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

50:50
Male to female ratio

58%
Students receiving financial aid from Amherst

58%
Demonstrated financial need met: 100%

16
Average class size

1,800
Students

Curriculum: Open

Classes with fewer than 30 students: 90%

35%
Students with a double major:

850
Courses

38
Majors plus interdisciplinary/independent majors

First-year retention rate: 98%
Six-year graduation rate: 95%

Student-faculty ratio: 8:1

Students graduating with honors theses: 40%

82%
Seniors graduating with honors theses: 40%

1821
Founded

22,000+
Active Alumni

Student research opportunities: Hundreds

40%
Students studying abroad

Study abroad programs: 200+

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

Number of first-year seminars: 30

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

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

30
Division III athletic teams: 27
Student organizations: 140+

States represented: 48
Countries represented: 55

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

Amherst College students taking courses through the Five College Consortium: 50%
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—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.
We’ve won 11 NCAA team titles (seven since 2009). Our students have won 76 NCAA individual titles and 33 Academic All-American awards (19 since 2008). Not coincidentally, we have the oldest college athletics program in the country.

A Campus that Looks Like the World

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, nearly 60 percent of our students receive need-based financial aid, and 15 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.

Facts
States represented: 48 (plus D.C. and Puerto Rico)
Countries represented: 55
Students of color: 44%
International students: 10%
Dual-citizenship students: 5%
Students receiving financial aid from Amherst: 58%
First-year students living on the first-year quad: 100%
Students living on campus: 98%
Student organizations: 120+
Opportunities to conquer an inflatable obstacle course: 1+

2. We’ve won 11 NCAA team titles (seven since 2009). Our students have won 76 NCAA individual titles and 33 Academic All-American awards (19 since 2008). Not coincidentally, we have the oldest college athletics program in the country.
A Place Where Discovery Happens

Amherst is located in an area of exceptional natural beauty bordered by the Holyoke Mountain Range of Western Massachusetts and 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.

Facts

Official name of region in Western Massachusetts: The Valley
Quasi-official name: The 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

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.
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—Fulbright, 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, general counsel for NBC Universal Telemundo Enterprises. Or Kimmie Weeks ’05, founder of Youth Action International.

Facts
Graduation rate (six-year): 95%
All alumni reporting graduate or professional school attendance: 80%
Students offered Fulbright fellowships in the past 5 years: 59
Students offered National Science Foundation fellowships in the past 5 years: 29
General managers in Major League Baseball who are Amherst alumni: 3
Alumni who engage with the College annually: 70%
Active alumni: 22,000+

4.
Facts

Students receiving financial aid from Amherst: 58%
Average financial aid award: more than $50,000
Percent of demonstrated need met: 100%
Loans replaced by grants and scholarships: 100%
Financial aid offered last year: more than $50 million
Students who are Pell Grant recipients: 24%
Percent of applicants admitted: 14%
SAT middle 50%: 2090-2380 (pre-March 2016 SAT)
ACT middle 50%: 31–34

That opportunity for discovery? It starts now.

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. Nearly 60 percent of our students receive financial aid, and our average financial aid award last year was more than $50,000. 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.

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.