

students review

The Students Review series is intended to aid prospective college students in their search by offering insiders' views of selected colleges and universities, as expressed by current undergraduates or recent graduates who have high academic ability. Note that the number of reviewers is small. Consider their personal perspectives as only one factor as you gather information and impressions from many sources.

Our reviewers include 34 alumni who majored in bioengineering (1), biology (6), classics (1), computer science (7), earth systems (1), economics (2), electrical engineering (4), English (1), environmental engineering (1), history (1), humanities (1), Japanese (1), math (6), mathematics & computational science (1), physics (3), political science (1), psychology (1), public policy (1), and symbolic systems (3). (The number of majors exceeds 34 because several reviewers had double majors.) Reviewers' comments appear within quotation marks.

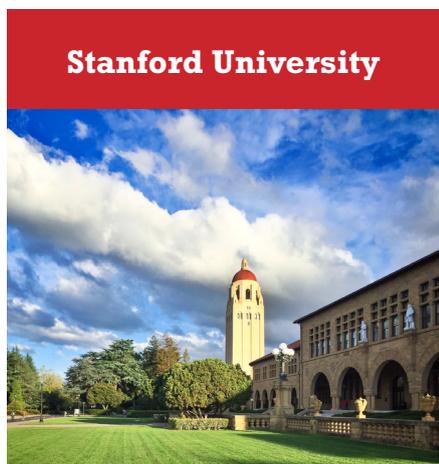
Quality of Academic Instruction for Undergraduates

Reviewers praised Stanford's faculty and the educational and research opportunities.

→ "Overall, the academics are superb. The technical (math, science, and engineering) environment is fantastic, with especially strong undergraduate programs in biology, chemistry, chemical engineering, computer science, engineering, and electrical engineering. The resources and faculty are exceptional—plenty of undergraduate research opportunities available with world-class faculty who are amazingly open to interaction with students."

→ "In every department, the academics are, or rival, the best in the nation. The psychology department faculty list reads like a *Who's Who* from a Psych 101 textbook. Many other departments boast great faculty who really love to teach."

→ "Stanford is abuzz with intellectual energy in fields from computer science to psychology to English. Most of my classes were well taught. Intro courses are large (300 for economics, 400 for physics, for



example), but when I took the initiative to talk to professors, they were always responsive. Stanford offers dozens of small seminars for freshmen and sophomores, which are among the highlights of the first two years."

→ "The computer science and engineering departments are top-notch; this is definitely Stanford's niche among top-tier schools. Proximity and close ties to Silicon Valley give us incredible computer facilities and many valuable internship opportunities. Many of its most successful entrepreneurs are Stanford grads, so these two networks are really close."

→ "Computer science is now the largest major on campus, and it's not unusual for enrollment in the intro computer programming course to be upwards of 500 students. Enrollment in artificial intelligence classes has grown exponentially; a deep learning class went from 100 to 700 people over the last three years."

→ "Stanford has many excellent interdisciplinary majors. Two of the most popular are Symbolic Systems (which includes courses in computer science, philosophy, linguistics, and psychology) and Human Biology (biology and anthropology). Others include Bioengineering, Biomedical Computation, and Science, Technology, & Society. Since the real world is not neatly compartmentalized as it is in academia, the interdisciplinary approach helps students understand the implications of

their work across different disciplines, which ultimately benefits them in their careers after university."

→ "Many departments offer co-terminal Master's degrees, which allow students to become better prepared for their activities after graduation. Most students who do a 'co-term' take a total of five years to finish their combined undergraduate and Master's degrees."

→ "There isn't as much competition or emphasis on grades as I've heard about at other top schools. Students support each other's academic efforts rather than struggling to top one another, even in the most typically cutthroat courses of study (pre-med, finance). In terms of stress, there is a good deal of work, but the culture is laid back. People joke about the 'Stanford duck syndrome'—students who appear totally relaxed, but beneath the surface they are furiously paddling to stay afloat—but the workload certainly isn't overwhelming if you don't want it to be."

Social Life

→ "Unsurpassed. The exposure to intelligent students from all over was incredible. And these students can have fun while pursuing excellence. The beautiful weather, living conditions, friendly atmosphere, and opportunities simply cannot be rivaled. Intramural sports are extremely popular, and the Bay Area is a cultural motherlode."

→ "Stanford is definitely tamer than your typical party school, and much more fun than your typical elite university. The social scene is extremely dorm-centric, especially freshman year (which is a blast!). Afterwards, students tend to find their niche. Most people choose to live in campus housing all four years. There is a huge range of communities, from crazy partying frats to hardcore studious dorms and everything in between."

→ "My favorite thing about the Stanford social life is that it's so accepting. People who live in co-ops like the Enchanted Broccoli Forest go to parties at frat houses and vice versa."

→ "The stereotype of Stanford students being more laid back than their East Coast

counterparts is fairly accurate. Rather than shutting themselves in their rooms to study all week and then letting loose on the weekends, people at Stanford tend to strike a continuous balance. We are a very athletic campus; people are always running, going to dance class, or out playing intramural something with friends. Also, most Stanford people are nice. Levels of arrogance are surprisingly low, given how much the people here have to be proud of."

→ "Stanford is a big, self-sufficient, very safe campus. You can bike around at virtually any time of night without any worries. It has an insulated feel to it in part because of its sheer size; the central campus is 2,300 acres. It's so large that most students spend all their time on campus. A drawback of this is the 'Stanford Bubble'—most students don't feel a need to break outside of this world—but can you blame them?"

What Do You Like Best about Stanford?

→ "The intellectual and social community. I could go anywhere and read textbooks or listen to lectures, but what's unique about Stanford is the opportunity to get to know so many exciting people. And this community is not limited to undergraduates; I've benefited from interactions with grad students, faculty, staff, and the constant stream of visitors from around the world who come to share in Stanford's excitement."

→ "College is not about four years of problem sets, GPAs, and exams. It's about learning and growing. I am convinced that nowhere else would I have found the combination of academic excellence and opportunities for personal and social growth that I found at Stanford."

→ "Academically, the thing I liked best about Stanford was its balance. It has world-class departments in math, science, and engineering, as well as in fields such as economics, psychology, political science, and history. And the nice weather year-round makes it easy to



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Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305
stanford.edu

- 4-year private university
- 8,100-acre campus in a suburb of San Francisco
- Full-time undergraduate enrollment 2016-17: 3,620 men; 3,412 women
- Special features: Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, Rodin Sculpture Garden, 1,200-acre nature preserve, marine biology station

unwind with a game of Ultimate Frisbee after a day in class or in the lab."

→ "The weather. Now that I'm back on the East Coast, I realize it was a huge part of my quality of life. And the campus has amazingly beautiful landscaping."

What Do You Like Least about Stanford?

→ "Having to leave."

→ "There are times when the administration seems to focus too much on athletics and fundraising, and some students seem too materialistic and career-oriented. But these problems may be inevitable at any large university, and they don't keep me from enjoying all that Stanford has to offer."

Who Would Be Most Compatible with the Academic and Social Atmosphere at Stanford?

→ "No ultra-intense, bragging, competitive people belong here. If you are the type who is motivated by the thought of being Number 1, don't come here. The friendly, relaxed nature of the student interactions here is a manifestation of the fact that most

students are driven by a desire to learn, rather than a competition complex."

→ "Someone who can do exceptional work while remaining somewhat relaxed, and who will take the initiative to seek out academic opportunities. People who stress a lot about studying and grades will probably feel that they don't fit in, while people who worry that they'd get lost among the multitude of opportunities at a major research university might do better at a smaller school."

→ "For high school students who want to get a taste of the Stanford academic environment but aren't close enough to visit campus, I highly recommend Stanford on iTunes."

If You Had It to Do Again, Would You Go to Stanford?

All but one reviewer said yes with great enthusiasm, emphasizing the excellence of the whole experience. As one student put it, "I've loved Stanford; it's a great place to live."

→ "Yes. I don't think any place else provides academic excellence in as many areas, with as nice a standard of living."

→ "Absolutely. My friends and I frequently have moments of sheer joy where we look around us, feel awed by the vitality of our school, and realize again how grateful we are to be living, learning and growing here. I think Stanford is the most beautiful and brilliant place on the planet."

→ "At first, I wasn't sure. My freshman year was so overwhelming. But I've come to value my experience here. The high academic caliber has pushed me to do my best, and the motivation and achievements of the other students have been inspiring. I was looking to be challenged, and Stanford has certainly done that. I just didn't realize how much better I could be." ■

Note: The reviewers quoted in the Students Review series are expressing their own views, which are not necessarily those of JHU or CTY.