



Focus on Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart University, founded in 1963, is a non-denominational Catholic university in Fairfield, Connecticut, with approximately 4,300 undergraduates and another 3,500 graduate students. Due to its location, relative newness, or both, the university has attracted major donations that have sparked a spirit of innovation, energizing the educational programming and enabling construction of facilities that meet the faculty's wish lists. With much new construction recently completed and more still in the works, the university plans to grow its undergraduate population to 4,450.

The Jack Welch College of Business (named for General Electric's CEO) has for many years been among the university's most highly regarded divisions and produces 25% of its graduates. The "Welch experience in Business" gives every first year student a "Sherpa," an upper-class mentor to guide him or her in all aspects of campus life from course selection to how to behave at networking events. Every month the program also brings to campus the CEO or CFO of a different prominent company to speak about his or her experiences, and another unusual perk these students enjoy is free golf lessons because the ability to hold one's own on the golf course is believed advantageous for people working in business.

The university recently bought a 150-acre property ten miles north of campus with a golf course and clubhouse. They are currently in talks with the PGA and hope to bring in a program in Golf Hospitality and Management.

Sacred Heart's Nursing and Health Sciences programs receive the greatest number of applicants although currently the number of them that can be accommodated is limited. Nursing, the only major students are required to apply to directly from high school, is therefore more selective than the rest of the university. It currently enrolls 100 students each year, but that number is slated to increase after completion of a new Nursing and Health Sciences building for which the university will break ground in June 2016.

Spring 2015 saw the opening of an impressive new building to house both the School of Communications and the Business School. It was designed to hold both so as to maximize the natural synergy between those disciplines and so increase their graduates' marketability.

In addition to fiber optic and other state-of-the art technology, Communications students have access to opportunities at both the university's own radio station and WSHU, which is one of Connecticut's two National Public Radio affiliates. Sacred Heart's aim is to build up the entire Media Arts program so that it rivals the nation's best.

Within the School of Arts and Sciences, the majority of students enter "undecided," but the university has made a strong commitment to helping them find their way by providing each of them with an upper-class mentor, an academic advisor who is one of their first year professors, and a career office counselor. Across all the schools, Sacred Heart students have the same Core Curriculum although the schools each offer different courses that can satisfy them. Advising provides many "touch points" throughout an undergraduate's career here to ensure that no one falls through the cracks and that most who wish to graduate in 4 years succeed in doing so.

The Career Development and Placement Center plays a prominent role in SHU students' lives right from their first semester on campus, and many majors require an internship for graduation. Both these factors may be credited with the success of graduates, as reflected in reports that 99% of the 2014 graduates seeking employment were employed one year after graduation, and approximately 39% of the class went on to graduate and professional school. For those wishing to pursue a Master's degree at SHU, a special track makes it possible to do so in most disciplines with just one additional year, provided they maintain the requisite GPA and take the necessary courses.

Another of SHU's noteworthy statistics is that the average student is involved in four different extracurricular activities or organizations. Community service is extremely popular, and the 7 fraternities and sororities are each committed to a specific philanthropic or social awareness cause. Athletics play a large role in campus life too, with 32 Division 1 teams, of which football and rugby are the most popular, and 24 club sports as well as intramural teams. Opportunities for students interested in dance, choir, band and theater abound too.

Although approximately 80 percent of the students self-identify as Catholic and Saturday night Mass is widely attended, students say that for the most part they are not really so religious. The most popular courses taken to satisfy the religious study requirement are World Religions and Eastern Religions, and they say that many, including non-Catholics, attend Saturday night Mass primarily because it is a social event and the clergy understand young people's issues and know how to connect with them.

Study abroad is encouraged, and approximately 50% of students do so for several weeks, a semester or more. Many participate in programs at the university's own campus in Luxembourg, and even the nursing students are given an opportunity to take some pre-nursing and core classes in Ireland. Students may also connect with those from other schools to study in many other countries too.

Admitted students generally have A-/B+ averages and lots of extracurricular involvement. Sacred Heart is test optional, except for the School of Nursing and Health Professions, where they must have a minimum of 1200 on the SAT or 26 on the ACT (or a bit lower if their grades and program or study are strong). Nursing students must have at least a 3.5 GPA. For Arts and Sciences or Business, admitted students generally need a 3.2 GPA and 24 or 25 on the ACT. If their scores are lower and the rest of their application is stronger, they are advised not to submit the scores.

The FAFSA and CSS Profile are both required for financial aid, and there are a variety of ways students can earn merit scholarships. No separate application is required for the Honors Program, but students with talent in Chorus, Band and Performing Arts should visit the website to learn about merit money for which they might qualify, in some cases following an audition.

The (binding) Early Decision deadline is November 1, the (non-binding) Early Action deadline is December 15th, and Rolling Admission Priority is given to applications received by February 15th.

