

College Spotlight: Saint Mary's College of California

I had the opportunity to visit St. Mary's this summer. Because of the Pandemic, the admissions office was not open, but we were greeted by a beautiful deer at the entrance to the school, which I am guessing is a direct result of no one but the security guard at the gate being around. St. Mary's is a lovely school situated on the side of the East Bay Hills, due east of San Francisco, and just over the hill from Oakland, California. It has a very rural feel despite being part of a major metropolitan area. Non-stop flights to both San Francisco and Oakland International airports from Maui (in non-Pandemic times) make traveling to this school fairly easy. Founded in 1865, it is a private, Catholic school.

Saint Mary's is a smallish (just over 2800 students) Liberal Arts college, with a fairly wide variety of majors available. Business and Marketing are the most popular majors, but there are majors in the sciences, general engineering and math. One of the more unique features of the school is the Geissberger Observatory which was established in 2003. It currently has 8 different telescopes located just above the campus. A student interested in Astronomy and Physics would find this to be a fascinating adjunct to their academic studies. The Business school offers majors in general business, Economics, and Accounting. Given its close proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area, internship opportunities are available in many disciplines.

Saint Mary's is largely a residential college, with almost all freshman and over half of all students living in on-campus housing. Most of the 22 residence halls are located at the top of the hill, with the classroom and recreational facilities on the lower side of the school. Off-campus housing is available in the near-by towns of Moraga and Orinda, and there is an off-campus housing office that can assist students with those living arrangements. This is not a Greek school, so there is no Fraternity or Sorority housing.

What about athletics? The Saint Mary's Gaels field 16 Division-I teams, with 300 student athletes participating. Saint Mary's Men's Basketball has been known to go to "The Big Dance" and are currently on the roster for the Maui Jim Invitational in 2021. Two former Gael's, Tony Gonsolin and Corbin Burns are both currently pitchers in the major leagues. And beach volleyball player, Elena Baka, will be training to compete in the Tokyo Olympics for Greece! A pretty good showing for a small, private school!

Tuition at Saint Mary's runs right around \$50,000 per year, but merit scholarships start at \$7,000 per year, with a possibility of going up to \$43,000 per year with average financial aid packages average around \$38,000. It is important to complete your FAFSA early to get the earliest bid on need-based aid. The FAFSA opens for the 2021-2022 school year on October 1, and remember the best way to get the strongest financial aid package is to do your very best work on your grades.

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