

Choices

for Higher Education in the U.S.




Private Universities

By JAMES W. WAGNER

Private research universities enjoy greater financial flexibility than their public counterparts. Thus, they are able to create distinctive programs.

PAUL SAKUMA © AP/WWP



Budding neuroscientist Dora Castaneda studies blood cells in a lab at Stanford University Medical Center, a research institution and hospital attached to the private university in California.



Public Universities

By ROBERT H. BRUININKS

Public, or state, universities typically enroll tens of thousands of students and offer degrees in hundreds of subject areas. These universities are among the major research universities in the United States and frequently have major involvement in international programs around the world.



These engineering students from the University of Arizona, a state school, were honored for the innovative design of their robotic airplane.



Community Colleges

By GEORGE R. BOGGS

Two-year colleges offer students an opportunity to begin their higher education in a small, community-based environment, often at lower cost than a four-year institution.



Stefanie Krueger, an education student, on the campus of her two-year college in Ohio.

RON SCHWANE © AP/WWP

ERIC SUMBERG /Quad-City Times © AP/WWP

EDUCATION



JOHN BAZEMORE © AP/WWP

Suhas Sridharan uses a wireless Internet connection to study outside on a warm November day on the Emory University campus in Atlanta, Georgia, which has extension programs in Asia for global health and business students.

Private Universities

One of the strengths of the American system of higher education is its great variety. From small colleges with only several hundred students to large state-supported universities with tens of thousands of students, and from two-year community colleges with vocational programs to privately funded research universities, American higher education meets a wide variety of needs. For students, the right choice has much to do with possible career paths, financial constraints, and geography. In other words, it has to do with what they feel called to do and to study, how much they can afford, and whether or not they want to leave home. What matters most in the end is the appropriateness of the school to the aspirations of the student.

In the United States, 92 of the 100 largest universities are public or “state-supported” (i.e., supported by one of the 50 individual states, not the federal government), and 77 percent of the nation’s college students receive their education at public institutions. Still, the major private universities occupy all but three or four of the top 25 slots in most rankings. Thus, the private research university appears to be held in especially high regard in the United States and around the world.

But what do we mean when we speak of a “private research university,” and what makes this type of institution so attractive?

Private research universities offer professional training (for instance, in law, medicine, and engineering) as well as education leading to the Ph.D. degree. Besides teaching, the faculty members spend a great deal of their time in research. In fact, in these institutions, the quality of faculty, scholarship, and research is as important in determining compensation and promotion as is the quality of teaching. But public universities also offer professional training, Ph.D. education, and an emphasis on scholarship and research. So what makes private universities different?

often translates into the opportunity to stay in fields where they might otherwise expect to find little encouragement.

Similarly, private universities’ independence from public coffers has made them more able to establish “points of presence” in other countries. The citizens of Georgia, for instance, are unlikely to approve the use of their tax dollars to establish a study center in London. But they probably would welcome the establishment of such a center by privately controlled Emory University. In general, private universities can more easily open international portals for research, service, and teaching. Emory University, for example, has programs in global health throughout Africa, in the Caucasus region, and in Asia. It has business programs throughout Europe and Asia. Such activities provide opportunities for American students and professors to engage, whether in the United States or abroad, with the best minds and talent from other countries.

Finally, most research universities are somewhat smaller than their public counterparts, offering a favorable mixture of rich resources and human scale. While the potential for learning and research is great at any of our nation’s fine universities, public or private, the smaller scale of private campuses makes possible the easy interaction of scholars across disciplines, since the schools and departments generally are at most a short walk across campus. In a world where the most important discoveries are being made through collaboration across boundaries, the capacity of the private university to foster and intensify collaborations both within the confines of the campus and beyond, to the far reaches of the globe, may be the private university’s greatest attraction.



James W. Wagner is the president of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.



LAUREN DESTENO/The Minnesota Daily © AP/WIDEWORLD

What is a Foreign Student Advisor?

Foreign student advisors on college or university campuses serve as the liaison between foreign students and all those with whom these individuals come into contact, representing the students' best interests and advising them accordingly. They provide information, programs, and services designed to make these students' U.S. experiences as productive as possible.

The advisors also work with American students, faculty and staff; with citizens of the local community; with officials of U.S. and foreign government agencies; and with a variety of agencies that sponsor foreign students in the United States. They promote constructive relationships between foreign students and their American hosts.

For more information, see <http://www.nafsa.org>, the Web site of the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors.



Public Universities

Public universities in the United States, also referred to as state universities, are closely identified with and supported by the states in which they are located. They are exciting, dynamic, and highly regarded centers for higher education, with unique traditions and connections to their communities. They are also major magnets for talent from all over the country and the world.

Typically, universities of this type enroll tens of thousands of students. They produce the majority of graduate and professional degrees in the country, as well as a significant number of undergraduate degrees. Also common to large public universities are a wide range of academic

programs. To use my own institution as an example, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus has 50,000 students, offers hundreds of degrees, and is a leader in fields as varied as neurology and transplant surgery, economics and political science, material sciences and nanotechnology, and agriculture and natural resources.

Public universities play a critical role in regional economic, cultural, and civic development, and many, such as the University of Minnesota, are deeply involved in advancing knowledge and technology through research. These universities are among the major research universities in the United States and fre-

Political science student Joel Bradley picks zinnias from the student-run garden on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota, a taxpayer-supported university. The students, from one of America's farming states, developed ways to grow plants and produce without pesticides, chemical fertilizers or herbicides.

quently have major involvement in international programs around the world. A series of federal actions in the second half of the 19th century provided resources to states to help establish and build universities. Public universities that arose from this federal largesse have a mandate to provide outreach and community engagement to the state in which they are located (e.g., technology transfer, support to agriculture, interaction with primary and secondary schools, and interaction with state and local policy makers).

The level of research intensity varies greatly among state universities. Competitive research grants and contracts awarded to the most prestigious public universities

typically amount to hundreds of millions of dollars each year. There is also great variation in the level of support from the states. State universities with large research budgets typically receive 10 to 30 percent of their budgets from the state in which they are located. The remaining portion of their budget comes from tuition and fees, grants, contracts and gifts.

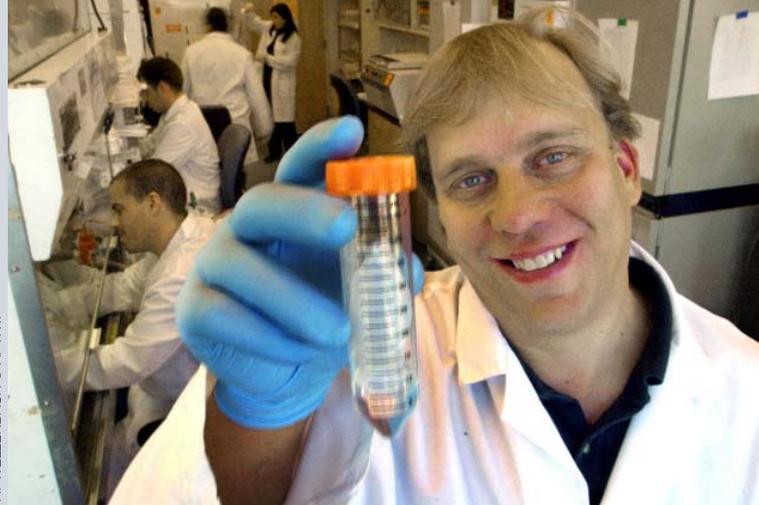
As a result of the financing structure of large state universities, many graduate students receive financial aid through research assistantships associated with research grants and contracts received by the university. Although many public universities are seeking increased funding to support international exchanges and study, access to financial aid for international students is very limited outside of the aforementioned research/grant funding. Since undergraduates do not generally hold research assistantships, scholarship support for international students seeking undergraduate degrees is quite limited at these public universities.

Large state universities are located in a variety of communities, from modest towns to

large metropolitan areas. Many universities also have multiple campuses at locations throughout their state, and many states also have more than one public university system.

Public universities are governed by boards of trustees or regents, with varying reporting responsibility to the state government. Unlike in many other countries, these U.S. universities don't report to a national education minister, and higher education policy is largely delegated to the states, with the important exceptions of federal student financial aid and research funding through federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies.

Some traditions of public universities in the United States are quite different from those in other countries. Even at these state-supported institutions, students have traditionally paid for part of their education through tuition and fees, and these costs to students are increasing. Today the average student takes out loans in order to help pay for his or her education. Private



PAT WELLENBACH © AP/WIDEWORLD

fundraising plays an increasingly important role in funding projects, scholarships, and positions at public universities. Finally, intercollegiate sports attract intense interest from students, alumni, and members of the general public, and these events generate additional revenue.

Among all U.S. universities, large state universities often include the largest percentage of international students and scholars. At the University of Minnesota, our community includes more than 4,500 international students and scholars from about 130 countries. The University of Minnesota provides support services such as counseling and advising on personal and academic issues, orientation to U.S. and university

Dr. John Wise holds a vial of arsenic in the lab at the University of Southern Maine, in Portland, the state's first toxicology center, which unites more than 30 researchers from the state's major research facilities, working to test water quality in wells, the source of water for most of the state's residents.

culture, immigration and visa advising, and English as a second language courses, as well as programs and workshops on a variety of topics including intercultural understanding and communication. Many state universities have similar programs in place to help students navigate what can sometimes be a confusing system of administration and academic regulation, although the scope of these services varies from institution to institution.

With growing competition from other countries, no major university in the United States can afford to take the interest of foreign students for granted. As a result, public universities are increasingly focused on attracting top students from around the world. If you are a motivated and self-directed student looking for exposure to the cutting edge of knowledge and creative work, I encourage you to investigate the rich opportunities available among large public universities in the United States.



Robert H. Bruininks is president of the University of Minnesota.

An Overview of U.S. Accreditation

Accreditation is a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. Accreditation in the United States is more than 100 years old, emerging from concerns to protect public health and safety and to serve the public interest.

In the United States, accreditation is carried out by private, nonprofit organizations designed for this specific purpose. External quality review of higher education is a non-governmental enterprise. In other countries, accreditation and quality assurance activities are typically carried out by government.

Accreditors review colleges and universities in

50 states and a number of other countries. They review many thousands of programs in a range of professions and specialties including law, medicine, business, nursing, social work and pharmacy, arts and journalism.

There are three types of accreditors: regional, national, and those serving a specialized profession. Accreditation serves the following purposes: assuring quality, determining qualification for access to federal funds, easing transfer from one school to another, and engendering employer confidence in the degree or license granted by an institution.

(http://www.chea.org/pdf/overview_US_accred_8-03.pdf)

USEFI Calendar



Northern Region

June 22: New Delhi
U.S. University Alumni Fair. Past and continuing students from a cross-section of U.S. institutions will discuss their first-hand experience with prospective students interested in pursuing higher education in the United States.

July 6: American Center, New Delhi

Pre-departure Orientation Program for students admitted to U.S. universities for the fall 2007 session. Students ready to depart on F-1 visas will hear about cross-cultural issues and life in the United States from a panel of experts consisting of Indian and American citizens who have studied and lived in both countries. Pre-registration is required.

Eastern Region

June 16-17: Hotel Capitol Hill, Ranchi, Jharkhand
USEFI staff from Kolkata will participate in an Admissions Fair. Information on higher education opportunities in the United States will be disseminated to prospective students.

June 30: American Center, Kolkata

Pre-departure Orientation Program for students who have been admitted to U.S. universities/colleges for the fall session. The program will be held at the Lincoln Room auditorium of the American Center, Kolkata. Departing students will receive important information on academic and social life in the United States. The program will help them to build networks. The panel will include students currently studying or who have studied in the United States, and American citizens in India.

Southern Region

May 23,30: USEFI, Chennai
"Exploring New Worlds," a basic orientation video on higher education in the United States, will be shown. It is a good starting point for prospective students.

June 6,13, 20, 27: USEFI, Chennai

"Exploring New Worlds," a basic orientation video on higher education in the United States, will be shown.

June 19: Chennai

A presentation on student visas by a consular officer from the American Consulate General, Chennai.

June 22: Vijayawada

A presentation on student visas by a consular officer from the American Consulate General, Chennai.

July 11, 18, 25: USEFI, Chennai

"Exploring New Worlds," a basic orientation video on higher education in the United States, will be shown.

July 12: Chennai

Pre-departure orientation for fall 2007 students. Resource persons will provide practical tips and discuss academic and cultural aspects of life in the United States with students on their way to the United States for higher studies.

Western Region

May 19: Mumbai

A presentation on "U.S. Higher Education" at Times Avenues 2007, a program focusing on careers and educational opportunities for students, organized by the Times of India group.

May 23

A basic orientation program for students interested in pursuing graduate and undergraduate programs in the United States.

June 8

A basic orientation program for students interested in pursuing graduate and undergraduate programs in the United States.

Selected Web Sites on College and University Education in the United States

United States Educational Foundation in India
<http://www.fulbright-india.org/>

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
EducationUSA

<http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>

EducationUSA provides a wealth of information and services for international students at all stages of the college search. Composed of a global network of more than 450 advising and information centers [<http://www.educationusa.state.gov/centers.htm>] in 170 countries, these centers actively promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, objective, and timely information about educational opportunities in the United States and guidance to qualified individuals on how best to access those opportunities. Portions of the Web site cover accreditation, finding a school, visa information, financial assistance, Fulbright scholarships, and programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State.

International Information Programs
Study in the U.S.

http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/education/study_in_the_us.html

Bureau of Consular Affairs: Visas
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Studying in the USA: Visas
<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/studying.html>

USNEI: U.S. Network for Education Information
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/edlite-index.html>

A basic resource on the U.S. educational system created to inform international exchange students.

Federal Student Aid: International Students
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/intl.jsp>

Office of Postsecondary Education Database of Accredited Institutions
<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>

America's Global College Forum
http://www.voanews.com/english/AmericanLife/global_college_forum.cfm

This weekly radio series profiles international students attending America's colleges or universities.

American Association of Community Colleges
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/>

American Council on Education
<http://www.acenet.edu//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

The major coordinating body for all of the nation's higher education institutions, ACE also sponsors a number of international initiatives:
<http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=International>

CHEA: Council for Higher Education Accreditation
<http://www.chea.org/>

Database of accredited institutions and programs:
<http://www.chea.org/search/default.asp>

College Board
<http://www.collegeboard.com/splash>

Council of Independent Colleges
<http://www.cic.org/>

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)
<http://www.ciee.org/>

eduPASS!
<http://www.edupass.org/>

Higher Education Resource Hub
<http://www.higher-ed.org/>

Institute of International Education
<http://www.iie.org/>

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
<http://www.nasulgc.org/>





DAMIEN DOVARGANES © AP/WIDEWORLD

Mashael Majid looks at enrollment information on community colleges in the "College Office" at her high school in Los Angeles, California. Majid hoped to attend the two-year Moorpark Community College a few miles from her home, then transfer to the University of California-Los Angeles for the next two years.

Community Colleges

Community colleges are the gateway to higher education in the United States for a growing number of students. These colleges provide students with an opportunity to earn credits for the first two years of a four-year bachelor's degree at high-quality, accredited institutions. With their lower tuition costs, community colleges give students a way to save money while learning in a supportive environment. They also allow students to access training for associate-degree or nondegree careers, and they offer continuing education and personal development classes for the broad spectrum of adult learners.

Community colleges are the largest and fastest-growing sector of higher education in the United States. There are now nearly 1,200 regionally accredited community colleges serving more than 11 million students (approximately 46 percent of all U.S. undergraduates).

Community colleges offer international students benefits, including opportunities to improve English language skills and to build an understanding of American culture in a U.S. community.

Other benefits are:

Lower costs: Tuition costs are significantly lower than for four-year colleges and universities (about \$5,000 per year as compared to \$12,000 to more than \$20,000 for a four-year institution).

Easy transfer to a university: Most community colleges have agreements with four-year colleges and universities, ensuring that credits earned at a two-year community college will count toward a four-year degree program at a larger college or university.

Accredited institutions: American community colleges, four-year colleges, and major universities are all accredited by the same agencies. That is why universities accept course credits obtained at community colleges.

Wide variety of programs: Community colleges have hundreds of majors from which to choose, including popular areas such as business management, computer science, engineering, and health sciences-related programs.

These students are among a growing number enrolling at community colleges in Nebraska, in America's rural heartland. These students are studying in the lounge at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha. It is one of six community colleges in the state.

English as a second language: Most community colleges offer a wide range of English courses at multiple skill levels and an array of support services to ensure that students with different language proficiencies succeed.

A supportive learning environment: Community colleges offer small class sizes, averaging fewer than 30 students, allowing personal attention and ongoing support from professors. The focus is on individual student success within an environment designed to support students' learning patterns and needs. Support services for students include tutoring, advising, writing labs, international student clubs and international student service centers.

Diversity: U.S. community college students come from diverse cultural heritages and ethnicities. The colleges offer a wide spectrum of clubs and activities that celebrate and support the diversity that describes society in the United States.

Access to U.S. culture: Because they are reflective of and responsive to their communities, community colleges tend to have strong local ties. This relationship provides international students with extensive opportunities to interact with Americans and to experience American culture.

Variety of locations and campus sizes: Community colleges, like other educational institutions in the United States, differ widely. Some are large, multicampus institutions located in big cities, while others are much smaller schools located in rural settings and serving small student populations. There is a community college conveniently located within commuting distance of 90 percent of the U.S. population.

Distinguished alumni: Alumni of U.S. community colleges include California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, NASA space shuttle commander Eileen Collins, Star Wars movie series producer/director George Lucas, film actors Tom Hanks and Clint Eastwood, fashion designer Calvin Klein, human genome scientist Craig Venter and former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona.



George R. Boggs is president of the American Association of Community Colleges (<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>)



NATI HARNIK © AP/WIDEWORLD