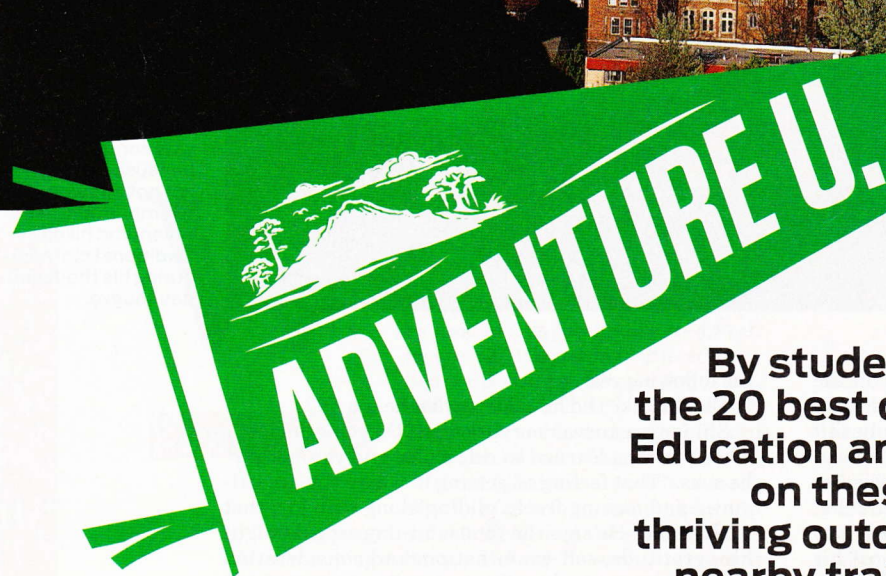
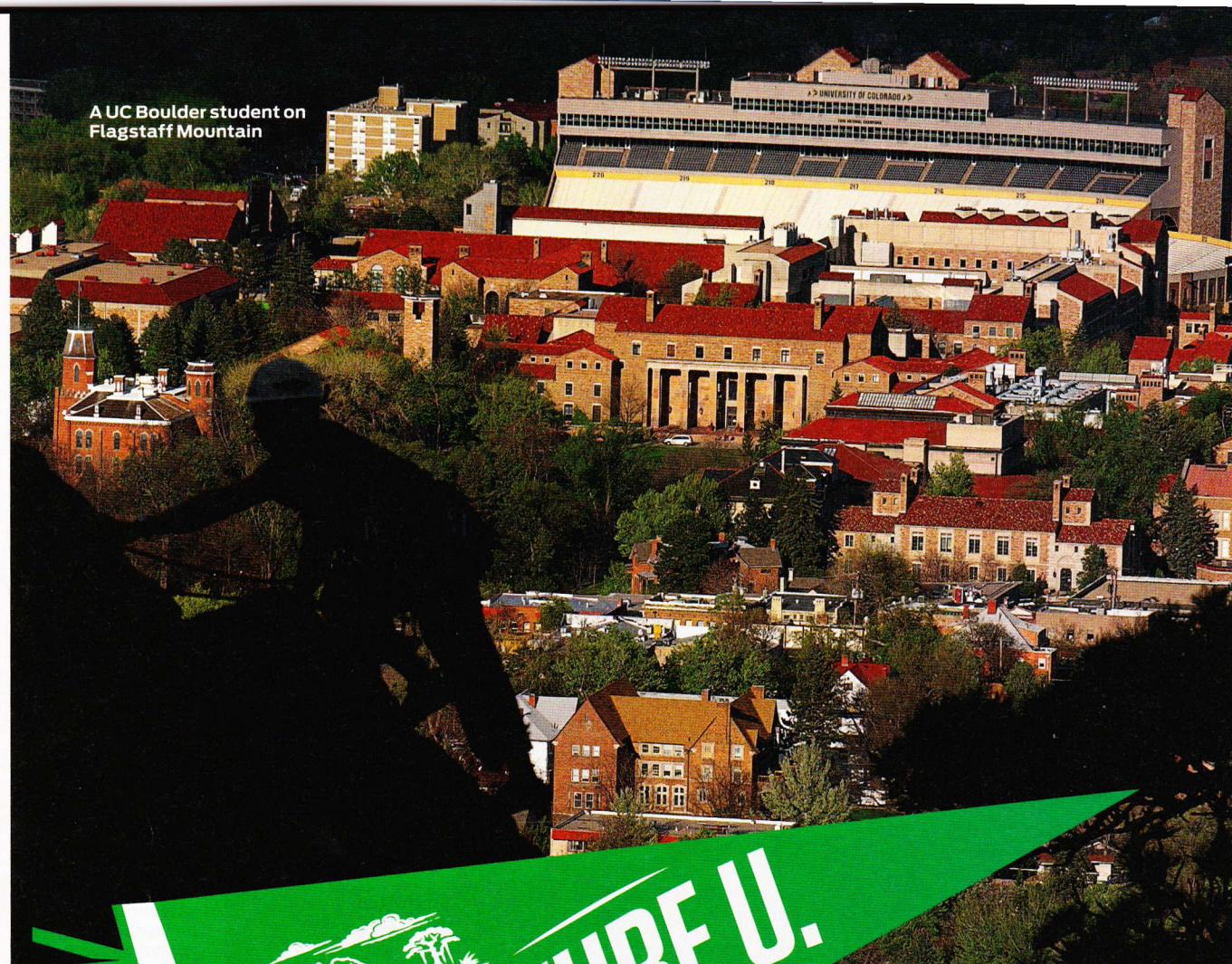


A UC Boulder student on Flagstaff Mountain



**By students, for students*:
the 20 best colleges for hikers.
Education and recreation meet
on these campuses, with
thriving outdoor programs and
nearby trails and mountains.**

**By Jackie Bannon (University of Wisconsin-Madison, '17)
& Carolyn Webber (University of Utah, '17)**

***and their parents**

GRADING SHEET

We reviewed hundreds of schools, rating them on a five-point scale based on three main criteria:



Proximity to mountains, trails, rivers, and other outdoor recreational opportunities



Culture, evaluated by number of outdoor clubs and participation



Quality and diversity of academics for outdoor-related careers



Biking near Vedauwoo and Happy Jack Recreation Areas

#3

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Laramie, WY
Enrollment: 13,929

4.3

4.2
4.2
4.5

College helps train future leaders, and this university believes roughing it breeds the best ones. The intensive, two-semester Outdoor Leadership Development Series culminates in a week of backpacking without an instructor in southeastern Utah. Students of all majors are encouraged to apply, but just 12 are accepted. Didn't make the cut? No problem. At Wyoming, it's easy to find close-to-home outdoor fun in the Snowy Range (42 miles), Vedauwoo Recreation Area (16 miles), or the North Platte River (76 miles). If you don't know where to go on a weekend, ask someone—most UW students are natives.

GO HERE!

NICHOLE MAE LUMADUE

SENIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

"I come from the East Coast, where going to the beach was the popular thing to do during spring break. Here, I've noticed the big thing to do is go backpacking or rafting. It's popular for students to get out."

#4

4.3

4.8
4.0
4.0

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Bellingham, WA
Enrollment: 15,332

It's hard to beat WWU's location: Pedal 20 minutes and you'll find world-class mountain biking at Galbraith Mountain, and drive 90 minutes to a top-notch ski resort (Mt. Baker Ski Area, which holds the record for highest annual snowfall). Plus, the North Cascades are 40 miles to the east and tide pools line the campus's west side. To help students explore the area, the Outdoor Center organizes multiple trips per weekend. Moreover, at this 100-percent renewable energy campus, students work hard to preserve the nature they enjoy. Western Wilderness Trail Corps maintains trails in the North Cascades, and student volunteers spread the outdoor love by taking community members outside with LEAD, an environmental service club.

GO HERE!

GUS LANDEFELD

JUNIOR, GEOGRAPHY

"I really like the snow caving trip. It's a funny way to get to know people because you're sleeping in the snow together, getting pretty cold, but showing people that you can have fun out of your comfort zone is really big for me."

Students explore Vermont's Green Mountains.



#5

4.2

4.7
4.0
4.0

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Burlington, VT
Enrollment: 12,815

When campus seems empty most weekends, don't look in the library. Check the Centennial Woods a few blocks away, the shores and waters of Lake Champlain, backpacking trails in nearby Maine, or atop Mt. Hunger under a full moon, where students gather with cups of hot chocolate (an Outing Club tradition). The club offers 100 trips annually, and the Ski and Snowboard Club provides free transportation to nearby resorts like Stowe Mountain (45 miles; student pass costs \$400), skiers-only Mad River Glen (35 miles), and Sugarbush (50 miles). A \$370 season pass scores unlimited days at the two latter. Back on campus, students have their pick from 22 environmental majors and concentrations.

40Backpacks

52Pairs of climbing shoes

78Sleeping bags

Size 8,500 square feet

Served 10,700

6,100 alumni and general public in 2015

120Sets of alpine skis

75Tents

96Sleeping pads

Backcountry stoves & cooksets

U of U. Here's a sampling of what No one does gear volume like the they have on offer.

4.2

4.0

4.5

#6

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Ashland, OR

Enrollment: 5,913

Nestled between the Siskiyou and Cascade Mountains, this small, artsy public school fits right in with the mountain town's nature-loving spirit. The Rogue River and Crater Lake National Park are natural laboratories for water quality research and land management studies, while the Outdoor Program helps foster a feeling of community, frequently gathering students for Wonderful Wednesday Eats, gear swaps, and film festivals. Scuba diving and caving clubs' trips are subsidized by student activity fees, so excursions are cheap. Hoping to make a career out of the outdoors? Major in Outdoor Adventure Leadership and take fly-fishing or mountaineering courses.

4.2

4.0

4.5

#7

PRESCOTT COLLEGE

Prescott, AZ

Enrollment: 848

When a college has more vans than classrooms, plan to get outside. These mobile labs bring students to such wonders as the Granite Dells (15 minutes away) or the Grand Canyon (two hours). Those in the five majors under the Adventure Education study area spend almost every sunny day outside teaching local kids about the environment and observing the flora, fauna, and geologic formations close to campus. The school also has a master's program in Adventure Education with three concentrations.

4.2

4.0

4.5

#8

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Salt Lake City, UT

Enrollment: 31,515

This big, urban campus at the base of the Wasatch Range is where students go to pair powder skiing with academics. In addition to quality research opportunities and top-ranked math and chemistry departments, U of U students get discounts to seven different world-class ski resorts, six of which are less than an hour away. By summer, students switch ski boots for climbing shoes, and runners, mountain bikers, and hikers hop on dorm-adjacent trails that extend into the mountains. And if you need to borrow a piece of equipment, the outdoor program is keeper of the nation's largest gear shed (they claim), available to students for prices from \$2 (for a pair of gaiters) on up to \$85 (for a whitewater raft).

4.2

4.0

4.1

4.5

#8

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Salt Lake City, UT

Enrollment: 31,515

GO HERE!
CASE TURNER, OUTDOOR ADVENTURES CO-MANAGER
"Our trips are about building relationships, and the outdoors is the perfect vehicle for community building."



The Woodsmen's Competition at Dartmouth

#9

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Hanover, NH
Enrollment: 6,298

4.2

4.2
4.3
4.0

In 1909, to "stimulate interest in out-of-door winter sports," Dartmouth created the first collegiate outing club, which is now among the largest in the nation with 1,500 members, about a quarter of the student population. Twenty to 30 trips depart weekly among 14 specialty clubs, ranging from patrolling and rescuing on Dartmouth Skiway (the college-owned ski area 20 minutes away) or maintaining 70-plus miles of trails and shelters on the Appalachian Trail. The school pairs high-end academics with easy-access escape, offering 11 cabins for students to rent 9 to 143 miles away. (Perk: Eight cabins are open exclusively to alumni and employees.)



Middlebury's Feb Ski-Down

#10

4.1

4.3
4.0
4.0

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Middlebury, VT
Enrollment: 2,526

Adventure for free? Why not. With a budget of \$5,000, the school's Adventure Grant program compensates students for gas, food, and camping fees, averaging about \$250 per trip. Students come with strong academic credentials and interest in the outdoors (environmental studies is the third-most popular major). A lucky 30 students get to live the dream in the Outdoor Interest House where someone is always running down the hallway saying they're going sledding, skiing, hiking, or fishing.

#11

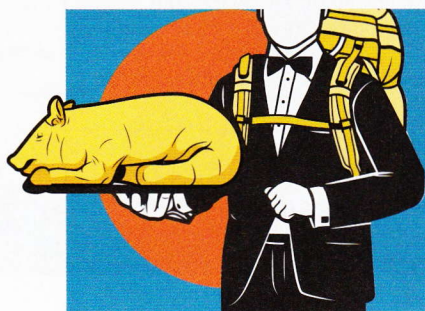
BATES COLLEGE

Lewiston, ME
Enrollment: 1,792

4.1

4.0
4.8
3.5

After their work is done, Bates students take their outdoorsy play with a little whimsy: Honoring a 41-year tradition, students dress up as bananas, pumpkins, penguins, etc. and plunge into freezing Lake Andrews on campus in January. Outing clubbers bag nearby peaks constantly, and in October, a group of 100 scale Katahdin together. Closer to school, early birds take sunrise paddles on Lake Auburn, while night owls can partake in the "children of midnight" adventures (see below). Despite quirky adventures, students (mainly New Englanders) are serious about their native land. For 80 years, they have maintained a 3.5-mile section of the Appalachian Trail.



BEST OUTDOOR TRADITIONS

Grab your tuxedo, sequined leggings, and get involved in the oddball action.

Children of Midnight BATES

All students receive an email from the Outing Club around 10 p.m. inviting them on a spontaneous adventure, like sledding or stargazing on nearby Mt. David.

Catamount Classic UVM

One weekend each year, about 700 students divide and tackle the 273-mile Long Trail in Vermont's Green Mountains to honor an outing club leader who passed away prematurely.

PHOTOS BY (FROM LEFT) DARTMOUTH COLLEGE; YEAGER ANDERSON; POMONA COLLEGE
ILLUSTRATION BY T.M. DETWILER

#12

4.1
4.0
4.2
4.0

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Ithaca, NY
Enrollment: 24,904

In the running for the most outdoorsy Ivy Leaguers (along with Dartmouth), Cornell students can earn credit by taking classes in backcountry cooking, dayhiking, and tree climbing. That's not to mention Cornell's campus: the Fall Creek runs through it and features two gorges, plus Ithaca itself is dotted with 150 waterfalls within 10 square miles. Cornell's Outing Club has 2,000 members, who, for only \$7 per semester, gain access to an extensive gear selection. When academic rigors get too intense (or, it's just too nice out to study), students de-stress with weekly paddling sessions on Beebe Lake, from April to late October.

#13

4.0
4.0
3.0
5.0

WARREN WILSON COLLEGE

Swannanoa, NC
Enrollment: 886

Warren Wilson's unique triad program—academics, work, and service—brings students outdoors, and the natural environment that surrounds the school provides opportunities for all three. Students might kayak in the French Broad River (31 miles west), backpack in the Blue Ridge Mountains (36 miles northeast), care for livestock on the college farm, help manage the recycling center, and, when they need a breather, study in the forest that covers more than half of the campus's 1,130 acres. Students in the Outdoor Leadership program run challenge courses on the 60-foot obstacle course for community members, promoting the theme "there is space for everybody in the outdoors."

Gourmet Hike
UC BERKELEY

Once a year, 50 or 60 students pack their prom outfits, strings of LED lights, white table cloths, candles, and sometimes a pig to roast and take to a nearby state park for a party.

Feb Ski-Down
MIDDLEBURY

Winter grads have a final hurrah by gliding down one of the university's 17 ski trails at Middlebury Snow Bowl in their caps and gowns.

Winter Carnival
DARTMOUTH

Swim in a freezing pond, carve 30-foot-tall ice sculptures, and mush in the human-powered dog sled race. But make sure you have onesies and gold sequined leggings suggested.

Sweet Onion Crank
WHITMAN

Students across the Pacific Northwest gather at Whitman for this Northwest Collegiate Climbing Circuit bouldering competition and informal onion-speed-eating throwdown now in its 24th year.

#14

3.9
4.5
3.8
3.5

POMONA COLLEGE

Claremont, CA
Enrollment: 1,650

Bomb down 1,600 vertical feet on skis or take on barrel-riding waves on a surfboard? Students at Pomona College, a small liberal arts school in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, can do both in a single day. They can also snorkel and spelunk while earning a certificate in outdoor leadership. Pomona strives to make the outdoors affordable and available to everyone, so student groups with little to no experience in the outdoors can apply for the Outdoor Engagement Fund and receive up to \$500 plus trained leaders from the Outdoor Education Center to guide their trip. Students and professors can take advantage of free gear rentals and trip-planning service. Or, they can visit On the Loose's website (the outdoor club of Claremont's 5 colleges), which has beta on many outdoor trips in the area.

GO HERE!
ALDAIR ARRIOLA-GOMEZ

SENIOR, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
"Our student-run outdoor education club plans and executes the trips ... and it's all funded, so students are not paying out of their own pockets."

Freshman orientation at Sequoia NP for Pomona students





#15

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Berkeley, CA
Enrollment: 37,571

3.9

3.3
3.5
5.0

This #1-ranked university for environmental and ecology programs is a magnet for tree huggers. The eight-week forestry field camp in the Sierra Nevada, open to all majors, has students staying in rustic cabins while studying flora like ponderosa pines and black oaks. Cal Adventures, the university's Outdoor Education Program, takes students backpacking through Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, both only about four hours away. A full moon paddle on the San Francisco Bay lets students watch the sun set behind the Golden Gate. But CHAOS's (Cal Hiking and Outdoor Society) signature event is definitely the "gourmet trip" (see page 81).

#16

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Boone, NC
Enrollment: 18,026

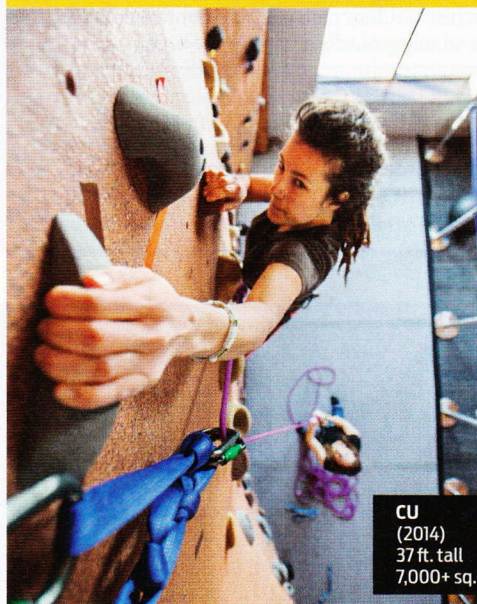
3.9

4.0
2.7
5.0

Deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Appalachian State students worship the land they love—90 percent of the students here are native North Carolinians, and 80 percent say they chose ASU for the outdoor opportunities. "Instead of partying at a bar, they party at a rock," says Erik Rabinowitz, director of the recreation management program. To turn its students' outdoor passions into careers, the school connects recreation management majors to internships with organizations like Alaska Mountain Guides and the National Park Service, and any student can earn credit for wilderness certifications such as climbing site facilitator, mountain bike instructor, and Leave No Trace master educator.

SIZE MATTERS

Climbing walls are today's must-have campus accessory.



APP. STATE
(built in 2006)
50 ft. tall
4,000 sq. ft.

U OF U
(2015)
54 ft. tall
4,600 sq. ft.

U. OF IDAHO
(2002)
55 ft. tall
6,000 sq. ft.

CORNELL
(updated in 2016)
50 ft. tall
6,200 sq. ft.

CU
(2014)
37 ft. tall
7,000+ sq. ft.



Reed students hike Shi Shi Beach in Olympic National Park.

#17

3.9

3.5
4.3
4.0

WHITMAN COLLEGE

Walla Walla, WA
Enrollment: 1,418

Whitman might have an idyllic, cloistered campus, but students seem more keen on spending time away in some of the 600 acres of recreational area nearby. Closer afield is Lakum Duckum, a geothermal spring that flows through the heart of campus. Students take advantage: Last year, 40 percent of them were involved with the outdoor program. Environmental studies majors can participate in the "Semester in the West," a three-month, 8,000-mile-long expedition through Oregon, Nevada, California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Idaho where students sleep under the stars and meet in the field with conservationists, foresters, poets, and others.

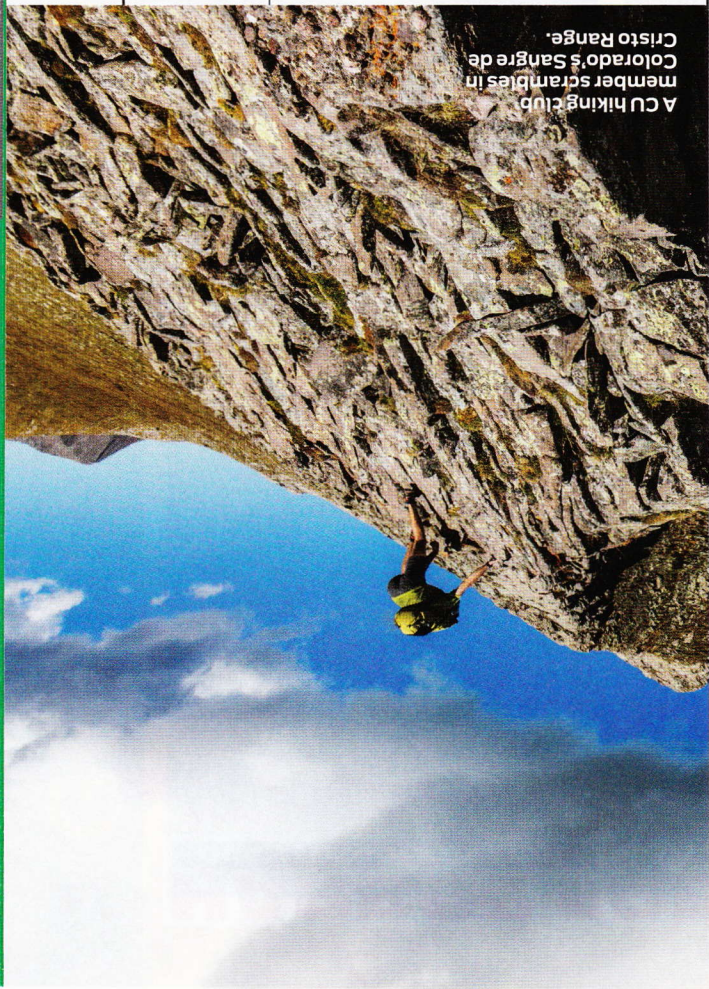
Get Out, Win Big
The Campus Challenge rewards active colleges with a chance to win gear. Outdoor Nation determines the winner by tallying the hours students, faculty, and staff spend outdoors. Southern Utah University took home last year's honors among 50 contestants. [Info: oncampuschallenge.org](http://info.oncampuschallenge.org)

The Rocky Mountains begin just up the street, and students don't take their location for granted. In one of the most active cities in the nation, students run, bike, hike, climb, long board, and in-line skate among the 45,000 acres of open space and mountain parks in the county. Never laced up a pair of hiking boots? No sweat. Attend one of the Outdoor Program's workshops like Ultra Light Backpacking Techniques or visit the Adventure Planning Center for trip-planning guidance. In winter, hit the slopes with Boulder Freeride, the largest collegiate ski club in America, which offers a fall camping trip (200 students and a DJ included).

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
Boulder, CO
Enrollment: 30,789



#20



A CU hiking club member scrambles in Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Range.

The Next Tier

#21 Colorado College
Colorado Springs, CO
3.7 (P:4.5, C:3.5, A:3.0)

#22 California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA
3.6 (P:3.5, C:3.3, A:4.0)

#23 Berry College
Mount Berry, GA
3.5 (P:3.3, C:3.3, A:4.0)

#24 University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN
3.4 (P:3.2, C:4.0, A:3.0)

#25 Dickinson College
Carlisle, PA
3.4 (P:3.3, C:3.8, A:3.0)

#26 Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ
3.3 (P:4.2, C:2.6, A:3.0)

#27 University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI
3.3 (P:3.8, C:3.5, A:2.5)

#28 University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV
3.2 (P:4.3, C:1.8, A:3.5)

#29 University of Idaho
Moscow, ID
3.1 (P:3.2, C:4.0, A:2.0)

#30 University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX
2.9 (P:2.7, C:3.2, A:3.0)



#19

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, MT
Enrollment: 15,688

For MSU students, getting a taste of adventure is a walk in the park. Literally. Bozeman's "Main Street to the Mountains" trail system provides 80 miles of trails leading to other public trail networks north and south of Bozeman. Surrounded by four national forests and six mountain ranges, the campus is a paradise for its outdoorsy students. "It's very normal that people have climbed Denali or worked on Rainier," says senior Sophie McLoughlin, outdoor program lead trip coordinator. It takes 30 minutes to escape to Bridger Bowl Ski Area and about an hour to get to Big Sky Resort. Or, hit up a whitewater rafting trip in Yellowstone National Park (two hours south) with the Outdoor Recreation Program. The school offers an annual, women-only trip and seminar, and all students have access to essentially any gear, from bear-proof coolers (\$11 per day) to river tubes (\$10) to a package of avalanche safety gear (\$13).

Sunlight skims golden trees on an autumn afternoon and a beaver pokes its head out of the creek. No, this isn't a national forest. It's Reed Canyon, the 28-acre watershed at the heart of Reed College. And students take care of the campus's heart, maintaining it during Canyon Day, the oldest tradition (since 1915) at this 108-year-old school. Students regularly journey to the Columbia River Gorge and the Willamette River, and all gear is free to borrow. That, plus proximity, puts multisport days, like an alpine start up Mt. Hood (81 miles) and sunset bonfire on Seaside beach (82 miles), within reach.



REED COLLEGE
Portland, OR
Enrollment: 1,453

#18