



Focus on College of the Holy Cross

A Jesuit college with 2,955 undergraduates and no graduate students, Holy Cross is situated on a pretty hilltop campus in Worcester, Massachusetts. Its core philosophy, like that of all Jesuit schools, is to promote scholarship, commitment to the community, and spiritual growth in whatever the individual's faith tradition may be. Slightly more than 50 percent of the students identify as Catholic, and course requirements include only a single religion course, which may be historical, philosophical, or comparative in approach. Both Catholic and Protestant services are held on campus, and an Interfaith Council serves students of all other faiths.

The Holy Cross community is socially open-minded, as evident in their acceptance of openly gay and transgender students and faculty and the prominence of the LGBTQ organization. It is also a fairly diverse community, with domestic students of color comprising 20 to 25% of each class and socioeconomic diversity made possible by the school's policy of meeting 100% of accepted students' demonstrated need.

The atmosphere is intellectual and the courses rigorous, typically requiring three hours of work outside of class for every hour spent in class. Four courses is considered the regular course-load, with the option for upperclassmen and some rare freshmen to take a fifth course Pass-Fail.

Students describe themselves and their classmates as driven to succeed academically but not competitive with one another, and they praise the faculty for their accessibility and commitment to teaching and mentoring. With an average class size of 19, this is not a place for students who wish to hide. The importance of

class participation is emphasized and in many cases counts for as much as twenty-five percent of the student's grade.

Holy Cross offers 28 majors, all liberal arts rather than career-oriented, several minors, and a number of "concentrations," which are interdisciplinary constellations of six or seven courses. Popular concentrations include Biological Psychology and Peace and Conflict Studies. Students may also design their own majors and minors, subject to approval. A Teacher Education program enables would-be teachers to earn certification by the time they graduate, and focused programs in Pre-Health, Pre-Law, Pre-Business, and Pre-Engineering guide students headed for professional schools after graduation.

Research opportunities are abundant in all fields, as are opportunities for study abroad, which are highly encouraged and possible to do almost anywhere a student could wish. Typically 25% to 35% of the junior class studies abroad, many for the full year. Even for pre-Med students, Holy Cross works to make study abroad possible, and a "Maymester" enables athletes and anyone else who can't go abroad during the regular school year to do so during the month of May.

The Career Planning and Summer Internship Office helps students find employment throughout their college years as well as afterward. A Washington Semester Program combines an internship at a D.C.-based agency or office with a seminar on public policy and an independent research project. A Summer Internship Program (SIP) enables approximately 200 students to obtain internships in a wide variety of industries throughout the country that are specifically for Holy Cross students.

Despite its comparatively small size, Holy Cross has a Division 1 sports program, and students say they enjoy supporting the teams, especially because they know the athletes as friends and classmates.

Although upperclassmen are allowed to live off campus, most opt to stay in the residence halls, and students say that the social life on campus offers something for everyone, including parties where it's possible for even non-drinkers to have fun, school-sponsored "stress-free Saturday" activities, and a wide variety of events put on by the residence halls. There is also a free shuttle students may take to Boston or Providence, each of which is a 45-minute ride away.

Although the work is challenging, students say the support is exceptionally strong for those both with and without learning differences. The humanities and social science courses are writing-intensive, and students speak enthusiastically of the professional and peer tutors who will help them edit their work.

The admissions process is holistic but painstaking. At least two readers familiar with the high schools assign each candidate grades for both academic and personal qualities before presenting them to committee with quotations pulled from their recommendations and frequent "revisits" to the application essays. Holy Cross is a test-optional school, and approximately 50% of the candidates apply without submitting standardized test scores. The admissions officers say that no one is

penalized for not submitting them, and that in fact SAT scores below the mid-600's are probably not worth submitting. On the other hand, A.P. and in some cases SAT Subject test scores can be most helpful. Intended major no longer plays a role in admissions, as everyone enters "undeclared."

Early Decision 12/15 confers an advantage in the admissions process. Regular Decision is 1/15. Overall the admit rate is approximately one-third.

