

Pacific Northwest Colleges  
College Counselors Tour  
March 2007

The Pacific Northwest Colleges Consortium hosted a group of 47 college counselors from around the country to visit *University of Puget Sound, Whitman College, Reed College, Willamette College* and *Lewis & Clark College*. At each school, the counselors had the opportunity to meet and spend time with the College President, Dean of Admission, members of the faculty, and students, as well as attend classes and tour the campuses.

This experience gave us valuable insights into the academic and social vision of each college, innovative courses and departments, and admissions policies in order to better advise our students in their college search. Here are some highlights from each college:

**Some commonalities among small liberal arts colleges**

- Holistic education based on “learning how to think”
- Students often have interdisciplinary majors
- Small class size, often seminar-style
- Classes taught by professors, not teaching assistants
- Professors know students, may act as mentors, often friends
- Well-kept campuses, many new facilities
- Usually state-of-the-art science labs and classroom facilities
- Opportunities for undergraduate research with faculty in all fields
- Friendly campus community
- 40-80% of students may study abroad at least one semester
- Athletics usually Division III
- Generous financial aid

**UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND, Tacoma, WA**

[www.ups.edu](http://www.ups.edu)

*Highlights & Admissions Facts:*

Applicants for class of 2010: 5,231

Number admitted: 3,388

Freshman class size: 678

Women: 59.9%; Men: 40.1% (reflects national trend)

Average GPA: 3.55

Average SAT: Verbal 633, Math 614

Demographics: 25% from Washington, 17% from CA, 22+% from Oregon and Colorado, balance from Midwest and East.

Strong/popular majors: Biology, Asian Studies, Business, Int'l. Political Economy  
English

UPS is located in a residential area near old town Tacoma. Like all colleges in the Northwest, there is a strong focus on the outdoors and regular weekend trips are planned for skiing, hiking, kayaking and other activities. However, it is not necessary to be “outdoorsy” to attend UPS. Seattle and all its big city offerings are less than an hour away.



“Prelude, Passages & Perspectives” is the highly regarded freshman orientation program. The UPS Core Curriculum begins with 2 first-year seminars, *Writing and Rhetoric* and *Scholarly and Creative Inquiry*, followed by upper division *Approaches to Knowing* and *Connections*, each in specific major disciplines. Freshman seminars are chosen from such topics as “Salsa, Samba and Soccer: Popular Culture in Latin America” to “Rhetoric, Film, and National Identity” to “Making Musical Theatre.”

Harned Hall is the new state-of-the-art science center for biology, chemistry, geology, physics and environmental sciences. Many students take part in research grants with faculty, even going to the Galapagos Islands to do research on evolutionary biology! A very high percentage of applicants (70-80%) are accepted to medical and other professional graduate programs. UPS offers an interdisciplinary major in Business; has a full symphony orchestra, concert band, jazz band and choral program; is the only liberal arts college to offer a nine-month study tour of Asia; many grads are awarded Fulbright, Watson, Rhodes and National Science Fellowships; and, among colleges of its size, had the highest number of Peace Corps volunteers.



## **WHITMAN COLLEGE, Walla Walla, WA**

[www.whitman.edu](http://www.whitman.edu)

### Highlights & Admissions Facts:

Applicants for class of 2010: 2,821

Admitted: 1,339 (49%)

Freshman class size: 369

Women: 59%, Men: 41%

GPA: Mid-50%: 3.59 – 3.95

SAT: Critical Reading 620-720, Math 620-690

ACT: 28-32

Demographics: 32% from Washington, 16% CA, 20% Oregon and Colorado,

Balance from Southwest, Southeast, Hawaii, Midwest and East

Ethnic diversity, including international students: 24.3% (11% are first-generation college students)

80% receive some Financial Aid

13 of the international students enrolled last year received need-aware, merit scholarships

Two scholarship programs of note: *Visit Scholarship Program*, in which high school seniors from underrepresented socio-economic, racial and cultural backgrounds are invited to an expense-paid visit to Whitman; *William O. Douglas Scholarships* for students with need who demonstrate the ability to contribute to increasing socio-economic and multi-cultural diversity awareness at Whitman, and who may not have the ability to visit the campus.

Although Whitman is located in Walla Walla in arid desert country of southeastern



Washington, an admissions officer advised us that “rural doesn’t mean there is nothing to do!” There are 100+ student organizations and 30 varsity, club and intramural sports teams. The recently formed cycling team (a club sport) is a two-time national champion. The Outdoor Program offerings are among the country’s most extensive and students can rent equipment for any weekend sport or activity.

According to the President, Whitman students love academic challenges and are “difference makers.” There are particularly strong programs in Theatre, Music and Debate. There are a number of a capella groups on campus – we heard the male T’Tones (Testotertones) and they were fabulous! Many of the counselors purchased CD’s of these groups.

Core is a two-semester program for freshmen, *Antiquity* and *Modernity*, which creates a foundation for the collaborative classroom style at Whitman. Students study the classics and great books from ancient to modern times. Faculty from all departments of the college teach the courses, and all freshman study the same curriculum, which promotes in-depth discussions among the students during their first year. An optional upper-division course, *Alternative & Critical Views* deconstructs what was learned in the first two courses. Whitman is the first and among the few colleges in the country to require that seniors complete a culminating oral comprehensive exam in their major.

*Semester in the West* is a unique program in which 21 students take a 100-day camping road trip throughout the southwest with faculty. Students earn 16 units in Ecology, Politics and Writing in this innovative course.

The *Undergrad Conference* is held each spring and is a forum for students to present their papers and research. Generally 150-175 students make presentations in all areas of study. For example, one student studied overseas in Sri Lanka and did a report on Textiles, based on her research on women making L.L.Bean clothing in the Free Trade Zone in Sri Lanka. (About 45% of Whitman students study abroad.)

The faculty we met were scholarly, but highly accessible mentors to their students. There is a close-knit community of students and faculty on campus. *Perry Scholars* collaborate with faculty members on summer research. One pair of students, for example, performed a project in Africa and then presented their research at an International Conference in Bulgaria.

Strong programs are Politics, Biology, History, Environmental Studies, English and Music. There is no Business program at Whitman. The drama department puts on up to 12 productions each year. Whitman is academically challenging, but one has the impression that the atmosphere here is cooperative and collaborative.



## REED COLLEGE, Portland, Oregon

[www.reed.edu](http://www.reed.edu)

Reed's 100-acre campus is located in a residential area of Portland, has rolling lawns, a creek and protected wetlands. The student body numbers about 1300. Reedies are unique, non-conformist and intensely intellectual. The first student we saw on campus was walking to class in the rain barefoot. The atmosphere on this campus is not for your average student. Every student is an Honor student. While it is not competitive, Reed students are always reading and debating and thinking, just for fun. They appear to revel in their intellectual pursuits.

A recent Philosophy graduate who sat at our table for dinner said that she was always "different" at her East Bay public school. For her, coming to Reed was a breath of fresh air – she finally felt accepted. The students we met at the student panel were incredibly enthusiastic about Reed and their particular fields of study. One of them insisted on the panel chanting the first line of The Iliad, which they learned the first day of class and which students often chant at events! A freshman on the panel said he was surprised at the intellectual discussions and debate which take place outside of class.



Senior Theses, Library Tower

One of the hallmarks of Reed is the Humanities 110 class. This is a multi-disciplinary course which studies at least two classical cultures and introduces freshmen to the "conference" structure of classes at Reed. The course is taught by Reed's most distinguished faculty. (The reading list is most impressive!)

Freshman traditionally take 3 classes; sophomores begin their core curriculum requirements, along with their chosen major courses; juniors prepare for the Qualifying Exam in their major, which they must pass before beginning their Senior Thesis. If a student has a double major, or an interdisciplinary major, she must pass the Qual in both areas. Seniors begin working on their thesis at the beginning of the year, and spend approximately 10 hours each week on research and writing, along with their other courses. They present an oral defense in the spring in front of a panel of faculty. Seniors then have a Thesis Parade and throw the weekend-long Renn Fayre.

Students receive lengthy evaluations, no grades. One student, used to excelling in high school, told us she was quite offended to receive 3-pages of comments on a paper she submitted. She then realized that the professor's goal was not to grade or to criticize, but to show her how to re-write it to make it better. Students and faculty at Reed are colleagues and peers. Only about 37% of students, usually juniors and seniors, even know their GPA. It is not a concern to them.

Reed is the only college in the U.S. to have a nuclear reactor on campus. The Gray Fund is available to students for special projects. Funding is also available for student research projects or travel. About 40% of Reedies study abroad. There seem to be unlimited academic opportunities and options for such a small school.



## **WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY, Salem, Oregon**

[www.willamette.edu](http://www.willamette.edu)

### Admission Facts:

Freshman class size: 480

Applicants: 1,800 - applications have increased 80%.

Median GPA: 3.74

SAT Verbal: 580-690 Math: 580-670

ACT: 24-30

Gender: 55% Women 45% Men

Demographics: 36 states, 15 countries; 32% from Oregon, 20% Washington, 18% California, 19% other Western states, 12% non-Western states



### Willamette highlights and soundbites:

First university in the West

New academic building planned

9:1 student/faculty ratio is the goal (currently 11:1). The number of faculty will be increased, while the number of students will decrease.

New President, planning many changes in the coming years.

Diversity has doubled in past 8 years, and they are actively recruiting diverse students in all contexts.

Willamette is deeply committed to community service.

Scholarship program is among the most generous in the West

Most popular major: Politics – Willamette is located literally across the street from the State Capitol. 9 out of 10 congressional interns come from the university.

3 U.S. Congressmen and 1 Senator have Willamette degrees.

New 3-2 business program

Strong Theater program

Guest Artist program

Parliamentary Debate Program

Chemistry: well-rounded engaged students, innovative curriculum with real world applications in science classes, case studies model (We observed Science and Math students working very closely in their departments with their professors in situations outside the classroom. Professors all have an open door policy.)

Exercise Science Program - not offered in many colleges

Summer Collaborative Research Project – 10 week grants for students to work with faculty. Also receive Lilly Grants, Carson Grants, many fellowships.

50-60% study abroad.

Seniors required to complete a Senior Capstone Experience in their major.

Campus: Lovely campus with lawns, a creek which runs through the main areas, Clean, modern brick buildings



## **LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE, Portland, Oregon**

[www.lclark.edu](http://www.lclark.edu)

### Admission Facts:

5300 applications for 500 spots – huge increase in applications this year

GPA: 99% have 3.0+ Mean: 3.8

SAT: 1230-1360 (CR + M only)

ACT: 27-30

\*Lewis & Clark gives applicants the option to submit a *Portfolio*, in place of test scores: 4 graded, 3 teacher recommendations (7-8% of applicants choose this option.)

17% of student body are of color, not including international students

Demographics: 47 states, 27 countries and territories; 20% from California

### Highlights and Soundbites:

(President's and Dean's remarks)

Ten years ago, Lewis & Clark significantly improved the quality of the faculty and students; fourteen nationally known scholars with a passion for teaching were hired. The focus is to continue to hire new, dynamic, young faculty-scholars.

"Students receive a holistic education at Lewis & Clark."

40-50 students do summer research in all disciplines.

(Faculty panel)

About 20 faculty members from all departments were introduced and were asked to describe what they were doing in their classes that day. This was quite an impressive exercise – the topics, presentations and field work in every class were extremely creative, substantive and made us all want to head immediately to their classes. For example, one class was interviewing a 101-year-old woman from Portland who is the oldest Isei survivor in the Northwest of the Japanese internment camps.

(Student Panel)

Lots of girls in Math department

"phenomenal financial aid package"

Lewis & Clark/New York City abroad program

There is a mentoring committee for student athletes

Class sizes: 12-18, some classes 30-40, large classes up to 85 with smaller sections,

Students have to have a good work ethic.

To thrive, you need to participate in more than one thing. In liberal arts colleges, unlike high school, everyone is a "big fish" so you must become involved.

Many clubs and sports, also Homecoming, International Food Fair, Luau, even a Naked Run School focuses on International Relations.

Students can also take classes at Portland State and Reed.



The Lewis and Clark campus began as a Tudor estate, with beautiful gardens and fountains. There are three new apartment-style residence halls. All students are required to have competency in a foreign language and foreign study, including other core curriculum requirements. Many seniors do a Capstone Project. The most popular majors are

International Affairs, Psychology, Environmental Studies, Studio Arts and English. Students tend to be liberal, laid-back, and many are outdoor enthusiasts. Community service and social causes are important. Sports do exist, NCAA Division III, and facilities are excellent. There is a thriving College Outdoors Program.

There is a Main Stage performance theatre, Black Box, Music Auditorium and practice rooms, including 4 pipe organs, many performing groups, a radio station, and Museum.

For a view of life at Lewis & Clark, visit [www.lclark.edu/reallife](http://www.lclark.edu/reallife)



Please visit the websites of each of these colleges for a better look at what each institution has to offer. You can take a virtual campus tour, view admission requirements, see what campus life and activities are like, and, under the Academics section of the website, find a department or major which interests you to see the courses offered and the graduation requirements for the major.

The College & Career Center has viewbooks, course catalogs and information on these and many more colleges.

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