



Focus on Champlain College

Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont, is a dream school for students seeking a career-based education in a close-knit community with highly dedicated professors, small classes, and extensive opportunities for real-world, hands-on learning. Thirty majors and twenty minors are offered in the broad categories of Business, Communication and Creative Media, Education and Human Studies, and Information Technology and Sciences.

The 2,100 students enjoy an average class size of 17 students on this campus adjacent to the University of Vermont, which uses both beautiful Victorian buildings previously owned by UVM and attractive new facilities outfitted with state-of-the-art technology.

One of the earliest schools in the nation to offer a major in Game Design, Champlain now has an impressive array of offerings in new media and technology. These range from Bachelor of Science programs in Broadcast & Streaming Media, Game Art & Animation, Computer & Digital Forensics, and Computer Networking and Cybersecurity to Bachelor of Fine Arts programs in Creative Media, Filmmaking, and Graphic Design & Digital Media. Other less commonly found majors include Legal Studies, Education for all levels, and Social Work.

The “top-down curriculum” means that students can plunge right into their area of interest and take as many as six major-specific courses by the end of the first year. This way they can ascertain quickly if their chosen field is right for them, and if not, shift to another field in the sophomore year. (Switching, I was told, becomes more difficult junior year although it may still be possible.)

Faculty all have five to ten years of experience working in the fields they teach, and they strive to stay current and connected, in part so they can assist their students in finding internships and other opportunities for real-world application of their classroom learning. The school, which employs a mix of full time and adjunct

professors, does not offer tenure. The absence of tenure, they say, enables them to employ only faculty who are the most up-to-date in their fields, and my tour guide told me of a professor he loved who has been at Champlain for 20 years but recently took an unpaid internship in order to update his experience in his field.

An unusual core curriculum is another distinctive feature of a Champlain education. Regardless of major, all students come together for two of their five courses each semester, and do a capstone project senior year. The core courses are organized thematically. The theme for freshmen is The Individual and Community (with a focus on exploration of identity and the individual's role in the community), for sophomores it's The Western Tradition (with offerings on scientific revolution, aesthetic expression, ethics and the environment), and for juniors it's Global Themes, which lends itself well to study abroad. Currently 56% of students study abroad, and the number is constantly growing. Champlain's campuses in Dublin and Montreal are popular destinations, but students also go to numerous other institutions worldwide for one-semester and full-year experience, their financial aid and scholarships going with them.

The core courses are all interdisciplinary and discussion-based with no tests but lots of reading and writing required. Professors pose big questions for students to think about critically and debate.

LEAD (Life Experience and Action Dimension) courses are another set of requirements, in this case designed to teach students practical skills through a series of workshops, seminars, breakout sessions, and community service activities. While career planning has a pre-eminent role at Champlain beginning freshman year, the school also aims to inculcate values of good citizenship and civic responsibility. This being Vermont, it's not surprising that environmental sustainability is among the contemporary challenges taken particularly seriously here.

All students do at least one internship, and some as many as six or seven during their time at Champlain. Many, but not all, are local. These experiences undoubtedly contribute to the high employment rate for graduates, over 90% of whom are working in their chosen field within a year of graduation.

For recreation, Champlain students enjoy more than 50 clubs and organizations in addition to everything Burlington, with its 5 colleges, has to offer. The city has several food and music festivals, and students attend events at all of the other colleges as well as their own.

Prospective students are strongly encouraged to visit, get in touch with their admissions representative, and/or Skype with a student ambassador. See the website for portfolio requirements for applicants to the programs in Creative Media, Filmmaking, Game Art & Animation, Game Design, or Graphic Design & Digital Media.

Application deadlines are November 15th for Early Decision I, January 15th for Early Decision II, and February 1st for Regular Decision.

