Discovering Amherst
On Discovering

College should be a time of discovery—an opportunity for intense intellectual exploration, when you wrestle with interesting and difficult questions, connect disparate ideas and discover what’s possible. You search, reimagine and create.

At Amherst, we embrace those opportunities for discovery, and we work together to transform them into outcomes that can change the lives of people down the street and around the world.
Amherst, at a glance

1821
Founded

52:48
Male to female ratio

850
Courses

38
Majors

International students: 10%
Dual-citizenship students: 5%

40%+
Students studying abroad
Study-abroad programs: 200+

35%
Students with a double major:

48
States represented

55
Countries represented

16
Average class size

1,800
Students

Number of first-year seminars: 30

22,000+
Active Alumni

Students receiving financial aid from Amherst: 60%
Demonstrated financial need met: 100%

Senior graduating with honor theses: 43%

Student-faculty ratio: 8:1

Alumni attending graduate or professional school within 5 years: 85%

States represented: 48

Countries represented: 55

Curriculum: Open

Student research opportunities: Hundreds

Majors

Study-abroad programs: 200+

Students studying abroad: 40%

Amherst College students taking courses through the Five College Consortium: 50%

The Five College Consortium:
Available courses: 6,000+
Students within a 10-mile radius: 30,000
Items in the libraries: 11 million+

60% of students graduate within 5 years:

100%
Division III athletic teams: 27
Student organizations: 120+

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Into the Great Wide Open

The liberal arts experience at Amherst College is rooted in the flexibility and freedom of our open curriculum, a curriculum that very few other institutions offer. With no distribution or general education requirements, Amherst allows you to choose the courses that define the shape of your education.

Amherst professors are some of the world’s foremost authorities in their fields, renowned for their scholarship and research, and they work with students every day, in and out of class, as teachers, advisors and mentors from the moment our students arrive on campus.

Supported by their faculty, our students—1,800 of the most interesting, intellectually adventurous, independent-minded people you’d want to meet—publish papers in major professional journals, present at national and international conferences, and undertake research, internship, study and service projects at sites around the world.

And because we’re a member of the Five College Consortium—four liberal arts colleges and one large research university in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts1—Amherst students can take courses at any of the nearby member institutions, allowing access to an astonishingly broad and diverse collection of courses right here at home.

Amherst students are part of a lively intellectual community—a community that prepares you to use ideas to make a major difference wherever you go, whatever you do.

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1. Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst—all conveniently connected by a free bus system.
2. We’ve recently won 10 NCAA team titles. Not coincidentally, we have the oldest college athletic program in the country.

The campus experience at Amherst starts with our students—1,800 bright, ambitious, high-spirited people from all walks of life, from nearly every state and 55 countries. More than 40 percent of our U.S. students self-identify as students of color. About 10 percent of our students are international, 60 percent of our students receive need-based financial aid, and 16 percent of our students are the first members of their families to attend college. We believe that diversity is an engine of innovation, and that a great intellectual community should look like the world. With every incoming student, that community comes to life here.

Our students perform in at least a dozen musical ensembles, play on 27 Division III teams and run more than 120 clubs and organizations. They’re engaged in everything from community service to political activism, from student publications to affinity groups (cultural, religious and more).

This is truly a place where learning includes living: We guarantee housing for all of our students for all four years; almost all of our students live on campus; and all first-year students live in dormitories on our first-year quad, right in the heart of campus, as part of a comprehensive first-year experience. A number of theme houses allow students who share an interest to live together on the same residence hall floor or in the same house. A sample of current theme houses: Asian Culture House, Charles Drew (black culture), cooperative living, health and wellness, La Casa (Latino culture), Marsh Arts House, and French, Russian, German and Spanish Houses.
A Place Where Discovery Happens

Amherst is located in the Pioneer Valley, an area of exceptional natural beauty bordered by the Holyoke Mountain Range of Western Massachusetts. The Pioneer Valley is home to more college students and more cultural events than any region in New England except metro Boston. It’s also home to a remarkable range of opportunities and activities—restaurants and music clubs, concerts and museums, hiking and skiing, lectures and operas, eclectic cafes and independent bookstores, farmers’ markets and a proudly alternative culture fostered by a politically active and socially conscious population. Amherst College is an integral part of the Town of Amherst, often cited as the best college town in America. The ethos here is: Start local, think big, work together.

3. A few of those: the Taste of Amherst, Cirque du Soleil, the Amherst Art Walk, Toni Morrison, the Hot Chocolate Run, the Martha Graham Dance Company, the Northampton LGBT Pride Parade, the Dalai Lama.

Facts

Official name of region in Western Massachusetts: Pioneer Valley
Quasi-official name: Happy Valley
Members of Five College Consortium: Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
College students within a 10-mile radius: 30,000
Annual number of cultural events in the Pioneer Valley: Thousands
Number of off-campus coffeehouses that serve as informal annexes to our library: 3
Motto of Iron Horse Music Hall in Northampton: “Music alone shall live”
Population of the Town of Amherst: 35,000+
Distance from Boston: 90 miles
Distance from New York City: 150 miles
After Amherst

Thanks to an exceptionally active research program, an expansive Center for Community Engagement and a robust roster of internships (including many opportunities provided by our alumni), our students apply their knowledge as they learn. They graduate with a profound sense of the power of their own ideas and a long list of achievements, with a combination of knowledge and experience that helps them confidently choose their next steps and successfully pursue principled lives of consequence.

Our seniors regularly win competitive scholarships—Gates, Goldwater, Rhodes, Watson—that fund research and international experience. Our alumni include leaders in government and finance, science and technology, law and civic activism, education and the arts. They are people who move the world forward in essential ways—people like Amy Rosenzweig ’88, a pioneering interdisciplinary scientist who won a MacArthur fellowship for her work toward advancing our ability to treat many diseases. In unusually high numbers, they’re actively involved in determining the shape and character of the global community. They’re also actively involved in helping new generations of Amherst students and alumni make their way.

4. Or David Foster Wallace ’85, who did pioneering work in fiction and nonfiction and was one of the most influential writers of his generation. Or Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz ’64. Or Ana Salas Siegel ’92, senior vice president at NBC Universal. Or Kimmie Weeks ’05, founder of Youth Action International.

Facts

Alumni attending graduate or professional school within 5 years: 85%
Students offered Fulbright fellowships in the past 5 years: 56
Students offered National Science Foundation fellowships in the past 5 years: 28
General managers in Major League Baseball who are Amherst alumni: 3
Alumni who engage with the College annually: 70%
Active alumni: 22,000+
Admission and Financial Aid
As described in our mission statement: “Amherst College educates men and women of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so that they may seek, value, and advance knowledge, engage the world around them, and lead principled lives of consequence.” Guided by that philosophy, our need-blind admission policy allows us to seek and admit students from across the country and around the world based not on family income, but rather on achievement and promise. If their families demonstrate financial need, we meet it one hundred percent. About 60 percent of our students receive financial aid, and our average financial aid award last year was more than $48,500. So the majority of our students pay less—often far less—than the cost of attendance.5 Our financial aid packages don’t include loans—we’ve eliminated loans and replaced them with scholarship grants—so our students can graduate with no debt.6 Students leave Amherst with an extraordinary education, a long list of exceptional accomplishments, the capacity to put their ideas to work—and the freedom to build their future without the burden of student loan debt.

Visiting Amherst
The best way to find out more, and to see if Amherst is the right fit for you, is to visit. Find out more about visiting at amherst.edu/visiting. Or go to amherst.edu/admission to sign up to receive more information.

Facts
Students receiving financial aid from Amherst: 60%
Average financial aid award: more than $48,500
Percent of demonstrated need met: 100%
Loans replaced by grants and scholarships: 100%
Financial aid offered last year: nearly $50 million
Students who are Pell Grant recipients: 23%
Percent of applicants admitted: 14%
SAT reasoning middle 50%: 2080–2360
ACT composite middle 50%: 31–34

5. For more details, and for the most current figures, see our financial aid section at amherst.edu. Not coincidentally, The Chronicle of Higher Education called us the “best of the best” American liberal arts colleges for supporting low-income, high-talent students.
6. We were one of the first and remain one of the only colleges in the country to adopt a no-loan policy.
Statement of Non-Discrimination: Amherst College does not discriminate in its admission or employment policies and practices on the basis of factors such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, color, religion, national origin, disability or veteran status. The College complies with federal and state legislation and regulations regarding non-discrimination. Inquiries should be addressed to the Interim Chief Diversity Officer, Amherst College, P.O. Box 5000, Amherst, MA 01002-5000.