College Profile: St. Olaf College

General Information

FAST FACTS

- *Size*: 3,046 students
- *Location:* Northfield, MN - 45 minutes from the Twin Cities
- *Middle 50% SAT/ACT:* SAT - 1300-1480 (15% submitted); ACT - 28-33 (37% submitted)
- *Application Plans:* Early Decision I, Early Action, Early Decision II, Regular Decision

ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

St. Olaf accepts both the Common Application and the Coalition on Scoir.

In addition to a rigorous academic curriculum, St. Olaf asks students to demonstrate "a wide range of talents" in the application - musical, artistic, athletic, and cultural. The school accepts both the Common and the Coalition applications. They do not have an application fee!

St. Olaf has several direct admit programs that require additional application components, including the Nursing and Music programs. All music major and music scholarship applications are due at the time of your regular application, but you need to plan ahead to be able to complete the four parts of the music application in time to meet the deadline.

The direct admit nursing application is due at the same time as the Common App or Coalition at on Scoir application and includes two additional essays.

St. Olaf takes demonstrated interest into account–be sure to check their websites for the ways students can show their interest.

BROAD OVERVIEW

St. Olaf College was founded by Norwegian Lutheran immigrants, and its Lutheran values underscore its mission to help each student find their vocation. St. Olaf is not bound by its faith tradition, but encourages its students to explore and become citizens of the world. In service of

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this goal, St. Olaf sends more students abroad than any other liberal arts college in the country. St. Olaf hopes to “develop individuals of action and substance.”

St. Olaf embraces the breadth of a liberal arts curriculum, preparing students to think critically across disciplines and provide them with a base of knowledge, skills, and experiences to be successful in many different fields. Northfield is a quaint, historical college town that is also home to the nearby Carleton College, and students often collaborate academically and socially.

Differentiating Information

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

- St. Olaf’s one-on-one career counseling services through the Piper Center for Vocation and Career rely on the Lutheran idea of a vocation to help students explore and find a career that is meaningful and relevant. Within one year of graduation, 98% of students are employed, in graduate school, or committed to full-time service work.
- St. Olaf has a robust study abroad program - the school sends more students abroad than any other liberal arts college in the US. It has been ranked #1 in study abroad for the last twelve years and 51% of the Class of 2023 participated in at least one study abroad/away program across 33 countries.
- Students have numerous opportunities to engage in political activities and develop civic awareness. The campus promotes political participation through student-led groups, voter education drives, and discussions on policy issues. St. Olaf encourages open dialogue and debate, fostering an environment where students from all political backgrounds can express their views and learn from one another.
- Collaborations between faculty, student organizations, and external speakers enhance the political experience by providing insights into current events, elections, and civic responsibilities.The Institute for Freedom and Community brings speakers like David Brooks and Andrew Yang to campus, and also sponsors the Public Affairs Conversation learning community.
- St. Olaf is home to four different living-learning communities, in which students take classes and engage in conversation on a variety of issues. In addition, first-year students can choose their First-Year Experience from five Conversation and Learning Communities (only one has a residential component) or take First-Year Seminar 120 and Writing 120.
- Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC) is a program that introduces an optional language component attached to a core course. Students who take two courses through the program can receive a certification of applied foreign language competence (AFLC), which appears on their transcripts.

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FUN FACTS

- St. Olaf is ranked #4 by the Princeton Review for its science facilities, which are housed in Regents Hall and include a cadaver lab for pre-health and nursing students. The Princeton Review also ranks St. Olaf #5 in Best Classroom Experience.
- Students say that although St. Olaf has Lutheran heritage, the school is liberal-minded and home to a large LGBTQ+ population. About one-quarter of students at St. Olaf are Lutheran.
- Christmas Fest, a beloved annual tradition, sees concerts over several nights from hundreds of student musicians, and students wear Norwegian sweaters to try lutefisk in the dining hall.
- St. Olaf's 330-acre campus abuts 300 acres of woodland and prairie for students to walk, bike, and explore.
- There are two degrees offered at St. Olaf: Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Music.

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS OR CAMPUS NEWS

St. Olaf recently inaugurated their 12th president, Susan Rundell Singer.

Six St. Olaf graduates were awarded Fulbright fellowships for the 2023-2024 academic year. In addition, one Class of 2024 member was selected to participate in Fulbright's summer program, Canada MITACS-GlobaLink.

In 2023, St. Olaf Professor of Physics, Prabal Adhikari, was awarded a $650,000 grant to establish a quantum computing research program at St. Olaf College.

In advance of the 2024 presidential election, mainstream media announced that St. Olaf achieved the highest rate of student voter turnout among any college and university during the previous 2020 presidential election - nearly 90%! This is an impressive feat driven by its strong culture of civic engagement. The college's emphasis on community participation, student-led voter education initiatives, and support from faculty and staff contributed to this high rate.

SIGNATURE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

St. Olaf is one of only three liberal arts colleges that offer accredited programs in art, theatre, music, and dance. The music program at St. Olaf is world-renowned, and one-third of students participate in music as members of the bands, choirs, orchestras, jazz ensembles, and handbell choirs on campus. With over 150 recitals and concerts, five full-scale theater productions, and a dance production at least once a month, there is no shortage of performing arts offerings to join or attend.

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Economics is the second most popular major at St. Olaf (biology is the first). Students also have the opportunity to join the Finance Fast-Track, an accelerated course progression intended to prepare students for competitive careers in finance.

St. Olaf also emphasizes its robust pre-health advising program, which allows students to make connections with alumni and even to study abroad through programs like the Norway Innovation Scholars Program, the Peruvian Medical Experience, and Biology in South India.

The nursing program offers both direct entry and sophomore admission into the program. Students have many opportunities for clinical experiences and in 2019, St. Olaf opened a new high-tech facility which includes two simulation labs, a simulation control room, classrooms, debriefing rooms, and a multi-bed skills lab. Students practice on adult and child medical mannequins that mimic real human responses.

Overall Impressions

BEST FOR

- Students interested in politics and civic engagement (those who lean liberal might feel most comfortable)
- Students interested in one of St. Olaf's signature programs, like music, business, or pre-health.
- Students looking for a small, liberal arts campus without major sports or Greek life as part of their social experience.
- Students who want a small college town experience, where they can get to know teachers and fellow students well.
- Students who are looking for four distinct seasons and prepared to weather the cold Minnesota winters!
- Students interested in a true liberal arts education, with the opportunity to learn across disciplines, who are not interested in immersing themselves in a pre-professional or Bachelor of Science program.

WHAT WE LOVED

- We like how St. Olaf emphasizes students preparing for their careers to be satisfying and meaningful - it is a unique way to look at Career Services that, while rooted in the Lutheran tradition, could benefit all students!
- The small student body and small campus create a cozy community for students, and we liked how easy it was for students to get to know each other and their professors.
- The amount of music on campus, and the 150+ concerts and events per year, make St. Olaf a great place to study for students interested in the arts, even those who are not seeking degrees in dance or music.

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WHAT WE WEREN'T CRAZY ABOUT

- St. Olaf is a small school in a small town, so it may feel isolating rather than cozy for students who crave a busy, bustling college experience.
- The winters in Minnesota are cold, so while St. Olaf's campus is compact and easy to walk through most of the time, those walks will feel long in February!

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