



Focus on The University of California/Davis

This 5,300-acre campus located 20 minutes from Sacramento and an hour from San Francisco, began as the state's Agricultural College in 1905. It now houses four undergraduate colleges: Agricultural and Environmental Science, Biological Science, Engineering, and Letters and Science, as well as graduate programs in Nursing, Business Management, Education, Law, Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine.

With almost 28,000 undergraduates and 8,000 graduate students, Davis, a city of just over 66,000 residents, feels like a real college town, smaller and more intimate than one might expect. Bikes are ubiquitous, and the vibe quite relaxed for such a highly regarded research university. The campus arboretum and vineyards, not to mention the average of 265 sunny days per year, probably have something to do with the atmosphere. The campus is walkable, and administrators describe the students as friendly and the spirit as more cooperative than at some peer institutions.

UC/Davis has exceptionally strong programs above all in Nutrition and Food Science and in Viticulture (wine production). In fact, it was recently ranked the number one school in the world for teaching and research in Agriculture and Forestry. Following a \$25 million gift from the Robert Mondavi Foundation, the state of California contributed \$33 million and the university itself \$20 million to construct a multi-building facility called The Mondavi Institute for Food and Wine Science that opened in 2008. Almost futuristic in the way it was designed to maximize efficiencies of all kinds, the facility is described by its administrators as the "best engineered building in a university in the world" and a "smart building for the future."

Other top programs include the Biological Sciences, Engineering, Political Science, and Art.

Admission to all the University of California schools requires a secondary school program of study equivalent to what California students take. Most out-of-state applicants find they have met the requirements except at times for the one year of

coursework in the visual or performing arts. Whenever possible, admissions officers will read applications from students whose high schools they are familiar with so they may assess the applicants in context. They do their own calculation of each applicant's weighted and un-weighted GPA and "score" each applicant based on the usual criteria of academic achievement, extra-curricular involvement, standardized tests, letters of recommendation, and application essay. Every application is scored by at least two readers, and if their scores diverge by more than a point, a third reader is used.

For the U.C. schools, the essay is a bit different than for the common application insofar as it's supposed to be just a straightforward explanation in plain language of what the student is interested in and cares about. They are not interested in anything stylized or poetic. The "Additional Information" section is to be used only if needed to explain something; it is not to be used for another essay.

Some of the UC/Davis's programs are more competitive to enter than others because they have more applications, but applicants are scored the same way regardless of intended major because the admissions officers don't know until all applications are in what the cut-off scores will be for each program. For students admitted overall in 2014, the median weighted GPAs were 3.95 to 4.24, median SAT's were 1800-2100, and median ACT's were 27-37.

