



Focus on Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Hobart and William Smith's gorgeous 320-acre campus in Geneva, New York, is on the banks of Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes region. Just over 2,200 students, all undergraduates, enjoy its 10-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio and extensive experiential learning opportunities including a study abroad program that has twice in a row been ranked number one in the nation by Princeton Review. Hobart is technically the men's college and William Smith the women's, but their classes and residence halls have been completely integrated for years. Only their deans, student government, athletics, and some traditions remain separate.

Director of Admissions John Young likes to say that HWS is a good fit for both the intrepid and the nervous, and that due to the structure of its advising program, undecided students thrive there as well as those who enter knowing exactly what they wish to study. A First Year Dean reviews all incoming students' admission materials and course requests before meeting them. He then advises them on course selection based on everything he knows both about them and about the teaching styles of his faculty members. Since the implementation of this system eight years ago, not only have first year students made many fewer requests for course changes, but their GPAs have also been higher.

In lieu of having to take general education courses, HWS students are required to take courses through which they will acquire skills in the following eight areas:

communication, critical thinking, quantitative, ethics, global perspectives, artistic construction, scientific inquiry, and awareness of race, gender and class differences. They can figure out from the course catalogue which classes satisfy which of these requirements either fully or partially, and some classes satisfy more than one.

Every HWS student graduates with both a major and a minor. In addition to the more typical liberal arts majors, the college offers some less common options such as Architectural Studies and Geoscience. It also has a particularly strong Creative Writing program, thanks in part to an endowment that pays for nationally recognized writers to serve as “writers in residence,” mentoring students and offering workshops and tutorials.

Some of the school’s minors are less common and more career-oriented than the majors tend to be. They include, for example, Child Advocacy, Entrepreneurship, Health Professions, Law and Society, and Urban Studies. Special advising and degree programs include Pre-Business, Pre-Health, Pre-Law, Teacher Education and Master of Arts in Teaching, and Engineering.

A Career Development Office works with students all four years to help them find a career path that utilizes the skills they acquire with their degree. Students are taught to pursue employment by networking, and alumni not only invite students to shadow them, but also take them to New York City, Boston, D.C., and Los Angeles for three-day programs. In each of these venues, the students attend events with alumni and visit various work places to see if they can envision working there. Internships frequently grow out of these trips.

Another unusual feature of HWS’s career preparation is that all students are guaranteed at least one internship experience during their college years. Furthermore, if a student puts in the effort to find one that pays insufficiently, the school will provide additional funding.

Hobart and William Smith has been listed in numerous publications as a college that delivers a particularly strong return on investment. Its graduates’ high degree of success in obtaining desirable employment or admission to highly regarded graduate and professional schools may be attributed to a combination of their access to internships and other types of experiential learning opportunities, faculty mentorship and career services.

Most of HWS students’ social life is on campus, although downtown Geneva, which is within walking distance, has some appealing restaurants and shops, and the surrounding natural environment attracts students interested in outdoor activities. Community service is also big. In fact, Washington Monthly magazine ranked HWS #1 in this category.

Sports play a prominent role in campus life too. One quarter of the students participate in intercollegiate athletics, which are Division 3 except for the Men’s

Lacrosse Team that competes in Division 1. Overall 41% of the students participate in some sort of athletics if club and intramurals are included as well.

For the most part, the student body is socially liberal. Commitment to environmental sustainability and global citizenship are currently major focuses of the school, which also prides itself on having been among the earliest to introduce majors in Women's Studies and LGBTQ Studies, and more recently a minor in Men's Studies.

Applications for admission are reviewed holistically, first by the person in charge of the applicant's region and then by another admissions officer. Each reader begins with the essay, then reviews the letters of recommendation second and the activities third in an effort to get to know the applicant before reviewing his or her transcript. The admissions office also makes a great effort to grant applicants interviews.

Demonstrated interest is considered insofar as the admissions officers want to ensure that applicants know enough about the campus. Thus, they like to know that the students have either visited or else met with a admissions officer who was on the road in their local area, but they do not track what applicants are doing online. Standardized tests are not required but may be submitted if the applicant wishes. Last year the average composite ACT for those who submitted it was 29, and the average SATs were in the mid 600s for each section.

Hobart and William Smith awards both need-based and merit scholarships. Some of the merit-based ones are for applicants with special qualifications in areas like debate and leadership, but only one requires an additional essay, and another requires a portfolio. For need-based scholarships, applicants must file both the FAFSA and C.S.S. Profile. Dean Young encourages families to file these because the school is good about providing need-based aid even to families who don't technically qualify as needy. Ninety-two percent of HWS students receive some form of financial aid, the average package being \$36,758 in a combination of grants, loans, and work-study.