



The University of Washington's Suzzallo Library is a campus landmark.

ROAD TRIPS

The best way to experience a college is to see it firsthand. *U.S. News* knows you can't visit them all, so our reporters toured 15 schools in the Pacific Northwest, Michigan, and New York and sent back their impressions.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The Pacific Northwest is a panoramic playground of mountains, rivers, and wind farms, and this topographical wonderland plays an important role in student life—academic and otherwise—at these five schools. We wandered through campuses big and small in Washington and Oregon and noted a certain pioneer spirit that repeatedly popped up in innovative curriculums, adventurous off-campus programs, and an appreciation of quirky individualism. So come along

for the tour, but bring your umbrella—the region is as wet as it is beautiful. Profiles by Michael Morella

A RESEARCH HAVEN UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

A 10-foot-long wind tunnel, where air can blow up to 200 mph, hums in an unassuming brick building near the center of the University of Washington campus in northeast Seattle. NASA and Boeing have tested products here, as has cycling's Lance Armstrong. The wind tunnel's crew members? Under-

graduate students who attend the school, known locally as "U-Dub."

The university receives the second highest amount of federal dollars for research in the country, according to the Center for Measuring University Performance at Arizona State University. In fact, one of every five of the almost 30,000 undergraduate students participated in projects during the 2009-10 academic year, says Janice De-Cosmo, director of the Undergraduate Research Program and associate dean of undergraduate academic affairs. Many of these projects involve cutting-edge science or new technology (like the development of a prosthetic titanium rib to help people with respiratory problems

or a computerized contact lens that actually connects to the Internet), but others range from history to the digital arts.

Founded 150 years ago, UW became one of the West Coast's first public universities. Everything on the 643-acre campus seems conceived on a generous scale, including the 72,500-seat Husky Stadium. Elegant brick buildings and cherry blossom trees mark the Liberal Arts Quad, and Suzzallo Library, UW's Gothic "cathedral of higher learning," is a campus landmark.

About 150 majors are offered at UW, along with 700-plus clubs and student organizations. Undergraduates, however, are not necessarily assured of getting their major of choice. The most popular, including biochemistry, psychology, and engineering, are competitive and students must apply to be accepted into these programs.

Between classes, students mingle in the vibrant atmosphere of Seattle's University District, dotted with banks and bookstores, bars and boutiques. As one would expect in the city where Starbucks was founded, the area has many cafes and coffee shops that fill with students and their laptops in the late afternoons.

Those who crave the outdoors can row or kayak along the waterways off the campus's sweeping southern border or drive two hours out to Mount Rainier National Park to hike or ski. (Mount Rainier's peak can be seen from campus—at least for about a third of the time, when the often present clouds blow away.)

Since on-campus housing is not guaranteed, about one third of incoming freshmen find spots in town. The school is building more dorms, but plenty of Huskies enjoy living in neighborhoods around Seattle, though housing costs can vary. (Room and board on campus runs about \$9,700.) In 2011-12, state budget cuts will lead to hikes in tuition and fees. In-state residents will pay \$10,300, almost \$2,000 more than last year. (Out-of-staters will pay about \$27,800, which rep-

resents about a 10 percent increase.)

Though the school often unites around its 19 varsity sports teams, Washington's huge size can be a little daunting. "I'm still learning about things that I have access to that I didn't know about," says senior Caitlin Donnelly of Snoqualmie Valley, Wash. To explore their options, freshmen and sophomores can meet with advisers in multiple disciplines to help them choose a course of study. Still, students and faculty members agree that Huskies must take the initiative to navigate all that UW has to offer. "It really does push you to find your niche," says 2011 graduate Afton Tyler of Vancouver, Wash. Then "you have to make a point to make yourself stand out."

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

WHITMAN COLLEGE

Last year, Whitman College junior David McGaughey spent his fall semester sleeping under the stars, talking with biologists and ranchers about the reintroduction of wolves into the western United States, and studying other environmental issues—all while earning academic credit. McGaughey, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was one of 21 students who

participated in Whitman's Semester in the West program, a 14-week field immersion course led by one professor and two assistants. The students traversed 10 states, bonding with one another and their instructors as they learned and wrote about how scientific and political concerns affect environmental policy.

That kind of multifaceted experience is just one distinctive aspect of Whitman, a private college of roughly 1,500 undergraduates in Walla Walla, Wash. The city's quaint downtown gives way to the charm of the school's campus. Red-brick dormitories and other university buildings surround Ankeny Field, the sprawling green at the center of campus.

The school attracts more women than men (at about a 58 to 42 ratio) and nearly two thirds come from out of state. The cost (tuition, fees, room, and board can run about \$50,000) is fairly typical for a traditional private liberal arts education. All first-year students must enroll in a year-long "Encounters" course, which combines a foundational writing class with a cultural survey of texts from Euripides and the Bhagavad Gita to Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Taught by more than two dozen faculty members, Encounters is designed to give students a "shared intellectual space" that they can refer back to in later classes, says Rebecca Hanrahan, associate professor of philosophy and director of the course. Under-



A chemistry class at Whitman College, which boasts a low 10 to 1 student-teacher ratio

graduates can later pick from about 45 different majors and 31 minors, as well as a fair number of electives. Each major culminates with a “senior assessment,” which could take the form of a thesis, test, project, or oral exam. “Students work very hard, but not to the point where they don’t have a life,” says 2011 graduate Gary Wang of Plano, Texas.

Most students live in residence halls, but even those who find housing in town tend to stay involved with campus life. Intramural sports are popular and many students participate in drama productions at the school’s Harper Joy Theatre. Debating is also a hot activity at Whitman, which generally excels in national competitions. Though there are several campus fraternities and sororities, many Whitties see them as just another extracurricular option, not the guiding social force on campus. In fact, the challenge is more in choosing what to focus on. “Everybody wants to put their toes in a hundred different things,” says Derek Thurber of Fort Collins, Colo., who graduated this past May.

Some students say Whitman can feel a little isolated in eastern Washington. Yet undergraduates rarely seem at a loss for something to do. The campus always seems in motion, particularly on sunny afternoons, when Whitties take to Ankeny Field for games of lacrosse, volleyball, Frisbee, and soccer.

A QUIRKY INDIVIDUALISM REED COLLEGE

Reed College’s Hauser Memorial Library stores every senior thesis ever written by its graduates, but Reedies find other reasons to visit the building they alternatively call the Hauser Fun Dome. Visitors can grab multi-colored jump-ropes to exercise away their stress and eat food provided free by other students during exam weeks, when Survivor’s “Eye of the Tiger” is also replayed hourly for inspiration. At

Reed, academic rigor and goofy good humor coexist throughout the campus. (The student union boasts a well-used couch mounted on a mammoth pink and teal seesaw.)

Though there are older schools in the Pacific Northwest, 100-year-old Reed in Portland, Ore., stands out for its classics-infused curriculum. Every first-year student is required to take Humanities 110, a comprehensive survey of ancient

sors don’t present their students with marks or course grades but instead return assignments with thorough written comments (sometimes longer than the essays themselves). Students say this approach helps them focus more on what they are actually learning, rather than on finding shortcuts to higher grades. Reedies can always ask to see their grades and transcripts if they wish, however, and about half of



Devin Judge-Lord, a 2010 Reed graduate, participates in a semiannual cleanup of the local area.

Greek, Roman, and Mediterranean literature. Lectures covering many disciplines are interspersed with smaller-group seminars called “conferences” and one-on-one meetings with instructors.

“Imagine an entire campus where everyone’s read Aristotle,” says classics professor Ellen Millender, who teaches the course. Students and professors tend to agree that this shared immersion in the classics helps level the academic playing field among students who arrive on campus with different degrees of preparation. As a complement to Humanities 110, students can sample offerings that cut across 35 major programs in the arts, humanities, physical sciences, and social sciences. As at Whitman, the curriculum does not currently include majors in career-track fields like business, journalism, or education.

Another curricular quirk at Reed is the de-emphasis on grades. Profes-

them do. Despite this unconventional approach to grading, Reed typically ranks near the top of all U.S. schools in the percentage of graduates who go on to earn Ph.D.’s, in fields ranging from the humanities to the physical sciences.

The school doesn’t offer varsity sports, but intramural and club sports are popular. Since Reed is located in a wooded neighborhood of southeast Portland, students can reach the downtown in 25 minutes by city bus. Those who stay on campus often participate in events like Eighties-themed dance parties. The undergrads also tend to embrace a non-conformist dress code—a Reedie might stroll through campus wearing a bathrobe or a tie-dyed bodysuit. “Everybody’s in their heads so much, they don’t really think about it,” says Devin Judge-Lord of New Hope, Wis., a 2010 graduate who stayed in the area but is headed next to grad school at Yale.

MATT SLABY—LUCERO FOR USN&WR



Undergraduates at Lewis & Clark College in Portland take a break between classes. Most students do a study-abroad program.

The workload is heavy, and Reed's small size (roughly 1,500 undergraduates) can make it feel like a fishbowl to some. And the price tag isn't cheap: tuition, fees, room, and board run about \$54,000. But it's the mix of academic rigor and quirky atmosphere that attracts many to the school. Celia Oney, a 2011 graduate from Northfield, Minn., became a licensed operator of Reed's washing machine-sized nuclear research reactor, the only one of its kind run primarily by students at an American liberal arts college. She now hopes to go into nuclear research, though her major was in the classics. The two disciplines may seem widely divergent, but Oney thinks her academic experience can only help her and says she is happy she had the chance to pursue "learning for the sake of learning."

A MULTICULTURAL SCENE

LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE

A walk through the 137-acre campus of Lewis & Clark College can be an ex-

plorer's treat. Not only does a lush ravine, part of nearby Tryon Creek State Park, cut across the grounds, but the snow-capped peak of Mount Hood can be seen in the distance. The campus, located in southwest Portland, runs uphill from the academic buildings to the residence halls. "We're all about scaling," says senior Zachary Holz of New Windsor, Md. Whether that means cresting the hill to their dorms, studying environmental preservation in Ecuador, or pursuing biology in East Africa, Lewis & Clark students tend to be mindful of what lies beyond campus. More than 60 percent of the undergraduates participate in study-abroad programs during their time at the school, and international students make up close to 10 percent of the student body.

An "international element is woven so deeply into what we do," says Greg Caldwell, who retired as associate dean of students this spring after 35 years at Lewis & Clark. "It's accepted, it's welcomed, it's celebrated." That celebration might take the form of an international symposium, cultural fair, or simply living in Akin Hall, the school's

multicultural dormitory, which houses about 60 students from the United States and around the world. It all makes sense at an institution named for two pioneering 19th-century American explorers.

When Lewis & Clark students study abroad, they tend to do so in groups—and often with faculty members—so they can let those overseas conversations carry back to Portland. The school has developed about three dozen such semester-long programs, with additional shorter-term opportunities available from particular professors and campus groups. Total costs per year for students run about \$48,500. And those who study abroad generally have to pay only about \$500 more.

For more recreational getaways, the College Outdoors club organizes hiking, river rafting, and cross-country skiing trips at locations across the Pacific Northwest. For those who want local entertainment, downtown Portland is about 30 minutes away by the school's free shuttle bus. (Some students say the school could benefit by having a few more on-campus recreation spots.)

Lewis & Clark's close to 2,000 undergraduates can choose from 28 majors, which can be a bit limiting; for example, there are no business or accounting programs. But students can devote roughly one third of their classes to electives.

Overall, though, it's the college's emphasis on multi-dimensional cultural awareness that sets it apart. As junior Matthew Rugamba from Rwanda wryly notes: "I just wanted to be with students who knew that Rwanda is not a hotel."

THE SPORTING LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

With about 19,500 undergraduates and just under 4,000 graduate students, the University of Oregon can justifiably call itself a "medium-size" school. The campus can be traversed by foot in about 15 minutes, but many students prefer to bike it. Cycling lanes wind across UO's 295-acre Eugene campus, which sets aside about twice as many spots for bikes as it does for cars.

The campus's commitment to fitness suits a school based in the city often referred to as "Track Town USA." The university's celebrated track and field stadium, Hayward Field, hosted the U.S. Olympic Team track trials in 2008 and will do so again in 2012. Nike co-founders Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight attended the school, and Knight's name is emblazoned on buildings throughout the campus, from the library to the new \$200 million basketball arena, which he helped underwrite.

The UO campus glows with green (one of the school's official colors) whether it's seen in the painted duck footprints that line many sidewalks or manifested in environmentally friendly structures, like the Lillis Business Complex

with its energy-saving solar panels. Some other newer facilities don't mesh as well with the historic architecture of the older buildings, but the campus is dotted with plenty of sculptures and trees that please the eye.

Admission to the school is not extremely competitive. Of the 22,000 applicants last year, about 17,000 were admitted. Roughly one fifth of undergraduates (mostly freshmen) live on campus. Some lucky students can even apply for rooms in the university's newest dorm, the Living-Learning Center, which includes both living spaces and classrooms, allowing fortunate residents to roll out of bed and walk downstairs to class.

Though the Ducks sports teams receive a lot of media coverage, the university also boasts top-notch programs in business, journalism, economics, and the sciences, among others. And architecture students have the opportunity of venturing to the state capital of Salem, about 60 miles north of campus, where they work on projects that range from developing that city's downtown waterfront to designing mixed-use housing developments.

Roughly 3,600 classes are offered each term representing some 75 majors, but students say they appreciate UO's ability to keep the student-to-

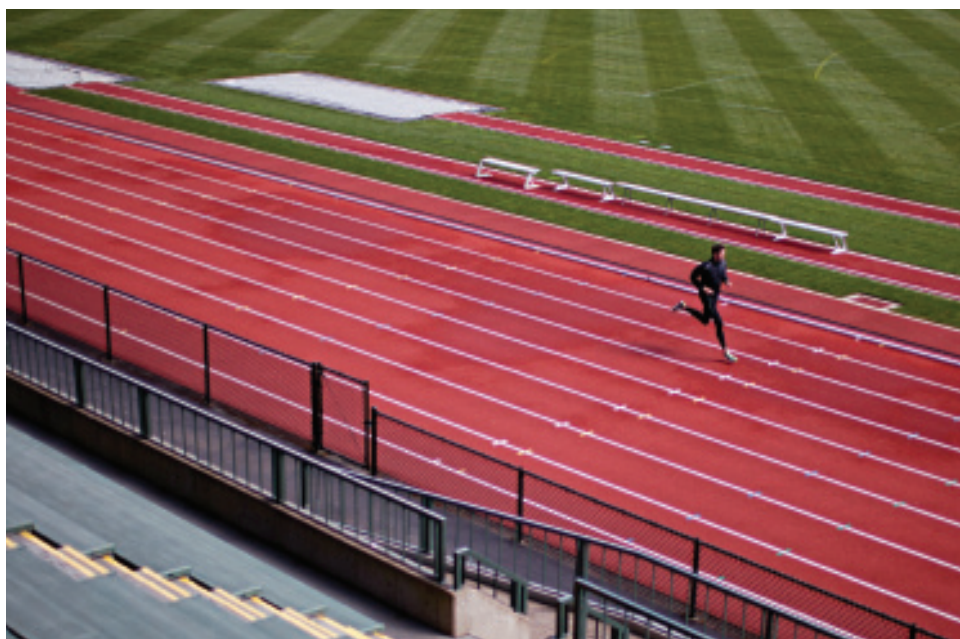
teacher ratio to a very manageable 20 to 1.

Outside the classroom, the student government controls a \$12 million budget, doling out money to 250 or so clubs and organizations. These range from ballroom dancing and a cappella groups to the pre-dental club and various multicultural associations. (The *Oregon Daily Emerald's* budget actually allows it to pay its reporters).

Many undergraduates spend their free time hanging out at the restaurants and shops lining the "campus downtown," along East 13th Avenue, or head into Eugene for the lively music scene. As Tara Celentano of Portland, who graduated this past spring, puts it, "There are things to get stoked on."

Over the past few years, state budget cuts have sapped some of the university's resources. Tuition and fees run about \$8,800 for Oregonians and \$27,700 for out-of-state students. Living and food costs generally average about \$9,500.

Students say the university can't completely shake the big state school vibe, with its large lecture halls and the attention (and resources) devoted to sports. Still, says Nora Simon, a 2011 graduate from Manhattan, Kan., "there are a lot of little places that you can get involved in that make you stand out." ●



The University of Oregon's Hayward Field will host the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team track trials.