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Focus on The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Although it is a public university, roughly half of the 30,000 undergraduates at the University of Michigan's main campus come from out of the state. They are a diverse group in all respects, hailing from 92 countries and every state in the U.S., and because of the university, Ann Arbor is much more diverse and liberal than the rest of the state. A 30-minute drive from the Detroit airport, Ann Arbor is very much the college town with lots for students to do. It has an abundance of ethnic restaurants and festivals, including the nation's largest art festival.

Students are drawn to the university by its reputation for **outstanding academics** coupled with a strong sense of community, tremendous school spirit and active student life outside of the classroom. Seventy percent of the majors are ranked in the top 10 nationally, and another 9% in the top 20. With more than a billion dollars of funding for research, University of a Michigan is designated the number one public research university in the nation. Research opportunities are in all academic areas and sufficiently plentiful that students can participate as early as freshman year. The university also boasts that it is ranked fifth in the nation for the number of students who study abroad, as it provides these opportunities for students in all majors including engineering and nursing, and the options include research, community service, and internships.

Although in most cases students don't apply directly to a major, they do apply directly to one (or in rare cases two) of **the university's seven colleges**. The College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) is the largest, with 90 majors, and that's where undecided students generally start out. The School of Engineering is the second largest, with 17 majors, and its students have until the end of sophomore year to choose their specialization. The School of Nursing is a small, direct-admit program. The School of Kinesiology has three majors: Applied Exercise Science, Movement Science, and Sport Management. The Stamps School of Art and Design awards both B.A. and B.F.A. degrees and requires applicants to submit a portfolio, but has no majors; rather, students design their own. The School of Music Theater and Dance offers a variety of degrees in its 17 departments, to which students must apply directly with an audition or interview. The smallest of the colleges is the Taubman College of Architecture. Architecture students spend their first two years studying liberal arts or art and design, so they must apply simultaneously to LSA or Stamps in order to be considered for "preferred admission" to the College of Architecture their junior year. Applicants to the School of Music, Theater and Dance and to Stamps are allowed to apply also to LSA, but all other University of Michigan applicants must choose a single school to which to apply.

The highly ranked **Ross School of Business** has a two-step application process. Since it is technically not a freshman- admitting school, freshman applicants must apply to one of the other schools while also indicating on their application that they are interested in Ross. Eighty percent of Ross students enter this way. Although 20% of the spots are reserved for transfers, these are explicitly not for students who indicated an interest in the division initially but were denied. They are, rather, for new applicants from other University of Michigan divisions or from outside the university, and the admission process for them is even more selective than for freshmen.

Another attractive feature of the University of Michigan is its **learning communities** that students may enter through an additional application process. These provide smaller communities within the larger one, based on shared interests or programming. Themes for the learning communities range from writing and the arts to the health sciences, and students typically take some classes together, eat together, and live together as freshmen or longer. The most selective of these are the Honors Program and the Residential College, both within LSA. Honors program students have access to their own more rigorous classes and special programming and housing.

The Residential College was created in 1969 to provide the style of education typically found in a small liberal arts college, but with the resources of the larger university available as well. Its chief characteristics are small, mostly seminar-style classes, lots of interdisciplinary study, close relationships between students and professors, and an emphasis on foreign language study. Residential College (RC) students typically live together for two years. They have their own freshman writing course and are required to take at least four more courses within the Residential College and four foreign language courses. The RC offers five languages, but students have the option to fulfill the language requirement by taking other languages offered

elsewhere in the university. RC students can pursue any major in LSA and can be in the Honors Program simultaneously.

There is no application process for the RC other than checking a box, and it's possible for students who don't enter as freshmen to enter later. Over the decades the RC has accepted anyone who wanted to be in it, with the entering class fluctuating in size from 200 to 250 students each year. Historically, RC students have been among the university's most activist. While activism on campus is not what it was in 1969, many RC students are knowledgeable and concerned about current affairs and social issues. Since it is not possible to opt out of the residential component of the RC (as it is to opt out of the residential component of the Honors Program), this is an automatic community of people who share similar inclinations. Among the RC's more unusual features are a series of one-credit courses led by students on a wide range of topics, giving them an opportunity to practice leadership and have fun learning together outside of a traditional classroom setting.

The **admission** rate to the university overall is approximately 20%, and the review process is identical for applicants from in and out of state. It is holistic, with first consideration given to the high school transcript. The GPA is recalculated based on all classes, unweighted. The average unweighted GPA of admitted students is 3.9, with grade trends and high school context taken into consideration. The rigor of the curriculum, including senior year, is important, particularly in courses relevant to the division students are applying to.

Test scores are still required and should be sent directly to the admissions office well ahead of deadline. The University of Michigan does not super-score but encourages applicants to submit all scores anyway because sub-scores can sometimes make them more competitive. Median ACTs of admitted students are 32-35, and median SATs are 1380-1540. Subject tests and AP tests are not required, and not submitting them will not disadvantage an applicant.

Extra-curricular activities are considered next, and then one or more letter of recommendation. Here too, the admissions officers say that it's okay to submit more than one, but there is no disadvantage to not doing so. Finally, the essays are considered, including a supplementary one which asks applicants to explain why they are applying to the particular school within this university. The admissions office does not track demonstrated interest in any other way, so this is the sole opportunity applicants have to convince them that they are a good fit for the program to which they're applying.

The financial aid office is separate from the admissions office and focuses on need-based awards. Fewer than 10% of students receive any merit-based aid, which is awarded through the individual colleges.

The deadline for Early Action is November 1st, with 50% of the class admitted from this pool. The Regular Decision deadline is February 1st.

The one exception is the School of Music, Theater and Dance, which has only a single deadline, December 1st.

All materials including test scores and materials sent by the high school must be received by the deadline for any application to be read.