

one of the most intense rivalries in the nation—is the highlight of the school year. “Any Alabama football game is a festival,” a sophomore says. Men’s track and field and men’s and women’s golf are competitive in the Southeastern Conference. ‘Bama sports a number of solid nonathletic teams as well, including the Alabama Forensic Council, which consistently places in the top 10 in national competition. Intramurals draw about a third of the students.

Although sports are still an integral part of the UA experience, the university’s declared emphasis is now on technology, merit scholarships, global perspectives, and undergraduate research. It’s an approach that’s bringing in more serious, cosmopolitan students. Best of all, says one finance and marketing major, “The students are so friendly, if you pass someone on the quad and say ‘Roll Tide,’ you’ve pretty much made a friend for life.”

If You Apply To ›

Alabama: Rolling admissions. SATs or ACTs: required. Subject Tests: optional. Does not accept the Common Application.

Albion College

Albion, MI 49224

Nestled between evangelical Hope and Calvin and out-there Kalamazoo, Albion is Michigan’s middle-of-the-road liberal arts college. Think Gerald Ford, the moderate Republican president who is the namesake of Albion’s signature institute for public service. Future doctors, lawyers, and businesspeople are well served.

Albion College is a small, private college in Michigan that emphasizes the importance of mixing learning with hands-on experience, particularly when it comes to citizenship and service. Albion helps students achieve their goals through personal attention from professors, internships, and a devoted alumni network. “Students at Albion College are not here to get an education and get out,” says a public policy major. “They are here to build relationships and form lifelong connections with fellow students, faculty, and staff.”

Founded in 1835 by the Methodist Church, Albion is located near the banks of the Kalamazoo River. In addition to its newer Georgian-style architecture, the college has retained and restored several of its 19th-century buildings. The campus is spacious, with statuesque oaks and a beautiful nature center. Robinson Hall, the campus centerpiece, houses myriad departments, including the Gerald R. Ford Institute for Leadership in Public Policy and Service, the Gerstacker Institute for Business and Management, and the Shaw Women’s Center. The college is also home to one of the largest indoor riding arenas in the United States.

Albion has a rich academic history and was the first private college in Michigan to have a Phi Beta Kappa chapter (1940). Students are required to take core courses distributed among humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, fine arts, and math. They must also satisfy requirements in environmental science and gender and ethnicity studies. Freshmen take a first-year seminar designed to provide a “stimulating learning environment” in a small-class setting; one recent offering, “To Sleep or Not to Sleep,” included a trip to Europe to study firsthand the effects of jet lag. In their final year, students participate in a capstone experience.

Website: www.albion.edu

Location: Small Town

Private

Total Enrollment: 1,505

Undergraduates: 1,505

Male/Female: 46/54

SAT Ranges: ERW 510–630,
M 500–610

ACT Ranges: 20–26

Financial Aid: 100%

Pell Grant: 47%

Expense: Pr \$ \$

Student Loans: 72%

Average Debt: \$ \$ \$ \$

Applicants: 4,226

Accepted: 68%

Enrolled: 15%

Grad in 6 Years: 64%

Returning Freshmen: 75%

Academics:   

Social:  

Q of L: ★ ★ ★

Admissions: (517) 629-0321

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Consistent with Albion’s interest in developing civic leaders, the Ford Institute takes a unique approach: students participate in a simulation of city government in which they play the roles of community leaders. Visiting speakers include senators and congresspeople, governors and state legislators, and interest-group representatives. The premed and prelaw programs draw dedicated undergrads, and the economics and management and communication studies departments are well respected. Students interested in environmental issues can apply to the Center for Sustainability and the Environment, which offers three majors. Other popular majors include biology, psychology, accounting, and finance.

The academic climate at Albion is described as competitive in certain departments, but not cutthroat. One student says, “Because of the small-school setting, it is easy to talk to anyone in my class to work together or ask questions.” Top-notch academic and career counseling and low student/faculty ratios keep students on track and motivated. Fifty-eight percent of classes have fewer than 20 students, and teaching assistants are used for tutoring, not teaching. Professors are said to be interested in students’ academic performance and their emotional well-being. “They have additional office hours on Sundays, come in for review sessions at 10 o’clock at night, and give out their personal phone numbers for questions,” according to a junior.

For those looking to expand their educational experience, Albion offers more than 100 study abroad programs in 32 countries (7 percent of students go abroad), as well as an honors program for highly motivated students. The Foundation for Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity, which pairs students from all disciplines with faculty mentors, is highly commended by students. One participant, a biochemistry major, says, “My professor walked me through new and old techniques individually, so I feel much more independent in the lab than most.”

Albion attracts an ambitious, involved group of students. “Very few students at Albion just want to blend into the crowd,” says a senior. Michigan residents make up 74 percent of the student population, and just 2 percent hail from abroad. “Since my first semester here, the school has evolved in a big way in terms of diversity,” says a junior; currently, 15 percent of students are African American, 10 percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are Asian American, and 3 percent are multiracial. Additionally, 47 percent of freshmen are now Pell-eligible. A senior describes the student body as a mix of liberals and conservatives who are “concerned about current issues,” including racial politics and immigration. There are a number of merit scholarships available, averaging \$27,200, but no athletic scholarships.

Since Albion is a residential college, 95 percent of students call the co-ed residence halls home, and the general consensus is that the “overpriced” accommodations “need to be updated,” and the Wi-Fi service can be unreliable. The majority of the freshman class inhabits Wesley Hall. During their sophomore year, many students move to the suite-style rooms in Whitehouse Hall or Mitchell Towers; seniors occupy apartment-style housing called The Mae. Other housing options include apartment annexes and fraternity houses. Sororities do not have houses; they hold their meetings in lodges. Meals are served in the centrally located dining hall, but a senior says, “The meals are not the best or diverse.” Students rate campus security staff and counseling services—including efforts to prevent sexual assault—highly.

Thirty-five percent of Albion men and 28 percent of the women belong to one of the school’s six national fraternities and six sororities. Greek parties draw large crowds, composed of Greeks and non-Greeks, making them a primary part of many

(continued)

Email Address: admission@albion.edu

Strong Programs:

- Public Policy
- Economics and Management
- Communication Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Biology
- Psychology
- Accounting
- Finance

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Traditional events include the Day of Woden, which is a picnic held in the spring on the last day of class.

students' social lives. "Campus Safety monitors every party and there is a curfew in place," notes a sophomore. Students 21 and older may consume alcohol in certain campus residence areas. A well-run union board organizes all sorts of activities—films, lectures, plays, comedians, and concerts—to keep students occupied in their spare time. Road trips are a big part of weekends for many students; Ann Arbor, East Lansing, and Chicago are frequent destinations.

Students report that, although there is not much to do in the town of Albion, its annual Festival of the Forks is fun, and the movie theater offers "free movies if you show a valid student ID!" According to an economics major, "The school has partnered with the city of Albion to help bring more business and entertainment into the city." New developments in the downtown area include a brewpub, a bookstore/coffeehouse, a community center, and a community theater. Students focus some of their energy by working for groups supported by the Student Volunteer Bureau; in fact, half of the students volunteer in the community on a regular basis, participating in "city clean-up day, Habitat for Humanity, and volunteering at nursing homes and schools." Some traditional events that offer a nice break from academics are the Big Show, which brings a major artist or comedian to campus, and the Day of Woden, which is a picnic held in the spring on the last day of class.

The Britons football team competes in the Division III Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association and has won 36 conference championships—the most in MIAA history. Other strong teams include men's and women's lacrosse and basketball, men's swimming, and women's track and field. Hope College is a bitter rival, as is Alma College. Recreational and intramural sports attract roughly one-third of the students, and some of the most popular include canoeing, disc golf, basketball, volleyball, and indoor soccer.

At Albion College, professors are accessible and interested, academics are challenging without being overwhelming, and students feel supported and motivated. In the words of one senior, "Even though Albion is a small school in a rural town in Michigan, we want to make a big impact on the world and make our school known."

Overlaps

Ohio Wesleyan, Earlham, College of Wooster, Beloit, Knox, Hope, Alma, Kalamazoo

If You Apply To ›

Albion: Early action, rolling admissions. SATs or ACTs: required. Subject Tests: optional. Accepts the Common Application with supplement.

Alfred University

Alumni Hall, 1 Saxon Drive, Alfred, NY 14802

Talk about an unusual combination: Alfred combines a nationally renowned and state-supported college of ceramics, a school of art and design, an engineering program, and a business school wrapped up in a university of 1,600 undergraduates. The Finger Lakes is a region full of natural beauty, but it takes elbow grease to pry coastal types to the hinterlands of western New York.

Website: www.alfred.edu

Location: Rural

Private

Total Enrollment: 1,719

With about 1,600 undergraduate students, Alfred University isn't a bustling academic factory; it's a quiet, cloistered, self-described "educational village" in a tiny town wholly dedicated to the "industry of learning." The university boasts highly respected programs in art and design, as well as ceramic engineering. Innovation not only shapes the curriculum, but also has a profound effect on campus life.