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Political science is one of the more popular undergraduate majors in the United States, and hundreds of colleges and universities offer a program in the field. Over 40,000 students graduate each year with a degree in political science or a closely related subject, such as government. Political science is a broad field and includes areas of study such as political processes, policies, diplomacy, law, governments, and war. Students look at both past and current political systems, and both domestic and international politics. Upon graduation, political science majors may end up working for government, social organizations, polling agencies, or educational institutions, and others may go on to earn advanced degrees in political science or business. It is also one of the more popular majors for students planning to go to law school. While there is no objective model for identifying the nation's best political science programs, the schools in this list all have multiple features that make them stand out. Their programs are sizable enough for the school to offer a broad array of classes, and students have the opportunity to conduct independent research, internships, or other high-impact, hands-on learning experiences. These schools also have the resources to employ a highly qualified full time political science faculty. College of Charleston. mogollon / Flickr Political Science at the College of Charleston (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 78/2,222 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 24/534 Source: National Center for Education Statistics; College of Charleston Website Admission to the College of Charleston is less selective than most of the schools on this list, but the school has a vibrant political science program focused entirely on the undergraduate student experience. The program is housed in one of the nation's top public liberal arts colleges, and the location in historic Charleston, South Carolina, is an added perk. All political science majors at the College of Charleston graduate having taken courses in American politics, global politics, and political ideas. They also complete a capstone seminar that requires students to apply their writing, speaking, analytical, and research skills. Students are encouraged to push themselves beyond the basic requirements of the major. The program encourages students to get involved with research projects, whether that be an independent research project or participation in the school's American Politics Research Team or Environmental Policy Research Team. The College of Charleston also creates an environment where academic interests and extracurricular activities can complement one another, and the school's 150+ clubs and organizations provide plenty of opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills and put their political interests into action. Students also find numerous internship opportunities to get meaningful hands-on experiences. George Washington University. Ingfbruno / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0 Political Science at George Washington University (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/Total) 208/2,725 Full-time Faculty (Political Science/Total) 43/1,332 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the GWU website George Washington University's graduate program in political science has been ranked among the best in the country by U.S. News & World Report, and the undergraduate program is excellent as well. Part of the program's strength comes from its location in the nation's capital. Students find numerous internship opportunities working with members of Congress, the White House, lobbying groups, non-governmental organizations, and various federal entities. Political science students wishing to earn a master's degree can take advantage of one of five combined bachelor's/master's programs. Graduate options include political science, public administration, public policy, legislative affairs, and political management. Georgetown University. K rlis Damb r ns / Flickr / CC by 2.0 Political Science at Georgetown University (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 307/1,765 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 65/1,527 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Georgetown University Website Like George Washington University, Georgetown University's location in Washington D.C. puts students at the heart of the nation's (if not the world's) political scene. Undergraduate students have six degree options related to political science: a BA in Government or Political Economy; a BS in Business and Global Affairs; or a BS in Foreign Service focused on Culture and Politics, International Political Economy, or International Politics. The university's strength in international relations adds to the opportunities available to students interested in political science. Graduation requirements vary depending on a student's particular degree program, but all programs have an emphasis on writing, and all offer small seminar classes in students' junior and senior years. Students also find many opportunities for experiential learning both in Washington, D.C. and around the world. Programs tend to be interdisciplinary and draw upon Georgetown's strengths as one of the nation's best private universities. Students often take classes and work with faculty from Georgetown College, the McDonough School of Business, and the Walsh School of Foreign Service. Weidensall Hall at Gettysburg College. Photo Credit: Allen Grove Political Science at Gettysburg College (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 59/604 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 12/230 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Gettysburg College Website Lists such as this one tend to feature large and prestigious research universities when the reality is that many smaller liberal arts colleges offer greater personal attention and a more transformative educational experience. Gettysburg College is one such school. Political Science is one of the most popular majors at the college, with nearly 10% of all students. Academics are supported by a 9 to 1 student/faculty ratio, and with no graduate students, the faculty are entirely committed to undergraduate education. Gettysburg's proximity to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Harrisburg (Pennsylvania's state capital) provides students with numerous work and internship opportunities. Students can jump right in their first year on campus by participating in a mentoring program through the Eisenhower Institute. Experiential learning is important at Gettysburg, and students find options both on campus and off, whether that be studying abroad or participating in the Washington Semester in the nation's capital. Getty Images | Paul Manilou Political Science at Harvard University (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 113/1,819 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 63/4,389 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Harvard University Website Harvard University ranks as one of the very best universities in the world, and this prestigious Ivy League school has the resources to attract top students and faculty members. A \$38 billion endowment has many benefits. Keep in mind that Harvard University has over twice as many graduate students as undergraduates, and the Government Department is home to 165 Ph.D. students. This can mean that some faculty members are more focused on graduate education than undergraduate students, but it can also open up research opportunities because of the university's high level of research productivity. Undergraduates, for example, are invited to take Gov 92r and earn credit while conducting research alongside doctoral students or faculty members. Students also conduct their own research in their senior year by working on a thesis project. Along with one-on-one work with a thesis adviser, seniors also take a seminar to support the research and writing process. Students with projects that require funding for travel or other costs find that Harvard has a variety of research grants available to undergraduates. DenisTangneyJr / Getty Images Political Science at Ohio State (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 254/10,969 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 45/4,169 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Ohio State Website The Ohio State University is one of the largest public universities in the nation, and it is also home to a high quality and popular political science major. Students have several degree options: a BA in Political Science, a BS in Political Science, or a BA in World Politics. OSU gives political science students plenty of opportunities for hands-on experiences, such as conducting an independent research project, writing a thesis, or serving as a research mentor. The university's location in Columbus also provides numerous internship possibilities for undergraduates. Ohio State has plenty of opportunities to enhance one's political science education outside of the classroom. The university is home to over 1,000 student clubs and organizations, including the Collegiate Council on World Affairs, the OSU Mock Trial Team, and the Journal of Politics and International Affairs. Mark Miller Photos / Getty Images Stanford University is one of the most prestigious and selective universities in the country if not the world, and its political science program has an impressive faculty (including Condoleezza Rice). The faculty span several areas of research that are reflected in the broad range of courses available to students: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political methodology, and political theory. The program focuses on developing students' analytical thinking skills and teaching sophisticated research methods. As with most schools on this list, Stanford provides political science students with numerous research opportunities, ranging from writing an honors thesis to working with a Stanford professor through the university's Summer Research College. Students also get help finding internships through the university's career services, BEAM (Bridging Education, Ambition & Meaningful Work). Geri Lavrov / Getty Images Political Science at UCLA (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 590/8,499 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 47/4,856 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the UCLA Website The University of California Los Angeles is one of the very best public universities in the nation, and it also graduates more political science majors than any other school in the country. The political science program offers roughly 140 undergraduate classes annually to its 1,800 majors and thousands of other students. Political science is one of the most popular majors at the university. The sheer scale of UCLA's program gives students a remarkable amount of choice in classes and areas of interest. Classes are often current ("Trump's Foreign Policy") and sometimes a little quirky ("Political Theory in Hollywood"). Students can also take advantage of some excellent travel opportunities such as the UCLA Quarter in Washington Program, run by the Center for American Politics and Public Policy, or Summer Travel Study. The course named Domestic and Foreign Politics in Europe (offered in 2020) will travel to London, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Paris. Annapolis - United States Naval Academy. Michael Bentley / Flickr Political Science at the United States Naval Academy (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 133/1,062 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 25/328 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Naval Academy Website The United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, isn't going to be a good choice for everyone. Applicants need to be U.S. citizens and pass a medical and fitness exam, and they must commit to five years of active-duty service upon graduation. That said, the Academy's political science program could be a fabulous choice for the right type of student. Being part of the military provides internship possibilities other schools can't (at the State Department and Office of Naval Intelligence, for example), and midshipmen can fly around the globe for free on military aircraft when space is available. Political science is clearly an essential field for the military, and the school's faculty has impressive breadth and depth of expertise. It's not surprising that roughly one out of eight students at the Academy majors in political science. Outside of the classroom, Academy students have numerous opportunities to enhance their political science education. The school is home to the annual Naval Academy Foreign Affairs Conference run by midshipmen. The political science department is also the sponsor of Navy Debate, the school's highly successful policy debate team. USNA participates in Model United Nations, has a chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha (the political science honor society), and runs an active internship program with 15 to 20 locations. Piriya Photography / Getty Images Political Science at UNC Chapel Hill (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 215/4,628 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 39/4,401 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the UNC Chapel Hill Website The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is one of the top-ranked public universities in the nation, and it also offers a remarkable value for in-state students. Political science is one of the university's most popular majors, and the faculty work within five subfields: American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political methodology, and political theory. The political science department at UNC has a primarily undergraduate focus (the graduate program is relatively small), and it frequently sponsors events for undergraduates, such as a speaker series and film screenings. UNC encourages undergraduate research, and students can conduct an independent study with a faculty member. Strong students can qualify to conduct an independent research project that leads to a senior thesis. The department has several endowments to help fund undergraduate research. As a large research university, UNC Chapel Hill is well-connected for helping students find internships, and the school offers over 300 study abroad programs in 70 countries. An international experience can clearly be valuable for many political science majors. University of Pennsylvania. neverbutterfly / Flickr Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 109/2,808 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 37/5,723 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Penn Website The University of Pennsylvania's political science department has been thriving in recent years, and the faculty has grown by 50% in the past decade. The undergraduate political science curriculum has students explore four subfields of politics: international relations, American politics, comparative politics, and political theory. Penn's curriculum emphasizes breadth, but students also have the option of declaring a concentration and taking at least five courses in a specific subfield. Students who meet the GPA requirement can also complete an honors thesis their senior year. The political science department encourages experiential learning and many students participate in an internship in the summer. Students interested in public policy should seriously consider the Penn in Washington Program. Over 500 Penn alumni in the Washington area meet with students, and students are taught by current policy professionals, have discussion sessions with policy leaders, and participate in challenging internships. University of Texas at Austin. Amy Jacobson Political Science at the University of Texas at Austin Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 324/9,888 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 77/2,906 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the UT Austin Website One of the nation's top public universities, the University of Texas at Austin has a thriving government program. The major is one of the most popular at the university and has its own dedicated undergraduate advising staff. UT Austin is home to The Texas Politics Project, which maintains educational materials, conducts polling, hosts events, and conducts research. Many UT Austin students interested in government find internships through the Texas Politics Project. To do an internship, students enroll in an internship course and commit 9 to 12 hours a week to work at a governmental or political organization. Like most schools on this list, UT Austin students can research and write a thesis their senior year if they meet the GPA and course requirements. Yet another research opportunity is the J.J. "Jake" Pickle Undergraduate Research Fellowship. The fellowship allows students to take part in a year-long course focused on political science research and data analysis. Students work roughly eight hours a week as research assistants to a faculty member or doctoral student. Andriy Prokopenko / Getty Images Political Science at Yale University (2018) Degrees Conferred (Political Science/College Total) 136/1,313 Full-Time Faculty (Political Science/College Total) 45/5,144 Source: National Center for Education Statistics and the Yale Website Yale University, one of three Ivy League schools on this list, is home to a highly regarded and vibrant political science department. The program has nearly 50 faculty members, a similar number of lecturers, 100 Ph.D. students, and over 400 undergraduate majors. The department is an intellectually active place that regularly hosts a variety of lectures, seminars, and conferences. One of the defining features of Yale University's political science program is the undergraduate senior essay. All seniors must complete a senior essay to graduate (at many schools, it's a requirement only of Honors students). Most Yale students typically conduct their research and write their essay over the course of a semester. For the ambitious, however, the university offers a year-long senior essay. Students can get a \$250 departmental grant to support a research project during the semester, and more substantial dollars are available to support summer research and internships.

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