

A Taste of California Colleges

This past summer I attended the first annual Grand SLAM tour of California colleges. Over three days I visited nine very different and diverse private colleges and universities that offer unique opportunities to remarkable students from around the world. Situated in and around Los Angeles county, one thing each campus definitely has in common is the beautiful sunshine and warm weather. What's not to like about that? Another common feature is that these nine schools figure among the top in starting median career salary according to the 2011-2012 PayScale College Salary Report (<http://www.payscale.com/best-colleges/top-us-colleges-graduate-salary-statistics.asp>). Here are some quick highlights from the tour.

California Institute of Technology (Caltech)

Pasadena, California <http://www.caltech.edu/>

Mission Statement

To expand human knowledge and benefit society through research integrated with education. We investigate the most challenging, fundamental problems in science and technology in a singularly collegial, interdisciplinary atmosphere, while educating outstanding students to become creative members of society.

Quick Facts

- Undergraduate enrollment of 978 students.
- Residential house system – undergraduates try out residences and select the best fit.
- Paid undergraduate research opportunities and summer undergraduate research fellowship program.
- Honor code assessment policy: "No member of the Caltech community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community." Collaboration on homework and other assignments is not just encouraged, it's essential for success. Exams are never proctored (most of them are take-home).
- The application process values experiences in Math and Science in school and out of school - deliberate experience sought out by the student!
- Financial aid available for international students.

Occidental College (Oxy)

Los Angeles, California <http://www.oxy.edu/>

Mission Statement

To provide a gifted and diverse group of students with a total educational experience of the highest quality -- one that prepares them for leadership in an increasingly complex, interdependent and pluralistic world.

Quick Facts

- Undergraduate enrollment of 2123 students.
- A research-intensive Liberal Arts College.
- Oxy's Undergraduate Research Program is widely recognized as one of the best in the United States.
- Top majors include Economics, Diplomacy and World Affairs and Biology.
- Financial aid available for international students.

Harvey Mudd College

Claremont, California <http://www.hmc.edu/>

Mission Statement

To educate engineers, scientists, and mathematicians, well versed in all of these areas and in the humanities and the social sciences so that they may assume leadership in their fields with a clear understanding of the impact of their work on society.

Quick Facts

- Part of the 'Claremont Colleges' consortium of 5 undergraduate Liberal Arts colleges – students can cross-register for classes at any of the 4 other undergraduate colleges.
- "Science divorced from humanity is worse than no science at all." - founding fathers of HMC.
- 9 majors in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- Pass/fail system in 1st semester.
- Paid summer research internships - 10 weeks long.
- 3 Apker Prize winners in Physics in the last 15 years.
- Student-led honor code.

Pitzer College

Claremont, California <http://www.pitzer.edu/>

Mission Statement

Pitzer College produces engaged, socially responsible citizens of the world through an academically rigorous, interdisciplinary liberal arts education emphasizing social justice, intercultural understanding and environmental sensitivity. The meaningful participation of students, faculty and staff in college governance and academic program design is a Pitzer core value.

- Part of the 'Claremont Colleges' consortium of 5 undergraduate Liberal Arts colleges – students can cross-register for classes at any of the 4 other undergraduate colleges.
- Open art campus - funding for students to put up murals on campus walls.
- Sustainable garden co-op.
- 20% of students create their own major.
- Test optional for international students (no SAT/ACT required).
- 72% of students study abroad.

Scripps College

Claremont, California <http://www.scrippscollege.edu/>

Mission Statement

To develop in its students the ability to think clearly and independently, and the ability to live confidently, courageously, and hopefully.

Quick Facts

- Part of the 'Claremont Colleges' consortium of 5 undergraduate Liberal Arts colleges – students can cross-register for classes at any of the 4 other undergraduate colleges.
- Undergraduate enrollment of 956 students.
- Most popular majors include Psychology, Politics and International Relations and Economics.
- One of the premier women's colleges in the United States.
- Graduates are twice as likely to enter medical/grad school and earn more than their co-ed counterparts.
- Humanities core curriculum - double majors are common and encouraged.
- Need based financial aid and merit scholarships available for international students.

Claremont McKenna College

Claremont, California <http://www.claremontmckenna.edu/>

Mission Statement

To educate its students for thoughtful and productive lives and responsible leadership in business, government, and the professional, and to support faculty and student scholarship that contribute to

intellectual vitality and the understanding of public policy issues.

Quick Facts

- Part of the 'Claremont Colleges' consortium of 5 undergraduate Liberal Arts colleges – students can cross-register for classes at any of the 4 other undergraduate colleges.
- Emphasizes Economics and Political Science.
- Interdisciplinary majors available.
- 10 research institutes - students can complete paid research as freshmen during academic year with summer internships also offered. 80% of students participate.
- 'Athenaeum' dinner program Mon-Thurs with more than 100 distinguished guest speakers per year.
- Accelerated integrated science sequence (27 students, 3 professors).

Pomona College

Claremont, California <http://www.pomona.edu/>

Mission Statement

Through close ties among a diverse group of faculty, staff and classmates, Pomona students are inspired to engage in the probing inquiry and creative learning that enable them to identify and address their intellectual passions. This experience will continue to guide their contributions as the next generation of leaders, scholars, artists and citizens to fulfill the vision of its founders: to bear their added riches in trust for all.

- Part of the 'Claremont Colleges' consortium of 5 undergraduate Liberal Arts colleges – students can cross-register at any of the 4 other undergraduate colleges.
- Undergraduate enrollment of 1560 students - 11% international.
- Top majors include Economics, Math and English.
- Multi-faceted, intellectual, outgoing, collaborative.
- Core requirements in 5 academic areas.
- Need-based financial aid available for international students.

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, California <http://www.usc.edu/>

Mission Statement

The central mission of USC is the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit.

Quick Facts

- Undergraduate enrollment of 17,414 students – 12% international.
- Most popular majors include Arts and Sciences, Business and Engineering.
- One of the world's leading private research institutions.
- 25% of students receive some kind of financial aid.
- Spring admit option – great for students wanting to travel, volunteer or work prior to starting college.

Loyola Marymount University

Los Angeles, California

Mission Statement

The encouragement of learning, the education of the whole person, the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

Quick Facts

- A premier Catholic university rooted in the Jesuit and Marymount traditions.
- Undergraduate enrollment of 5,667 students – 5% international.
- 56 majors available in 8 Colleges and Schools - top majors include Business, Film and Television Production and Engineering.
- Strong history of service-learning and volunteerism.
- LMU students volunteer more than 175,000 service hours a year with 350 community organizations.