About the University

The Unique Appeal of Johns Hopkins

The fusion of learning and research is the hallmark of graduate and undergraduate study at the Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and the Whiting School of Engineering of The Johns Hopkins University. The catalog contents represent the university’s unique intellectual life and educational philosophy. The academic programs described here, and the faculty who teach them, constitute the strengths that have long distinguished Hopkins as a private, selective institution.

The unique educational philosophy of Johns Hopkins was first articulated more than a century ago by Daniel Coit Gilman, the university’s first president. Gilman believed that the highest quality education can only be carried out in a research environment, and that the best training, whether undergraduate or graduate, takes place under the supervision of an active researcher. This belief in the inseparability of education and research has become the distinguishing feature of the university’s academic programs. In both the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering, undergraduate education, graduate education, and the conduct of primary research are interrelated in an organic way. There has never been a separate undergraduate college at Hopkins.

This educational philosophy has also led to the remarkably low student to faculty ratio on the Homewood campus, for it requires the kind of close interaction between faculty and students that occurs in small seminars, in the supervision required for independent projects, or in the research laboratory. Academic requirements for undergraduates are highly flexible and designed to enhance rather than restrain creativity. Graduate and undergraduate students are largely free of university-wide curricular requirements, so that every scholar can proceed at his or her own speed. As a result, many Hopkins undergraduates quickly find themselves enrolled in advanced seminars, engaged in independent study projects, or incorporated into research teams with faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows. Courses that focus on some well-defined objective in depth are more characteristic of the Hopkins curriculum than broad introductory surveys. Upper-level courses are heavily attended by both undergraduates and graduates in a continuation of the Hopkins tradition of relaxing the distinction between the two groups.

Homewood Campus

The Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and the G.W.C. Whiting School of Engineering, the two divisions represented in this catalog, are the heart of a small but unusually diverse coeducational university. These Homewood schools are located on a wooded, 140-acre campus of great beauty in a residential area of north Baltimore. Originally the home of Charles Carroll Jr., son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the Homewood estate was given to the university in 1902. The Faculty of Philosophy began instruction on the campus in 1915.

While the number of academic programs has grown substantially since that time, the schools of Arts and Sciences and Engineering have managed to maintain a small student body and a low student-faculty ratio. They presently have a combined enrollment of approximately 4,980 undergraduates, 1,840 graduate students, and 230 postdoctoral fellows, and a combined faculty of more than 450.