University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

https://www.ucla.edu/

General Overview

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) sits in the heart of Los Angeles in the vibrant neighborhood of Westwood, offering students a classic college campus experience within one of the most dynamic cities in the world. Despite its urban setting, UCLA feels surprisingly contained and walkable—just about one square mile—creating a true campus community.

The campus blends historic beauty with modern energy. Iconic buildings like Royce Hall, modeled after a church in Milan, sit alongside lush green spaces like the sculpture garden at the heart of North Campus. UCLA also has a long-standing tradition of student activism and school spirit, contributing to a "work hard, play hard" culture that is collaborative rather than cutthroat.

Looking ahead, UCLA will take on a global spotlight as the future home of the Olympic Village for the 2028 Summer Olympics, where athletes will live during the games—an exciting point of pride for the campus community.

Academics

UCLA offers the resources of a large research university with many opportunities for smaller, more personalized academic experiences. About two-thirds of classes have fewer than 30 students, and even larger lectures are supplemented by weekly small-group discussions led by teaching assistants.

Students can enhance their experience through unique programs like Fiat Lux seminars and the Cluster Program, which allows students to explore interdisciplinary topics over the course of a full year.

Academically, UCLA is often described as having two distinct "halves." North Campus is

home to the humanities, arts, and social sciences, while South Campus focuses on STEM fields. Facilities include an observatory, cadaver labs, and proximity to the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center for research and clinical opportunities.

Engineering applicants apply directly, nursing is highly selective, and psychology is one of the most popular majors. UCLA does not offer a traditional undergraduate business major, though students often pursue economics or communications and gain experience through clubs and internships.

The university operates on the quarter system, with students typically taking 3–4 courses per 10-week term.

Admission

UCLA is one of the most selective public universities in the country. Applications are submitted through the UC system between October 1 and December 1.

UCLA does not offer Early Action or Early Decision. Standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, and demonstrated interest are not considered.

Instead, the focus is on the Personal Insight Questions (PIQs), which function much like interview responses. Students are encouraged to “show, not tell” through specific examples.

Transfer admission rates are higher than freshman rates, though most transfer students come from California community colleges.

Campus Life

Campus life at UCLA is vibrant, social, and deeply rooted in tradition. Nearly all first-year students live on campus, primarily on “The Hill,” which serves as the social hub of student life. UCLA guarantees up to four years of housing.

Dining is consistently ranked among the best in the country. Traditions such as the Inverted Fountain help build a strong sense of belonging.

Students benefit from a large activities fair, free bus transportation, and a lively surrounding neighborhood in Westwood. Parking is limited, reinforcing the walkable nature of campus.

Athletics and Recreation

UCLA’s athletic tradition is one of the most storied in the nation, with 123 NCAA championships. School spirit runs high, and athletics are a central part of campus life.

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Students can participate in intramural sports, fitness programs, or attend major athletic events.

Scholarships, Financial Aid, and Costs

UCLA offers strong value, particularly for California residents. Students are automatically considered for scholarships.

For in-state families earning under approximately $80,000, tuition may be fully covered. Out-of-state students should expect higher costs, though financial aid may still be available.

Who Thrives at UCLA?

UCLA is an excellent fit for students who want the energy and opportunity of a large university combined with a connected campus community.

Students who thrive tend to be academically motivated, comfortable in a fast-paced environment, and eager to take initiative. They value both strong academics and a vibrant social life, and are open to exploring different academic paths.

UCLA is ideal for students seeking world-class opportunities alongside the cultural richness of Los Angeles.

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