Overall, the student body hails from 47 states, and the entering class of 600 students will have representation from 500 different high schools. Most Wooster students arrive to campus on the road less traveled and are attracted by a strong fit with the college rather than following the crowd. The campus is intensely residential, with 98% of students living in college housing. The campus culture is uniquely strong and unified; it is an “all-for-one-and-one-for-all” kind of place.

The smaller campus size permits students to pursue a range of activities. About one-third of students perform in musical ensembles, one-third play varsity athletics, and one-fourth participates in theater or dance. The campus includes a fitness center completed in 2012, a nine-hole golf course that is free for students, and the student center has an 8-lane bowling alley and student radio station. The Newman Catholic Student Association is very active, with a Mass for students every Sunday at St. Mary's Catholic Church on the south edge of the campus.

The city of Wooster is handsome college town with all the expected amenities, a handsome downtown, and leafy residential streets. It is one hour from the Cleveland airport and ninety minutes from the Columbus airport. Put aside preconceived notions of flat, featureless Ohio landscape; this section of Ohio has rolling hills and is quite scenic. Wooster is a good option for students who are drawn to St. Olaf College but might like to leave Minnesota for college, or to Hillsdale College but might want a little more political or religious diversity.

Denison University (Granville, OH)



The beauty of the Denison campus will knock your socks off. It is the classic “small-town college-on-the-hill,” as the campus offers impressive views of the quaint town of Granville and the surrounding valley. Denison is at the larger end of the small college spectrum, with 2,120 students. About 70% of students are from outside of Ohio, and over half come from more than 500 miles away. A PA student looking for a beautiful, mainstream, tradition-rich selective small college where he or she will have geographically diverse peers would do well to consider Denison.

The Denison campus totals an impressive 900 acres, including a 360 acre biological reserve (covered by the college’s WiFi, of course). Granville is 27 miles from Columbus via a major highway. The Columbus airport is a very easy trip of 30 minutes. Parents will not feel much anxiety about leaving their son or daughter in the safe surroundings of Granville.

The most telling sign regarding the quality of Denison’s academics is the 3:2 faculty teaching load (meaning that faculty teach 5 courses per year). This is a gold standard that assures the presence of accomplished scholars on the faculty. When combined with a 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio, the indications of a high quality academic experience are strong. The Science buildings are quite new and a unique interdisciplinary major called Philosophy, Politics, and Economics is popular.

Denison is a 100 percent residential campus. The athletics program (Division III) is very prominent and very successful. About 40% of Denison students are varsity athletes and the “Big Red” have won the conference all-sports trophy 14 times in 30 years.

Catholic life is led by the Denison Newman Club. Mass is offered in the main campus chapel on Sundays at 4:30 p.m. The Newman Club estimates that 25% of Denison students self-identify as Catholic. A core group of a couple dozen students are very active in the Newman Club (attending weekly events and retreats) and about 50-75 students attend the Sunday Mass on campus. The Newman Club is organizing a trip to the papal visit in Philadelphia in September 2015. The local Catholic parish provides two professional ministers and the pastor serves as Denison’s chaplain.



The folks at Denison will be first to tell you that the university has undergone real change; in the 1980s it was a very preppy, affluent college that was not too serious academically and where 85% of students participated in Greek life. An intentional evolution has created a more accomplished, serious, broadly diverse student body at Denison. Greek life was de-emphasized in the 1990s, though healthy participation rate of 35% remains. That major reform did away with Greek houses, which has made the Greek community safer and less overbearing in the lives of students.

The admission rate in 2014-2015 was 47% and the average ACT of accepted students was a 29. Denison has a test optional admissions policy, and scholarships are not tied to whether or not an applicant submits test scores.

Denison is refreshingly committed to using its financial wherewithal to support students from all ranges of income background. A very robust merit scholarship program is in place, with students receiving, on average, \$23,000 in scholarship assistance. Overall, 96% of students receive some form of financial aid, with 55% of students receiving only merit assistance (i.e. are not eligible for need-based assistance).

Denison's alumni body includes U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, the former President of ESPN/ABC Sports, talented entertainers such as Steve Carrell and Jennifer Garner, and PA's own Mr. Michael Scholl. The college's endowment of \$800 million is among the top 100 college endowments in the country. This is a substantive, financially healthy college with a beautiful campus and rising profile.



Kenyon College (Gambier, OH)



Kenyon College is a “brand name,” elite liberal arts college located in the hilltop village of Gambier, Ohio, about an hour northeast of Columbus. Included in the same breath as Carleton, Macalester, and Grinnell as among the most selective and well-resourced Midwest colleges, Kenyon shares the ideals and appearance of the best known New England small colleges. One could be forgiven for thinking he or she was in New England while walking around the campus and adjacent village.

This campus is as “out of the way” as they come, but the upside is a campus of classic beauty and serenity. The village of Gambier is truly just a village; a college town like Northfield, Minn. (home of St. Olaf College and Carleton College) is a huge metropolis by comparison. All but two buildings in the village are operated by the college. More significant shopping amenities are available in Mount Vernon, about five miles away. While the college is rather remote, students seem to embrace this aspect of the location; talk of heading to Columbus for “things to do” is rare. Kenyon enrolls 1,650 students and is a completely residential campus. Just fourteen percent of the students come from Ohio; this is a national college that happens to be located in Ohio.



Like all of the best-known liberal arts colleges, Kenyon's academic life is defined by hands-on instruction at a high academic level. The standard faculty teaching load is 5 courses per year, which assures a faculty full of serious and active scholars. Kenyon has long been known for its English and writing programs and for the well-known *Kenyon Review* literary journal. Other popular majors include economics and international studies.



The campus is mainly made up of older, original buildings (most have been renovated and modernized) and many academic departments have offices in old houses rather than large academic buildings. It is a quaint campus without many grand structures. The exception is the Kenyon Athletic Center, a truly stunning center that houses a swimming arena, basketball arena, indoor tennis courts, recreational gym, an indoor track, and a theater all under one roof. Kenyon's swim teams are the most successful in NCAA Division III history, having won the national championship a combined 52 times.

Kenyon is highly selective, admitting 24% of the 7,000 students who applied in 2015. Applying Early Decision confers a significant advantage; nearly 60% of ED applicants were accepted and these students constitute nearly half of the total entering class. Demonstrated interest is a significant factor in the admissions process. The admissions committee loves to see campus visits, but if this is not possible then engagement with the assigned admissions officer and completing a local admissions interview are important. Kenyon does award some merit scholarships (to the top 12-13% of the entering class), but most dollars are allocated to need-based financial aid. Kenyon meets 100% of demonstrated financial need.

Ohio Wesleyan University (Delaware, OH)



Ohio Wesleyan University enrolls 1,750 students and belongs to the *Colleges that Change Lives* consortium. The student body is arguably more eclectic and artsy than the other four colleges profiled here. Forty percent of students graduate with a double major, California is the most represented state on campus after Ohio, and there is a sizeable presence of international students. Students describe the campus as “pretty liberal and united about recent social movements.” At the same time, traditional elements of small college life such as athletics, student life traditions, and Greek life are well represented.

OWU is recognized as a very high quality liberal arts college, but an initiative known as “The OWU Connection” seeks to ensure that students get a valuable practical preparation at the same time. There are three prongs to OWU Connection: first, connecting education to real world challenges; second, adding a global dimension to one’s studies; and third, finding practical opportunities to apply knowledge through internships or research. Some less common majors for this type of college include Zoology, Finance and Management Economics, Health and Human Kinetics (including Sports Management), and Medieval Studies.



Nearly all students live on campus. The town of Delaware has a population of 38,000 and an interesting, historic downtown. It is close enough to Columbus to serve as a far suburb and the

airport is under 40 minutes away. OWU has a safe campus with a strong sense of community; food points from the campus meal plan can be used at restaurants and theaters in town.

About half of OWU students are from Ohio. The admissions process is test optional for students who have above a 3.0 GPA in high school. Admission standards are attainable: the middle 50% ACT range for enrolling students was a 22-28 in 2015. The top merit scholarship is worth \$27,000 per year, awarded to students with a GPA of 3.75 and an ACT of 29 or higher. Scholarships are also available for arts, music, theater and dance, and economics.

Wittenberg University (Springfield, OH)



Wittenberg University is a small liberal arts institution enrolling 1,800 students in Springfield, Ohio (population: 65,000). A small college related the Lutheran Church (ELCA), Wittenberg has many peers that are closer to the Twin Cities, such as Gustavus Adolphus, Luther College, Wartburg, and Concordia College-Moorhead. A student interested in campuses like those and academic programs in business, entrepreneurship, dance, theater, science, or education might find Wittenberg to be an intriguing option.

Springfield is one hour from the Columbus airport and 30 minutes from the smaller Dayton, Ohio airport. While Dayton is the much closer city, Wittenberg students see Columbus as the more vibrant and interesting city to visit. Springfield is, on the whole, a struggling city with some blighted areas. The campus is near downtown, though separated from it by a small river. There is definitely more traffic noise on this campus than many of the other small Ohio colleges.

About 40% of students belong to Greek life organizations. Students are required to live on campus for two years, and upperclassmen tend to live in college-owned housing off-campus. A Frisbee golf course runs through the campus, and red Adirondack chairs are everywhere. The residence halls and student center are average – not impressive, not terrible. During a panel discussion, students raved about the faculty and the ease of becoming engaged with the campus community, but they also cited a “suitcase campus” issue (students from Ohio going home on weekends) and the relative lack of school spirit culture as things they would change if they could. On the other hand, Wittenberg athletic teams are very successful, having won 5 of the last 6 conference football titles and featuring one of the winningest men’s basketball programs in Division III.



As is the case with Lutheran colleges, the faculty is made up of caring, impressive people. Wittenberg has had more professors named Ohio Professor of the Year than any other Ohio college. The faculty earns these recognitions through dedicated and innovative teaching, as well as intensive mentoring of students. From this strong foundation, Wittenberg has enacted the “Wittenberg Commitment” with its six major points:

- 1) Full-year first-year seminar for all students
- 2) Comprehensive faculty advising
- 3) Active and engaged learning
- 4) All students create an online “Wittfolio” of their best work and their experiences in college
- 5) Link to the Wittenberg alumni network
- 6) Four-year graduation guarantee