

Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA



Located in the hills just northeast of downtown Los Angeles, Occidental is one of the few nationally recognized liberal arts colleges in a major metropolitan area. With its classic collegiate look, Occidental's campus has been referred to as an "Urban Oasis." Architect Myron Hunt, who also designed the Rose Bowl Stadium, designed Occidental's original buildings in a Mediterranean style, with covered walkways and tile roofs. The beautiful campus feels like a private little enclave in the middle of all the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles.

Occidental College was founded on April 20, 1887, by a group of Presbyterian clergy and laymen, including James George Bell. The college's first term began a year later with 27 men and 13 women students, and tuition of \$50 a year. Today, tuition, room and board runs over \$51,000 and with books and fees, etc. the total is \$55,691, of whom seventy-nine percent receive some form of financial aid. Initially located in Boyle Heights, in 1912 the college began construction of a new campus located in Los Angeles' Eagle Rock neighborhood. The Eagle Rock campus covers over 120 acres, much of which is undeveloped land on a hill known as "Mt. Fiji."

A nationally recognized, residential college of the liberal arts and sciences, and one of the few located in a major city, Occidental is at the forefront of interdisciplinary, intercultural education that integrates the classroom with community-based learning. Their small size and strong sense of community, rigorous curriculum, superb faculty, diverse student body and access to the resources of Los Angeles make Occidental the best of both worlds: intimate in scale, but infinite in scope.

Hillside Theater

Since 1925, commencement has been held each year in the outdoor Hillside Theater (which also is the venue for the annual summer production of Occidental Children's Theater.) The 2,500-seat theater is always packed as each graduate takes a proud walk across the stage to receive his or her diploma



Students who apply to Occidental often also apply to USC, UCLA, UC-Berkeley, Pomona, Claremont-McKenna and Stanford. Occidental seeks to enroll students who bring to the table a wide variety of talents and experiences, and who possess the intellectual curiosity and muscle necessary to take full advantage of its rigorous and stimulating liberal arts education. 'Oxy' is most interested in students who excel from a place of personal authenticity, rather than boilerplate candidates whose search for collegiate prestige undercuts their individuality. Either the SAT or ACT is required (average SAT verbal score is 640, math, 650; ACT, 29). The acceptance rate currently is at forty-one percent and will likely continue to fall, as it has nearly every year for the past decade. Ninety percent of accepted students in the class of 2010 were in

the top fifth of their high school class. Occidental evaluates applicants in a holistic manner that takes into account the whole person, the wide variety of passions and circumstances that GPA and SAT scores do not reflect. Princeton Review's The Best 373 Colleges suggests that the typical Oxy undergraduate "is politically and globally aware, is passionate about more than one interest and loves to speak up about any and every issue. Most are very liberal, studious, hard-working and playful."



The central gathering place on campus is the graceful **Johnson Student Center**, built in 1928 and expanded and remodeled in 1998.

Diversity, in all its forms, is a fundamental value at Occidental, and its 1,819 person student body is one of the most racially, geographically, and socioeconomically diverse in the nation. In our increasingly interconnected world, intellectual muscle is most useful when combined with cultural and social literacy, and in this sense Oxy students learn much from each other. Roughly three

quarters of students receive financial aid, and elite prep school graduates blend with those from inner-city public high schools. There is a feeling of community and camaraderie among students and a common desire to unite the intellect with the heart, theory with practice, to make a difference in the world.

As an institution dedicated to educating citizens of a pluralistic world, Occidental encourages all students to participate in off-campus study. Each year, roughly a third of the junior class heads off to more than fifty programs in dozens of countries. Students are encouraged to integrate life experience into intellectual conversation and to apply academic ideas toward understanding and navigating our complex and interconnected world. The broad diversity of the student body is of great service in this regard, and all are encouraged to engage the alternate worldviews of their peers—particularly in first-year cultural studies seminars and colloquia, which set the tone for the rest of the Occidental experience. First-year students choose from seminars in a variety of disciplines, each designed to examine large liberal arts questions. Seminars are capped at 16 students, all of whom live together in a common dorm.

Anchoring the southern end of the Quad is **Clapp Library**, with its half-a-million books and microforms, its computer labs, study rooms, and art gallery. Up on the second floor is Special Collections – home to rare books, manuscripts, and one of the country's best collections of mysteries.

The first-year cultural studies seminars and colloquia, and the communities surrounding them, are an essential part of the college's Core program, which is designed to support rich liberal arts values throughout the Occidental

experience. Some of Oxy's strongest programs, according to the 2011 Fiske Guide to Colleges include Economics, English, Music, Psychology, Chemistry, Biology, Art and Diplomacy and World Affairs. Occidental students can also take classes at CalTech and Art Center, and can earn joint degrees at CalTech, Columbia University, and the University of Southern California's Keck Graduate Institute.



Occidental is one of the five schools that founded the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) in 1915 and is currently a member of the SCIAC and NCAA Division III. Occidental features 21 varsity sports teams and a program of club sports and intramural competition. Approximately 25 per cent of the student body participates in a varsity sports program.



In 1979, Occidental installed *Water Forms II*, a kinetic fountain designed by professor George Baker. The fountain is a campus landmark and was featured prominently in the 1984 film *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*.

Herrick Interfaith Center, built 1964, with *Water Forms II* in the foreground.

Notable alumni include Jack Kemp, '57, U.S. Representative from New York 1971-1989, U.S. Secretary Department of Housing and Urban Development 1989-1993, Republican Vice Presidential candidate for the 1996 Presidential election; Stephen Cooper, '68, former CEO of Krispy Kreme Doughnuts; Barack Obama fall 1979 through spring 1981, 44th President of the United States, transferred to Columbia University after two years; Ben Affleck, actor, director and screenwriter, attended but did not graduate; Rosalind Wiseman, '91, author of Queen Bees and Wannabees which inspired the movie *Mean Girls*; Andrea Elliott, '95, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the *New York Times*.