

PRESIDENTIAL WHITE PAPER

**A LIBERAL ARTS EXPERIENCE WITH A CLEAR DIFFERENCE**

---



THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
CLAREMONT MCKENNA

---

Prepared by  
**Pamela B. Gann**  
President  
Claremont McKenna College  
May 2010

### **A Liberal Arts Experience With a Clear Difference**

*In the diverse landscape of American higher education, Claremont McKenna College has carved out a truly distinctive place. CMC combines leadership and idealism for a better world with an abiding self-confidence and motivation to bring it about.*

Colleges and universities across the country struggle with an ongoing question: How do we differentiate ourselves from institutions with similar academic profiles and missions? Perhaps the most important quality that attracted me to [CMC](#) eleven years ago was the College's unique character and its singular place in American liberal arts education. As I look at CMC today, I see a college that offers a liberal arts experience with a difference, a place that engages and prepares students to meet the challenges of a complex global environment.

At CMC there is at once a very focused mission that emphasizes the importance of leadership, a connection to real-world issues, and a far-reaching intellectual curiosity that are all fundamental to the ethos of the College. I like to say that our liberal arts college combines theory with practice at the local, national and international levels.

CMC's mission, within the framework of [The Claremont Colleges](#), "is to educate its students for thoughtful and productive lives and responsible leadership in business, government, and the professions, and to support faculty and student scholarship that contributes to intellectual vitality and the understanding of public policy issues. The College pursues this mission by providing a liberal arts education that emphasizes economics and public policy, a faculty that is dedicated to effective undergraduate teaching, a close student-teacher relationship that fosters critical inquiry, an active residential and intellectual environment that promotes responsible citizenship, and a program of research institutes and scholarly support that makes possible a faculty of teacher-scholars."

Beyond the focus on [economics](#) and [public policy](#), CMC offers students the opportunity to concentrate in a broad range of areas, from [English](#) to [international relations](#) to [biology](#) to [psychology](#). The presence of students pursuing other concentrations provides a richer context for intellectual inquiry for the College.

We are very intentional about [recruiting students](#) with a wide range of viewpoints and different backgrounds to create a residential learning environment that is vibrant. Given the highly competitive nature of the college admission and selection process today, there is a collective urgency among students and parents to find that right balance of academic rigor, personal attention and real-world experiences. CMC has provided students with this all too often elusive blend of experiences for decades.

Woven into the fabric of CMC is the ethos of leadership. Leadership is our cornerstone-it informs everything we do and defines who we are. We have an [institute](#) dedicated to it. CMC's reputation as a place where leaders are developed is well deserved, and is realized in the impact our graduates have on the world around them. Seventy percent of CMC graduates go on to advanced degrees, and one in eight graduates holds a position in top management.

To talk about the CMC experience, one must start with the connection between students and faculty. The intimacy of the CMC residential, educational experience allows students to form enduring relationships with faculty, who serve as mentors to students. It is typical for CMC students to go to a professor's house to continue discussions about the issues of the day over dinner, and in survey after survey, students talk about the importance of accessibility and the fact that CMC teacher-scholars truly care about students and their development. CMC students are driven to pursue their passions and interests through faculty who constantly challenge them and involve them in their research. Our faculty have the ambition and track records of peers at

national research universities: they are dedicated scholars who engage in the world of ideas by writing books, publishing in major academic journals, or developing op-eds for national media. Yet the quality of their teaching and their fundamental commitment to students are never compromised.

The College's [ten research institutes](#) provide an ideal environment for this balance of learning and research. No other national liberal arts college has such a diverse group of research institutes that involve students in scholarship. Our research institutes provide students with powerful, real-world opportunities, immeasurably enhancing the educational experience and giving students responsibility to drive research projects that deal with complex issues, from human rights to sustainability to governance. The institutes foster close interaction between faculty and students as they work together to find solutions to pressing national and global problems. Two exemplary models are [The Lowe Institute of Political Economy](#) and [The Roberts Environmental Center](#). With more than 40 student research assistants working with six affiliated faculty, the Lowe Institute's recent projects have included studies on the relationship between China asset prices and inflation, the economics of oil shocks and terrorism, and an empirical analysis of auction theory. Research at the Roberts Environmental Center, conducted jointly by students and faculty, grades some of the world's largest companies in terms of the transparency of their environmental reporting and sustainability effectiveness. These national and international companies, along with media, take the results seriously. The Roberts Center, and their student researchers, work with many companies and organizations in helping them learn how they can improve their sustainability reporting practices and become better environmental stewards.

Through an array of experiences outside the classroom—from [the Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum](#) to study abroad programs to internships —CMC prepares students to thrive in a global marketplace.

The Athenaeum is truly unique among liberal arts colleges, for that matter, among all colleges and universities in this country, and is an essential ingredient to CMC’s intellectual recipe, exposing students to the views of renowned speakers and giving them the chance to discuss key issues of the day. Four days a week the Athenaeum affords students preparing to become the leaders of tomorrow the opportunity to meet the leaders of today. There are precious few colleges or universities where students can have such close interactions with the thought leaders of our time: Nobel laureates, former presidents, novelists, poets, environmental advocates and human rights activists all make their way to the College to be part of the Athenaeum series.

The Athenaeum is inextricably linked to the character of the College. At CMC, we foster openness toward different approaches to public policy solutions, different viewpoints about the appropriate role of government in the economy, or the appropriate roles of national governments versus international organizations. CMC is a place where students are encouraged to embrace a healthy mix of opinions about politics and public policy, where students take part in the give and take of rigorous discussion. The rich array of speakers who come to the College every week captures this receptiveness to new ideas and new solutions to complex problems

The College’s robust study abroad programs allow students to enhance their understanding of topics and issues explored in the classroom. Study abroad opens doors for students to travel to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. About 50 percent of the graduating class have taken advantage of our study abroad and off-campus programs, and they are invariably transformed by their experiences. Additionally, about 75

percent of CMC students participate in internships, which take them around the nation and the world to gain invaluable experiences outside the classroom. Student internships have allowed students to participate in Middle East peace discussions, research maternal healthcare in Honduras, or follow the storied path of Genghis Kahn in the mountains of Mongolia.

In order to define the distinctive qualities of Claremont McKenna, one must look at the College in the broader context of the Claremont Consortium. While consortiums of colleges exist in various locations around the country, such as in Massachusetts where Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke College, Smith College and UMass-Amherst form a group that are in proximity to each other, but separated by as many as 10 miles. Only in Claremont are there four other superb undergraduate and two graduate institutions within walking distance to CMC and to each other. The consortium of these nationally renowned colleges and graduate institutions – [Harvey Mudd](#), [Pitzer](#), [Pomona](#), [Scripps](#), [Claremont Graduate University](#) and [Keck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Science](#)--pool their resources to become the equivalent of a major university. The Colleges not only share a library system, athletic facilities, and extra-curricular activities, but also offer joint academic programs and cross-registration in courses. Currently the consortium has approximately 6,800 students and a combined faculty of approximately 2,300. More than 2,500 courses are available to students in Claremont. The residential character of Claremont McKenna, with 1,200 undergraduates, is clearly bolstered by the power of the Consortium.

At the heart of the [Campaign for Claremont McKenna](#) is a desire to preserve and enhance what is distinctive about CMC. In 2001, the Board of Directors of [CMC's Alumni Association](#) defined the “essential characteristics” of the College. They wrote: “CMC has pursued its mission with a forward-looking worldview derived directly from the generation that returned

from World War II. That spirit combined idealism for a better world with an abiding self-confidence and motivation to bring it about. That spirit has continued to the present. Not surprisingly, therefore, CMC acts as if it is not resigned to its place in the world; but rather, that it has chosen to make its place in the world.”