



Focus on Fairfield University

Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut, provides its 3,800 undergraduate students with a Jesuit education that combines a liberal arts core and attention to their development as well-rounded human beings with career preparation, regardless of their major. They experience an intimate environment where professors get to know them well in discussion-based classes that average 23 students.

Most prominent, perhaps, for its Dolan School of Business and its School of Nursing, Fairfield also has a growing School of Engineering in addition to its oldest division, the College of Arts and Sciences. Within the latter, the Visual and Performing arts majors that include TV, Film and Media are particularly noteworthy, and new majors have recently been introduced in Public Relations and Digital Journalism.

The university also offers twelve 4+1 programs that enable students to obtain a Master's degree in only one additional year, and a new Pre-Health Studies minor that prepares students for graduate work in Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant programs.

Applicants to the Schools of Business, Engineering, and Arts and Sciences need not choose a particular major before they come. In fact, "undecided" is the most common freshman designation, and students are supported the first two years in their efforts to figure out what they want. The core curriculum encourages exploration in any event, as students across the schools take classes together, where connections across disciplines are emphasized.

Like all Jesuit schools, Fairfield teaches the value of diverse perspectives and service to the community. Although the students are primarily Catholic, they are not necessarily religious in a conventional sense, and they are welcoming to people of all faiths. There are Protestant, Orthodox, and Muslim chaplains on campus, and a Jewish student organization sponsors monthly Shabbat dinners and services. The

course requirement in Religious Studies is commonly fulfilled with courses in world religions and studies that take a historical or philosophical approach.

Within the School of Business, Finance and Marketing are the most popular majors, but the Accounting major is the most prestigious, having been designated the best such program in the state of Connecticut and listed by Bloomberg in the top 100 such programs nationwide. At present Fairfield has 1,565 undergraduates majoring in Business. The school's Business graduates in all fields do well in the job market after graduation in part because of the excellent internship opportunities they enjoy as undergraduates. The location is a major advantage in this regard, due to the many nearby businesses in Connecticut and even in New York City, which is easily accessed by train in 70 or 80 minutes.

The nearby beach is another draw. Housing is guaranteed all four years in a variety of old and new residence halls, but approximately 200 students each year opt to live at the beach. A representative of the university lives there as well to provide a degree of oversight and ensure that the students maintain good relations with the town.

The School of Nursing will begin construction this spring of a new building, and eventually will probably grow. At present 100 nursing students are admitted into each class. They begin their clinical work in the second year, enjoying access to numerous hospitals and medical facilities including a clinic run by the university.

The School of Engineering currently has between 50 and 70 students in each class, but is planning to grow to 100 in each. The most popular major here is Mechanical Engineering, and the newest is Bioengineering. Computer, Electrical, and Software Engineering are also offered. A new dean is said to be energizing this division with initiatives that include a challenge to all freshmen to invent something new by the time they graduate. They work in groups with classmates from other majors and have produced some exciting results like a voice-activated wheelchair.

Athletics play a large role in the life of the university, as does community service. Division 1 teams, particularly in Lacrosse and Basketball, have a history of successes and garner strong student support. Club and intramural teams are popular too, with 70% of Fairfield students participating in sports at some level. A new Lacrosse stadium opened recently, and a new workout facility will open in Fall 2016.

Admission to Fairfield is test-optional, with approximately 30% to 40% of applicants each year choosing not to submit SAT or ACT scores. The admit rate is approximately 65% for all the schools except the School of Nursing, which admits approximately 45% of its applicants.

All the schools are looking for students with at least a B+/A- average in a challenging curriculum. Nursing and Engineering students must have four years of solid science courses and math through at least pre-Calculus. Calculus is more

important for applicants to the Business school. In general, applicants are encouraged to submit their scores only if they have a minimum of 1800 on the SAT and 26-29 on the ACT, recognizing that the scores will be factored into the formula used to determine merit scholarship awards. Since students need not submit them to receive merit aid, doing so could either help or hurt them in this regard.

All applicants are automatically considered for merit aid. Yearly scholarships range from \$7,000 to \$25,000, with the top ones typically going to “A” students with the most challenging curricula including Honors and Advanced Placement courses. For need-based aid, applicants must file both the C.S.S. Profile and the FAFSA.

Admissions decisions are holistic, giving prime consideration to grades and program of study. The school is seeking students who challenge themselves in honors and advanced placement courses and who show growth and improvement. Admissions officers also look carefully at the personal essay and recommendations from the school counselor and at least one teacher. A second recommendation is welcome, not necessarily from a teacher but from someone who knows the student well and can speak to his or her work ethic. Finally, demonstrated interest in the school does play a role, and a good way to demonstrate that interest is to interview either on or off campus with an admissions officer or alumnus.

Early Action (11/1) and Early Decision 1 (11/15) applicants will receive a decision before Christmas. Those who apply Early Decision 2 (1/15) which will receive their decision by mid February, and Regular Decision (1/15) applicants will hear by the end of March.

