

Re: Undergrad chemistry college choice

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.chem/2005-01/0627.html>

From: William Penrose (*wrp0143_at_comcast.com*)

Date: 01/15/05

Date: Fri, 14 Jan 2005 17:07:42 -0700

On 14 Jan 2005 08:37:47 -0800, "alphageek@milmac.com"
<ovum_nospam@hotmail.com> wrote:

*>I want to study chemistry at a good college or university. I live in
>the US, but I will consider schools abroad. What are some of the top
>institutions to consider for an undergrad chemistry major?*

If one of my kids, or grandkids now, said that they planned to study chemistry, I'd kick their butts until they came to their senses. A degree in chemistry is about as useful these days as a degree in English literature or ancient languages, perhaps less so. I was fortunate to come up through chemistry during its golden age, but that is over now.

I taught chemistry until I retired last summer. Not many of our graduates from the BS, MS or PhD programs found jobs, at least jobs in chemistry. This appeared to be true for most schools. We were forever fielding calls from desperate students from other schools looking for jobs. Many ended up going to grad school only because there was no alternative, thus digging themselves deeper into the unemployment hole.

The only reason to study chemistry is that you really, really want to be a chemist. If that is the case, don't worry too much about the undergrad school. Any of the better state universities can give you a decent education in chemistry. Some of the biggest schools, however, may short-change the undergraduate school to put more resources into the graduate school. A small, more intimate school with good funding and a chemistry faculty of at least twenty may give you a better grounding in chemistry than a big, impersonal one. A school that will give you a chance to work in research lab while still an undergrad is also a big plus.

Always, always visit a school before accepting. Make sure the fit is right.

Grad school should be a snap to get into, if you are still enthusiastic by that point. Most grad schools, big and small, are

sci.chem: Re: Undergrad chemistry college choice

thrilled out of their shorts to get applications from native English speakers. In fact, if there were no Chinese students, many chemistry grad departments would simply wither up and blow away. Thank God for the Chinese, or chemistry would be a forgotten art by now.

Bill Penrose