



## Focus on Clark University

With 2,300 undergraduates and another 1,000 graduate students, Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, is the smallest research university in the country. It is also one of the schools featured in Loren Pope's first edition of *Colleges That Change Lives* because of its success in providing life-changing personalized undergraduate education, and it has remained in all the revised editions of that book. It is looking to grow ever so slightly over the next few years, increasing each class by 70 students, but the basic character of the school should remain unchanged.

Founded in 1887 as a graduate school in Psychology, it still has a prominent Ph.D. program in Psychology and attracts many undergraduates with an interest in that field, but these days it is also known for much more. Biology is the second most popular major, and a program called "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" which has spawned many start-ups has been ranked among the top ten programs of its kind in the nation. Clark's other nationally recognized programs include "Geographic Information Science," "International Development and Social Change," and "Holocaust and Genocide Studies." Sustainability is an important focus.

Research opportunities abound in all disciplines, available even for freshmen. The school publishes a journal of all undergraduate research, and students receive stipends to do research over the summer and attend conferences nationwide.

LEEP, which stands for Liberal Education and Effective Practice, is a hallmark of a Clark education today. Predicated on the philosophy that study of the liberal arts must be connected with real world applications, the school recently opened a LEEP

Center to house its career center, center for study abroad, specialized advising and more. In addition to an academic advisor, every student has a LEEP advisor to advise him or her on internships, study abroad, and career options.

Clark students tend to be passionate, interested in a broad range of ideas, and quick to social action. They can also be quirky because this is a campus where everyone's views are welcome and everyone's voice is heard. Students sometimes describe themselves as an opinionated lot, but the admissions officer I spoke with who recently graduated from Clark himself, says it is also a comfortable environment for shy students, who will overcome their reticence. There are no fraternities or sororities, and everyone I spoke with concurs that it is not at all cliquey. In fact, students say, everyone really mixes including the international students who comprise 17% of the population and the 15% who identify as persons of color.

With an average class size of twenty, Clark offers lots of one-on-one interaction with faculty, who really get to know the students, many of whom they may teach in more than one course. They are said to be sensitive to student issues in general, and their attitude combined with the strength of the support services can make Clark an attractive option for students with learning differences.

The Program of Liberal Studies is a distribution requirement mandating that students take at least one course in each of eight categories before they graduate, and there are many possible ways to fulfill each requirement. The average course load is four, but after the first year students may take a fifth if they wish.

Approximately one-third of Clark undergraduates opt to stay a fifth year to complete a Master's degree. The five-year combined Bachelor's and Master's degree is offered in fourteen departments, Education and Business being the most popular.

Students who are happy with the size of the school speak of its strong sense of community while noting that even as seniors they still don't know everyone. Only freshmen and sophomores are required to live on campus, but most upperclassmen opt to stay in the residence halls, and there are a variety of planned activities on campus every Thursday through Sunday evenings. Student theater and music groups are popular, and on a typical Saturday night many students will attend a campus event earlier in the evening before heading off to a small party or to sample the local music and bar scene. Worcester's many excellent restaurants are a big draw as well.

Worcester has its sketchy areas, but Clark students maintain that there's no problem so long as one behaves sensibly, and actually the fact that the city is experiencing a resurgence means they have opportunities to get involved in both social and business projects on the ground floor. They happily see themselves as a bit gritty and "of the city," distinguishing their own attitude from that of Holy Cross's students up on the hill (although, to be fair, Holy Cross students engage in quite a bit of community service themselves). Clark administrators say with pride that in the past

ten years the relationship between their university and the surrounding community has improved greatly.

Clark has D-3 Athletics with 17 varsity sports that enjoy student support primarily when people go out to cheer on their friends; this is definitely not a big tailgate school. However, numerous club sports and pick-up games are popular.

Applicants are admitted holistically, and Clark is a “test optional” school, meaning that SATs and ACTs are not required. For those who do submit the SAT, the median score for both the Critical Reading and Math sections is 610. The average GPA is 3.6.

Identified as a “best buy” in various publications, Clark offers merit awards ranging from \$3,000 to \$23,000 based on the applicant’s GPA and the strength of his or her high school program. Applicants in the top of the pool are invited to write an additional essay to apply for a LEEP scholarship, which provides full tuition, room and board. This year ten students received LEEP scholarships. Their GPA’s averaged 3.7 (recalculated) and they had five Honors or Advanced Placement courses each semester as well as “significant work outside the classroom.”

Application deadlines are November 1<sup>st</sup> for Early Action or Early Decision and January 15<sup>th</sup> for Regular Decision. The review is a bit more lenient for those who apply Early Decision, but only a total of ten or twelve students enter that way each year.

