

Information for Prospective Students for Johns Hopkins University, Computer Science Dept

By Paritosh Shroff

1) In the latest US News rankings, we have moved up into the top 30 group, and our Theory program is rated 15th. Unofficially, our AI and Systems groups are rated 18th and 28th, respectively. These are unofficial since there is a cutoff based on the number of votes received. I am sure in the next ranking it will be much higher. According to me it is certainly one of the top 20 CS depts in the US.

2) It is a small dept comprising of somewhere in the range of 70-80 graduate students (Master's + phd's) and around 10-12 main faculty members. The dept is headed by Dr. Rao, who is one of the best in Theory.

3) There are few faculty members but all absolutely outstanding in their respective fields. Dr. Rao and Dr. Awerbuch are one of the best in Theory, Dr. Yarowsky is great in his field, Dr. Taylor needs no mention in Computer Integrated Surgery (he is one of the pioneers in the this field), Dr. Shapiro is making his own OS EROS.

4) The Natural Language Processing and Computer Integrated Surgery labs are on the best in the US, infact I was told JHU is no 1 in CIS and among top 5 in NLP. It is also very good in Theory, i guess it was ranked 15 last year. The other labs are very very good as well, though i don't know their exact ranking. Also a new security institute has just been opened due to some grant of \$10million last year.

5) The courses offered here are limited, but each one is very good. Being a private school the quality of instruction is very good and profs take teaching seriously. Though you may not get a wide variety of courses here, so may want to check the course webpage to see the courses offered before coming here. Check the current courses being offered and not the Course Catlog which is outdated and contains many courses which are never offered.

6) As far as admissions are considered i guess they give all the factors almost equal weightage (Gre & acads), though i am not exactly sure as nobody ever comes to know the exact procedure followed. Some research work would definitely help alot.

7) There are a few indians here, But nowhere as many as some of the other univs.

8) The campus is not very big, nothing compared to some of the state univs or even the IIT's. It is a small but beautiful campus. Overall, JHU is not a very big school in terms of students, so the campus size is appropriate according to me.

9) Baltimore is an OK place to live in. As it is not a university town, it doesn't have as many places catering to univ students as compared to some other univs. So if you are someone who likes to hang out in pubs or discs this may not be ideal for you. (Though i

must point out that during the semester even if you can go home daily & get a decent sleep, you can consider yourself lucky!)

10) Baltimore is not considered a particularly safe place to live in. But the places in and around the campus are quite safe. Also the law enforcement is pretty good here. I have walked home even 3 o'clock in night alone and did not feel anything. Although one keeps on hearing of a few stray incidents like robbery once in a while. I have still to meet a person who has been a victim of such incidents. So i guess this should not be too much of a concern. Also the University provides Escort services (van) from 5pm to 3am in the night from the university to anyway in the 1 mile radius, which more than covers all the residential locations of students. So if you are cautious, you could use this service.

11) Aid Scenario: The phd's are normally fully supported. For masters normally students are given 10-50% tuition waiver. But in addition to this dept doesn't give anything to master's students. The tuition waiver is not increased nor decreased during your time here. Though earning your living expenses i.e. around \$400-500 via odd jobs like graders/tutors/library jobs, etc is very easy. These jobs are available in plenty and there are more jobs than takers for these jobs. So getting a job of around \$8 /hr is EASY, and i mean it. But still you might have to pay for you tuition from your pocket or India. The fees is terribly high, so must give it a serious thought before coming here.

12) The housing is available, how easily depends...but if u come here you will definitely get a place to stay (we won't let you stay homeless!). The rents vary from \$800-\$1200 for 2 bedroom apts and from \$400-\$700 for 1 bedroom apts., studios, efficiencies etc.

13) In the CS department you can finish your MSE in CS in 1 year by taking 10 courses (you'd probably have no time for socializing if you do this though!). However if you intend, you can also finish your masters doing a master's thesis or project but then it will take much longer. This just give you options, you can choose the way you want to do it. However because of the huge expense, most master's students try to finish it off in a year. The courses in summer cost \$1500 per course. This is NOT a part of your tuition fees which you pay for the semester.

14) To transfer from MSE to PhD, there are no fixed rules. However, if you can impress a professor and he is willing to fund you then you could change your status to a PhD student. Or the other option is apply again for a PhD after or while doing your masters. The department here doesn't seem very stringent on this issue, though there are no fixed guidelines laid out for this.

15) As far as the industry reputation of JHU CS department is concerned, I assume it should be pretty good. Hopkins was ranked 7th for undergraduation overall a couple of years back. It is 16th I guess now. It is one of the best places for undergrad, so the recruitment here is pretty good. It comes down to you, the companies will come, you have to be good enough to be picked. The quality of the students here is very good.