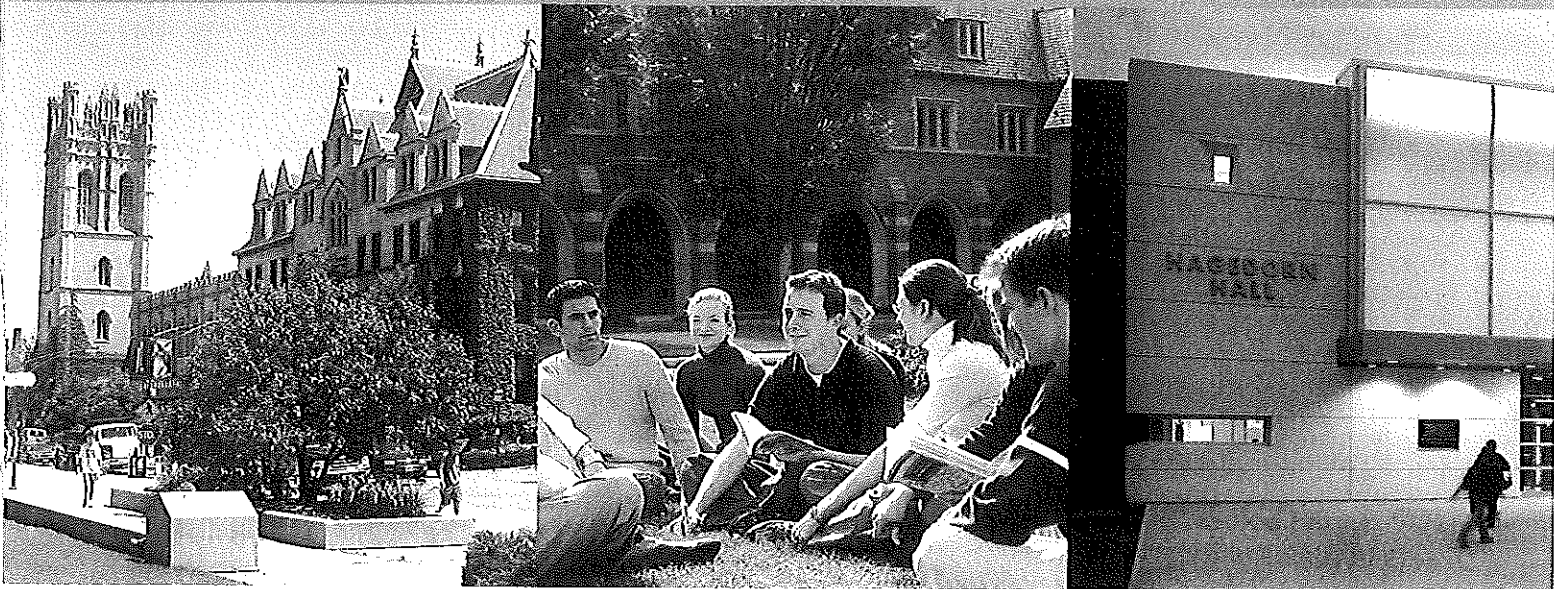


Great places to learn



*From left:
Neogothic architecture
highlights The University
of Chicago campus.
An outdoor class at the
University of Richmond.
Hagedorn Hall at
Hofstra University.*

AMERICA IS HOME to the world's largest, most diverse and arguably best system of higher education. This year almost 16 million students will attend our nation's 4,168 colleges and universities, pursuing everything from a single course to a doctorate. They'll enroll at institutions of every stripe: public and private, nonprofit and for-profit, residential and virtual, two-year and four-year, large and small, urban and rural.

With such a dizzying array of options, how do you choose what's right for you? Each college and university is distinct, with its own culture, traditions and academic strengths. Popular rankings and statistics tell but one part of the story. Finding the best fit requires a closer look.

So let's take a tour of America's campuses and see what's going on. We'll sample a few morsels from this educational smorgasbord and get a flavor of its seemingly infinite variety. Along the way, you may just discover one or two places that satisfy your palate and pique your curiosity.

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Extending the classroom, expanding horizons

SPEAKING OF CURIOSITY, you can't claim that students at the University of Richmond lack any. Located in Virginia's capital city, this private institution of 3,500 students features schools of arts and sciences, business and law, as well as the innovative Jepson School of Leadership Studies.

students to submit questions worthy of university-wide inquiry. Over the ensuing two years, the campus community fashions new courses and seminars, hosts related symposia and conferences and invites renowned speakers to address the topic at hand. The winning student receives a tidy sum of \$25,000.

"When does
discovery inspire change?"

— Winning quote, University of Richmond Quest program

Every two years, students from across the university wrap their nogginns around a single question posed by an undergraduate. The program, known as the Richmond Quest, invites

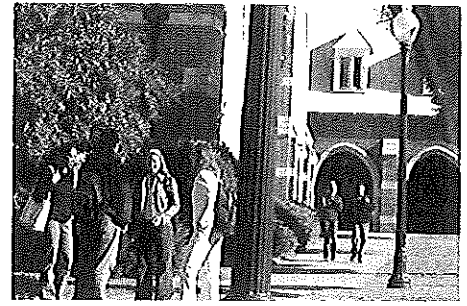
students to submit questions worthy of university-wide inquiry. Over the ensuing two years, the campus community fashions new courses and seminars, hosts related symposia and conferences and invites renowned speakers to address the topic at hand. The winning student receives a tidy sum of \$25,000.

Just what are these far-reaching questions?

Quest is the brainchild of President William Cooper, who started the program in 1998.

"I wanted to enable students to participate in a competition that forces the creative hand," Cooper said. "For two years, we address a question that brings together the

university's distinctive assets and drives related programming. It also gets competitive juices flowing."



Students on the University of Richmond campus.

The first one, in 2000, asked, "Is truth in the eye of the beholder?" Two years later, the campus pondered, "When does discovery inspire change?" And most recently, students tackled the fundamental query "How do we know which questions to ask?" Students are now busy preparing submissions for the next round. "The question has to be universal," explained Dana Lascu, an associate professor of marketing who heads the Quest committee. "We want the entire campus to vibrate around this question."

Liza Stults, a recent graduate, won the second

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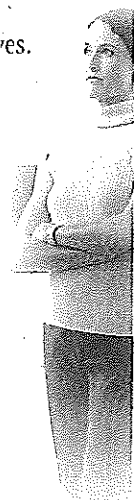
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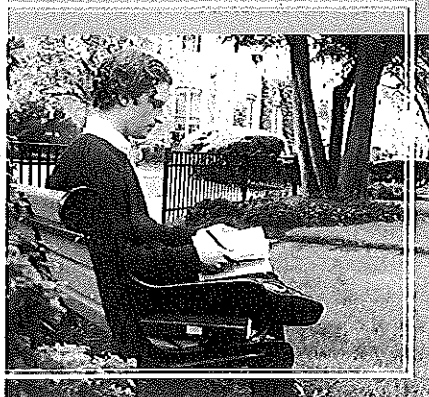
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A Hofstra student finds a quiet moment.

competition with her question about when discovery inspires change. At the time, she was only a freshman. "The nature of change interested me," Stutts said. "The theme was the easy part, but I had to make the question broad enough so that all academic disciplines could address it."

Stutts spent the summer following graduation on a dude ranch in Wyoming, just for the heck of it. But she hasn't spent the \$25,000. "I put it in the bank," she said.

Other University of Richmond students might not display the same parsimony, but they're certainly proud of the Quest program and eager to extol its virtues. They're also fanatical about their athletic teams, affectionately known as the Spiders. Spiders?

"We get our name from a baseball journalist in the 1890's," President Cooper explained. "He covered a Richmond game and compared the odd windup of one of our gangly pitchers to the movement of a spider. But we like the name. It's symbolic of a small, relatively complex organization that carries more than its own weight."

If it's tangled webs you're after, look no further than our nation's capital, where you'll find students at American University's School of Public Affairs busy trying to reshape policy. You might also find them riding on Air Force One, interning on the Hill, helping to run a re-election campaign or comparing notes with other wonks at various federal departments and agencies.

As its name suggests, the school attracts students with a strong interest in public policy and government affairs. About half of the 2,000 enrolled are undergraduates pursuing degrees in fields as diverse as leadership, organizational change, and law and society. "Our mission

is to provide undergraduate students a solid liberal arts education and an introduction to the study of public affairs," explained Dean William LeoGrande. "At the graduate level, we provide professional training for people who seek careers in that area."

Given this mission, the school naturally encourages students to tap into the unparalleled resources of Washington, D.C. Some 80 percent of undergraduates weave at least one credit-bearing internship into their studies, and many undertake several.

Likewise, students at Stony Brook University sharpen their résumés with work outside the classroom. The Long Island public institution has achieved recognition for engaging undergraduates in faculty-led research projects. This kind of activity doesn't occur just among a few departments of science and engineering; it's woven into the fabric of the place, involving every discipline.

Leading the charge is President Shirley Strum Kenny, who chaired a national commission that encouraged universities to embrace undergraduate research. "We must look at undergraduate education as learning to ask the right questions," Kenny said, "not just getting the answers. Knowledge changes too rapidly, and stu-

*"We must look at
undergraduate education
as learning to ask the
right questions."*

— President Shirley Strum Kenny, Stony Brook University

dents need the flexibility of mind and curiosity to constantly see new relationships between pieces of information."

Angela Kokkosis certainly appreciates the university's research emphasis. The senior from Ronkonkoma, N.Y., began working in Stony Brook's labs as a high school sophomore, delving into pharmacology. Kokkosis will continue her studies next fall at Stony Brook's medical school. "Research is part of our culture," Kokkosis said. "It's understood that most students want some experience in research, and labs look to undergraduates for help."

The university's culture is also shaped by campus activities that bring students together. On one day in the spring, stu-

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dents congregate in the center of campus to present their research, exhibits and performances in an eclectic display of individual achievement. And armed with duct tape, cardboard and paint, students face off in the annual Roth Pond Regatta, a race that challenges students to be creative and industrious, all while having some fun. A metaphor, you think?



Fall at the University of Richmond.

It's quite an honor

AT NEARBY HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY, people are equally serious about their studies. The private university, sprawling over some 240 acres, enrolls roughly 14,000 students, of whom 8,300 are undergraduates pursuing degrees in 130 fields of study.

Undergraduates in the liberal arts have two program choices. They can enroll in the more traditional arts and sciences school or opt for Hofstra's "New College," a smaller unit that

offers purely interdisciplinary courses and concentrations.

In either case, the most academically gifted students can choose the Honors College. Now in its fourth year, the college features its own curriculum and offers its own degree, which students earn in addition to their bachelor's degrees in academic disciplines. Not surprisingly, Hofstra's program hinges on close interaction between students and faculty, often

resulting in research collaborations and individual mentoring. "For years we had a small honors program designed for humanities majors," explained Herman Berliner, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. "Now we've created an honors college where liberal arts coursework is a complement to students in any major."

BillieRose Vernillo, a senior majoring in English, commutes to campus from her home in Hicksville, N.Y. She credits the honors program for strengthening her relationships with faculty. "Because I'm an honors student," she said, "the faculty know I'm more dedicated, and they're all so willing to help out."

Just to the southwest, on Staten Island, Wagner College also offers a rigorous honors program, but with a twist. More on that later.

This 2,000-student, primarily undergraduate campus sits on a hilltop overlooking Manhattan, a mere 25-minute (free) ferry ride away. The college has garnered attention for its innovative Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, which blends academic study with internship placements throughout the community. During their four years, students take a series of tutorials that integrate classroom and experiential learning.

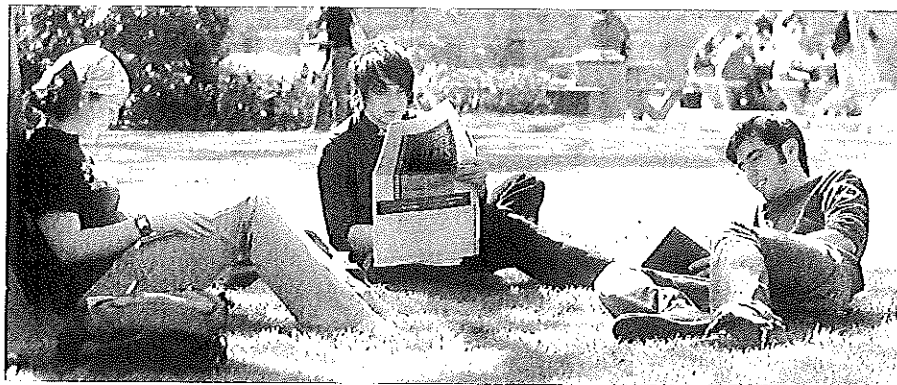
"The Wagner Plan gives students a chance to compare what they've learned on the page to what they're seeing in the real world," said Miles Groth, associate professor of psychology. "By the time they graduate, they've already laid the groundwork for getting a job."

Groth runs Wagner's honors program, reserved for a relative handful of dedicated students. Only about 40 from each entering class are invited to participate, and they must maintain a 3.5 grade point average to stick around. Students take at least five specially designed honors courses, complete a capstone project and present their work at a public forum.

And here's the promised twist: The top half-dozen or so graduating seniors receive a free trip to Europe, courtesy of a local group of alumni and friends of the college. During the past few years, Groth and his colleagues have taken students on 10-day learning excursions to Venice, Rome and Paris.

Doug Auer toured Italy following his 2002 graduation. The Staten Island native, a second-generation Wagnerian, earned his degree in English, tacked on a master's in journalism in the Midwest and returned home to write for the Staten Island Advance. "We had a list of readings to complete before we went," said Auer of his European experience, "and then we got to immerse ourselves in what we had read. It really brought everything together."

Back in Richmond, honors students at



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Virginia Commonwealth University may not have Europe at the end of the rainbow, but they do have an equally appealing incentive awaiting them: They can march seamlessly into graduate school via the Guaranteed Admissions Program.

Wouldn't it be nice to know as a freshman that your spot in medical school is already secure? Or how about dental school or nursing or pharmacology or business? Honors students who maintain a high average and fulfill necessary course requirements have the luxury of knowing that a top-notch VCU graduate or professional degree is there for the taking. They don't have to apply for admission or even take those pesky graduate-level entrance exams.

Ali Kahn, a senior from Herndon, Va., majoring in biology and mass communications, is on the eight-year plan. Next year he'll head to VCU's medical school, thanks to the Guaranteed Admissions Program. Over the past few years he's managed to keep busy with a political internship in Richmond, a summer journalism job in D.C. and several research projects in VCU's labs. Kahn eyes a career in public health

communications, a field that represents his various interests. "College is all about trying to experience as much as possible," Kahn said, "and VCU has let me pursue all of my passions at once. I've done everything I set out to do, and more."

As Kahn and his fellow students have grown and developed over the years, so too has the university. In the last decade, VCU has poured over a billion dollars into its campus, with many more projects on the way. Recently the university opened an \$18 million dining hall; soon it will unveil new facilities for the schools of nursing, business and engineering.

Enrollment has correspondingly increased, growing by 50 percent over the past five years to a current total of 28,000, of whom about 17,500 are undergraduates. What's more, by becoming a more residential campus, this public university is slowly shedding its reputation as a commuter school. To accommodate this cultural shift, VCU has invested heavily in student life initiatives.

Spearheading this transformation is President

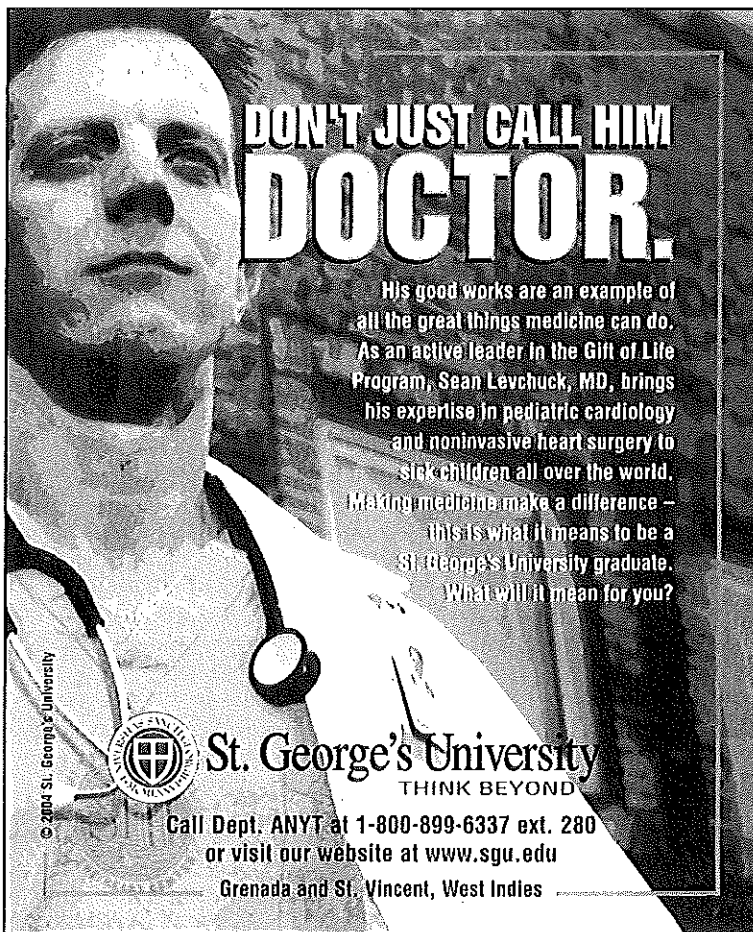
Eugene Trani, who likes to talk about "degrees of experience" at VCU. "Students who come here learn practically as well as academically," Trani said, noting the various opportunities students have on campus and around Richmond. "They get to combine their coursework with real experience and gain a competitive advantage."

Trani is also quick to point out VCU's strengths in life sciences, an academic umbrella

"College is all about
trying to experience
as much as possible."

—Ali Kahn, student, Virginia Commonwealth University

la covering such fields as medicine, biology, ethics, forensics, ecology and even religion. In short, it's an interdisciplinary approach to viewing life as a holistic, interrelated process. According to Trani, VCU does it as well as anyone. "We probably have the most broad-based



**DON'T JUST CALL HIM
DOCTOR.**

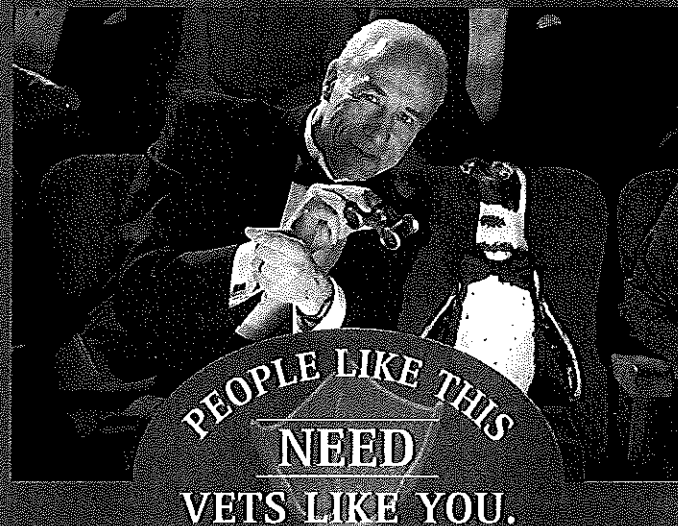
His good works are an example of all the great things medicine can do. As an active leader in the Gift of Life Program, Sean Levchuck, MD, brings his expertise in pediatric cardiology and noninvasive heart surgery to sick children all over the world. Making medicine make a difference — this is what it means to be a St. George's University graduate. What will it mean for you?

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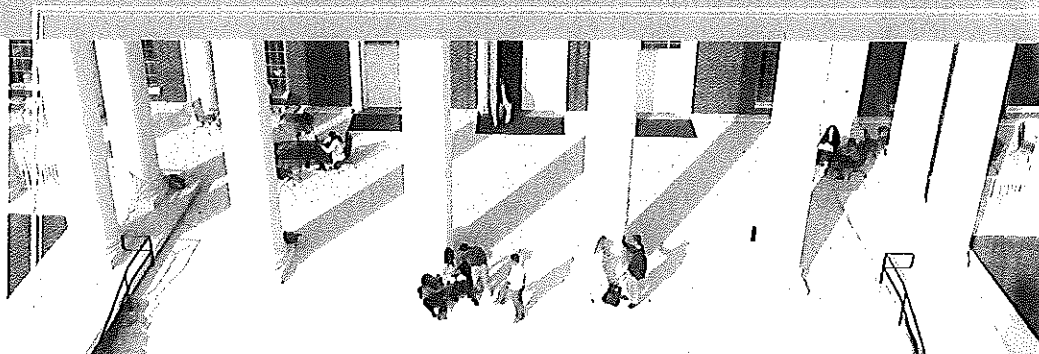
St. George's University
THINK BEYOND

Grenada, West Indies

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program in life sciences of any university in the country," Trani said.

And honors students who find intellectual nourishment in life sciences or any other discipline, including those in VCU's well-known School of the Arts, can continue their exploration at the graduate level. It's guaranteed.



The DeMoss Learning Center at Liberty University.

Endless variety, coast to coast and beyond

IF YOU CAN SUM UP American higher education one way, it's this: You can't sum it up. For every campus with 50,000 students, there's one with 500. For every high-rise city campus, there's one tucked away in the woods. For every sports-minded college, there's one with no football team. What they all share, perhaps, is a quest for quality, an eagerness to excel . . . and, nat-

urally, the hope for a bigger endowment.

Did we mention football? Anyone for a Forty-Niners game? That's certainly possible for folks at San Francisco's Academy of Art University, assuming they can find time to get to the stadium. It seems students there stay rather busy designing, painting, printing, photographing, editing, animating, illustrating and working with

area studios such as Disney and Pixar.

With more than 7,000 students, the academy ranks as the largest private art institution in the nation. It offers degrees and certificates in a dozen fields and courses in 30 disciplines. You don't have to be in San Francisco to take advantage of this breadth, however; that's because you can take classes online at your convenience, choosing from among 277 courses.

Teaching in all these areas are practitioners drawn from relevant fields. "Our mission has always been to use professional artists to train the next generation of artists," President Elisa Stephens said. "Students come here to prepare for a career and to build a portfolio. That's how artists are hired."

Stephens also highlighted signature programs like fashion, acting for television and film, and automotive design. "Our only competition," she quipped, "is ignorance."

On the opposite end of the state, not far from San Diego, people at the Gemological Institute of America concede little to the competition. It's tempting to call the institute a diamond in the rough, but then again it's already recognized as the world's foremost authority in gemology. You've probably heard of the "Four C's" — color, clarity, cut and carat — commonly used to evaluate diamonds. That mnemonic device was coined there, and the institute developed the standard International Diamond Grading System. The GIA's experts evidently know their stuff because they recently helped Scotland Yard crack a case of diamond theft valued at \$15 million to \$20 million.

Established in 1931, the GIA offers courses in gemology, jewelry-manufacturing arts and jewelry design, among other concentrations. For all programs, students can take courses either on campus or through distance-learning formats.

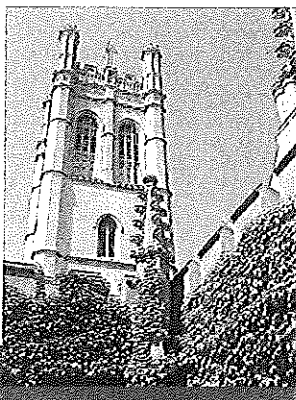
On the subject of distance learning, can you name the first American university to offer an

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M.B.A. completely online? If you answered Liberty University, you were correct.

This private, Christian institution in Lynchburg, Va., enrolls more than 17,000 students in residential and distance degree programs. Areas of concentration include religion, business, law, psychology and nursing; degrees range from an associate's to the doctorate.

The university prides itself on flexibility and convenience. Terms start at 17 times during the year, or every three weeks, so students can begin courses when their schedules permit. Distance programs feature online instruction as well as hybrid alternatives that blend in on-campus experiences.

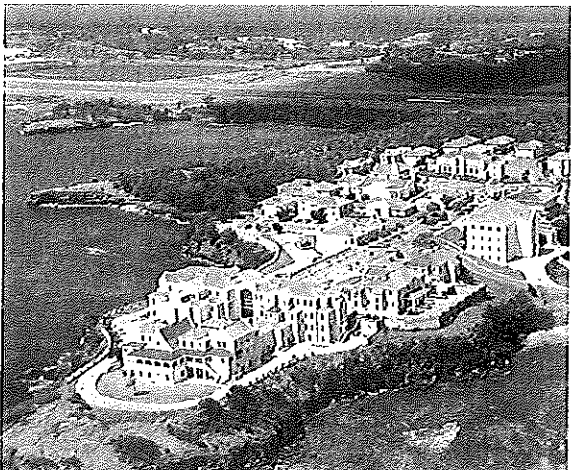
At the undergraduate level, about one-third of the students pursuing degrees via distance learning are in the military. Many are fighting the war in Iraq. And even without online access, students can complete their course of study. "Our distance education programs are very popular with people in the military,"

"Our distance education programs are very popular with people in the military."

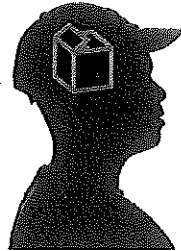
—Patti Thompson, associate dean for arts and sciences, Liberty University

said Patti Thompson, associate dean for arts and sciences. "If they're on an ocean vessel, they can take course materials with them and just pop in a tape."

The aforementioned M.B.A. program requires 12 classes, which start every eight weeks, not every three. Most students complete the program in two years, but some do it in as little as one. Recognized as a "best buy" among distance M.B.A.'s, Liberty's program will run you about \$12,000, not including books and replacement mousepads.



The scenic campus of St. George's University.



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- We have 20 NCAA Division I varsity teams and a new 8,300-seat stadium.
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But let's say you're a high school student eager to embark as soon as possible on your college career. What then? Do you have to wait until you graduate? Not necessarily. If you don't mind the city's famous wind, you may just find a happy home at **The University of Chicago Graham School of General Studies.**

The Graham School is the extension division of The University of Chicago, one of the nation's

"We're here to connect
the traditional values
of a classical education
with a nontraditional
community of learners."

— Jeffrey Rosen, associate dean, University of Chicago
Graham School of General Studies

foremost institutions of higher learning. Its mission is to open the university's resources to the community. Each year about 10,000 people take

advantage of the offer, enrolling in graduate and certificate programs or just taking courses for personal or professional enrichment. Classes are offered on the university's main campus in Hyde Park and in downtown Chicago, a convenient location for busy adults.

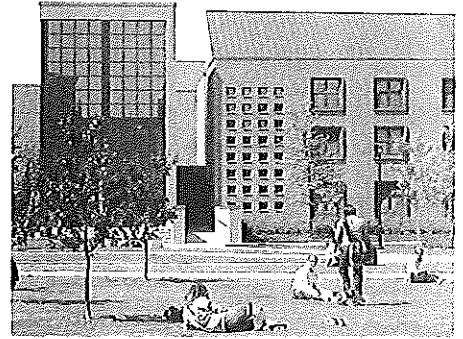
During the summer, high school students can take intensive, three- and four-week courses in foreign languages, business, human rights, computer science, math and . . . well, you name it. The more adventurous might take "Stones and Bones" and conduct an archaeological dig in Wyoming. Or they could participate in field studies in New Mexico or pack a bag for Athens to study Greek. Classes are taught by university faculty and are credit-bearing, so students can begin to build a college transcript. Those credits may then transfer to whatever college they choose.

Given this chance to study such a variety of subjects with some of the best minds in the business, it's no wonder students descend on Chicago from all corners of the globe. While there, they can stay on campus and use the university's athletic facilities, dining halls, libraries and labs. They might even make a few friends. "Students who come here for summer sessions really bond together," said Jeffrey Rosen, associate dean.

Not only do high school students beef up their résumés with courses, but they learn how to package themselves for the college admissions frenzy. Admissions officials at Chicago offer tutorials in completing appli-

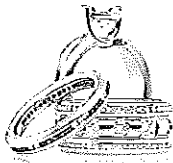
cation forms, writing essays and taking standardized tests, in the process allaying some of the fears and anxiety that are normally associated with the application experience. To put it simply, these kids get a leg up on the competition.

Still, others at the Graham school aren't there to compete for fat envelopes. Many college students from campuses across the country come to Chicago to bone up on foreign languages or take courses their home institutions don't offer. College graduates come to explore areas for further study. And during the academic year, working adults and seniors immerse themselves in one of the university's hallmarks: its "Great Books" curriculum, a tour of Western civilization's literary and historical masterpieces. As Dean Rosen said, "We're here to connect the traditional values of a classical education with a



Students relax outside University of Chicago dorms.

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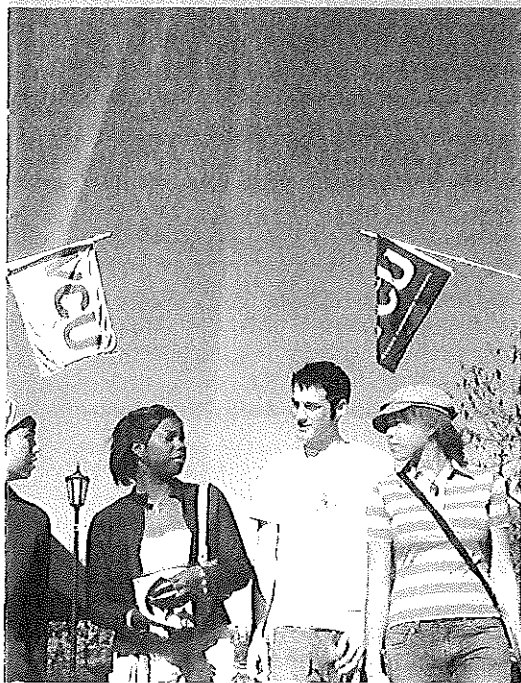
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Students stroll the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University.

nontraditional community of learners."

Okay, so we've seen that America has some pretty neat places to learn. Of course, this country hasn't cornered the market on quality, and it's true that some Americans seek educational opportunity elsewhere. Like in the Caribbean. [Who could blame them?]

One destination might be St. George's University in Grenada. Founded in the 1970's as an alternative for medical school hopefuls in the United States, the university has since expanded to include programs in veterinary medicine, arts and sciences and public health. It enrolls about 2,600 students, most of whom are pursuing a medical degree.

"We were founded to meet the growing demand for places in medical school," explained Margaret Lambert, dean of enrollment planning and university registrar. "In the 1970's, many students sought a medical education abroad and had to learn new educational systems, languages and foreign cultures. We provided an option based on the American system, with instruction in English and a curriculum geared toward U.S. medical exams."

While the student body has become more international over the years, it has maintained its American flavor. About two-thirds of St. George's students hail from the States. This cosmopolitan mix creates a global network of alumni that benefits graduates — even Americans, who typically return home for their residencies and subsequent careers.

American students also flock to the School of Veterinary Medicine, which features a growing program in marine science. That would make sense, given the university's majestic location on the True Blue Peninsula.

The campus named for that peninsula has received an \$80 million capital infusion since its establishment, but school officials are more likely to tout investments in programs and student services: "We firmly believe in the value of student support services," Lambert said, "and we're very proactive in helping people learn how to learn."

That concludes our brief tour of great places to learn. Whatever institution you choose and whatever path you follow, may you enjoy the learning experience. ☺

Great places to learn

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