



An archaeology student at University of West Florida returns from diving on *Emmanuel Point II*, a 16th-Century Spanish shipwreck.



Students at three service academies trade tuition and sea time for national service.



Students from Humboldt State University in California take water and sediment samples aboard the *Coral Sea*.

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# THE BOAT LOVERS' GUIDE to AMERICAN COLLEGES

By Tim Murphy

This *BoatU.S Magazine* exclusive roundup of colleges, written specifically for students, presents the **top marine programs and related extracurricular boating activities** in America. The first of its kind, use it with our extensive online database of links to find inspiration, and the right school for you and your family.

Parents, a warning:  
This article will make you wish  
you were young again!

# EVERY COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT KNOWS

CollegeBoard, Princeton Review, Barron's, Peterson's, U.S. News & World Report — they've all got their own special way of sorting institutions of higher learning into lists the size of telephone books, each one designed to help steer the biggest decision in a young scholar's life. What you'll hardly find in any of these lists is boats. Yet dozens of colleges and universities across the United States offer hundreds of top-notch programs, both academic and extracurricular, to students who want to hone their skills in and on the water.

To fill that gap we've surveyed some of these programs, and created our own BoatU.S. Magazine list of the top boating colleges in the country — schools that offer the best mix of water-oriented studies and



A University of West Florida archaeology student works to excavate the *Emmanuel Point II*, one of 11 ships that brought colonists and soldiers to Florida in 1559.



Florida Institute of Technology students survey Sebastian Inlet, Florida.

fun. We found marine-based programs aimed at students whose interests range from engineering to science to liberal arts, as well as hundreds of teams and clubs that offer coaching and camaraderie in waterskiing and sailing, even competitive bass fishing. A comprehensive list of all these programs, including links, can be found at [www.BoatU.S.com/Colleges](http://www.BoatU.S.com/Colleges) For now, let's scan the horizon.

## Studies First

If you love being on and around lakes, rivers, and oceans, and want to build your studies, perhaps even your career,

in the marine environment, today's colleges offer a terrific set of choices. Given the range of marine-related fields, you'll first want to decide in a broad sense which academic direction to pursue. Let's look within engineering first. Are you good at trigonometry and calculus, chemistry and physics? Do you like them? If so, consider such fields

as ocean engineering, coastal engineering, marine engineering, or naval architecture. All offer strong post-grad prospects. "All our students who graduated in December have jobs," said Gerard Coleman, a senior lecturer of marine engineering at Texas A&M University in Galveston. "In fact, the industry has asked us to crank up our graduation rate."

The American Society of Naval Engineers ([www.navalengineers.org](http://www.navalengineers.org)) is a good place to find an overview of the marine-related fields in engineering. Its members describe naval engineering as "a career both steeped in tradition and at the cutting edge of technology." Like many

marine fields, this one is interdisciplinary, drawing on electrical, mechanical, civil, and ocean engineering. Naval engineers design, build, run, and maintain every kind of ship: commercial, military, submarines, aircraft carriers. Focused subcategories of naval engineering include naval architecture and marine engineering. Ocean engineers have a slightly different focus: They're particularly concerned with what happens to structures underwater as well as above it. They design vessels and devices that scan the ocean floor, assist with salvage and recovery, and rescue submarines.

If you find any of these marine-related engineering fields interesting and you've shown the aptitude for it, you'll need to weigh an important life choice: whether to enroll in a regimental program. Three federal academies — the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy — offer top-notch instruction, plenty of sea time, and free tuition in exchange for a commitment to serve the country after graduation. Also, state-funded maritime academies in California, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas offer their own mix of government aid for a commitment of service.

Alternatively, there are plenty of good engineering programs with a more civilian character. ASNE recommends several schools for particular curricula. For naval engineering: Stevens Institute of Technology (NJ). For naval architecture and marine engineering: University of Michigan, University of New Orleans, Webb Institute (NY). For offshore engineering: University of California at Berkeley. For ocean engineering: Florida Institute of Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Rhode Island, and Florida Atlantic University. Our online BoatU.S. list of majors includes links to these and other programs.

Now let's consider the marine sciences. If you loved your lab-science courses in high school, look at the colleges offering good programs in marine biology, marine science, oceanography, or fisheries. These programs also tend to be interdisciplinary — drawing on biology, chemistry, physics, geophysics, mathematics, botany, zoology, meteorology, geography — and they encourage curious minds to understand marine environments from the microscopic level to that of global systems. Plus, you can expect ample fieldwork on the water.

# THE LISTS...

If you enroll in the fisheries department at Humboldt State University in California, for example, your classroom will be a 90-foot aluminum trawler with 12 bunks called the *Coral Sea*. Want to learn more about the largest mammal that ever lived? Dr. Bruce Mate was recently featured in National Geographic's "Kingdom of the Blue Whale." He teaches at Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute.

Or how about the ways "ocean currents link the nearshore mangrove forests, outlying seagrass beds, offshore coral reefs, and deep-sea regions of Florida and the Intra-Americas Sea in an interconnected system of underwater habitats"? The Florida Institute of Technology, affiliated with the Caribbean Marine Research Center, has research sites in Lee Stocking Island in the Bahamas, in addition to several others in Florida and the Caribbean basin. The MarineBio Society (<http://marinebio.org>) offers an excellent overview of college programs and career possibilities. Also see Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station careers page ([www.marine.stanford.edu/careers.htm](http://www.marine.stanford.edu/careers.htm)).

If you love fishing, care about its long-term viability, and possess talents that range

from science to politics, consider fisheries. You'll find good programs at universities all around the country; the University of Alaska at Fairbanks devotes an entire school with two campuses to it — one surrounded by glaciers near Lena Cove in the Tongass National Rainforest, the other overlooking Mt. McKinley and surrounded by subarctic streams and lakes. Both are near the world's most productive fisheries habitat. "Students are preparing to enter this challenging area, using applied biological techniques ranging from molecular genetics to hip-boot-and-outboard-motor field ecology to biomathematical analysis of population models," says the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences web site. Because the school recognizes that problem-solving in fisheries deals with diverse aspects of life, students also train broadly in disciplines outside of science.

Moving on from engineering and hard science, maybe you'd rather read and write about history or literature or the social sciences. In that case, check out some of the college programs that offer bachelor-of-arts degrees in maritime studies, or fields related to boating such as Caribbean studies or maritime archeology. A pair of students doing fieldwork at the maritime studies program at the University of West Florida in Pensacola recently discovered the remains of a Spanish colonization fleet wrecked in 1559, more than 60 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. Not a bad bonus for an afternoon of scuba diving. If your time on the



The Texas A&M at Galveston sailing team are on the water virtually every day of the year (top).

Undergraduate Becky Goldberg (right) examines squid embryos on board the *Don Jose* in the Gulf of California as part of a unique Stanford University program.



## The 25 "Boatiest" Schools In America

The schools on this list (arranged alphabetically, not ranked) offer at least three different accredited marine-related programs, both academic and extracurricular.

- Auburn University (AL)
- Florida Atlantic University
- Florida Gulf Coast University
- Florida Institute of Technology
- Florida State University
- Maine Maritime Academy
- Ohio University
- Old Dominion University (VA)
- State University of New York, Maritime College
- Texas A&M at Galveston
- University of Alabama
- University of California at Davis
- University of California at Los Angeles
- University of California
- University of Connecticut
- University of Michigan
- University of New Orleans (LA)
- University of North Carolina
- University of Oregon
- University of Rhode Island (RI)
- University of San Diego (CA)
- University of Washington
- U.S. Coast Guard Academy (CT)
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (NY)
- U.S. Naval Academy (MD)

## Scholarships

A number of schools and marine organizations have scholarships available for students looking for education and training in a marine-related field. Visit our web site to find out what's available. Also, any organization offering scholarships is welcome to go online and add information about your programs.

[www.BoatUS.com/Colleges](http://www.BoatUS.com/Colleges)

## The Top-Ranked Sailing Schools

Boston College (MA)  
Georgetown University (DC)  
Yale University (CT)  
St. Mary's College (MD)  
College of Charleston (SC)  
Roger Williams University (RI)  
Harvard University (MA)  
U.S. Naval Academy (MD)  
Hobart and William  
Smith Colleges (NY)  
Stanford University (CA)  
Tufts University (MA)  
Brown University (RI)  
SUNY Maritime College (NY)  
Connecticut College  
University of South Florida  
Eckerd College (FL)  
Massachusetts Institute  
of Technology  
Boston University (MA)  
Old Dominion University (VA)  
Washington College (MD)

Source: Sailing World ([www.sailingworld.com/ranks](http://www.sailingworld.com/ranks)); April 8, 2009; coed teams. Rankings are updated regularly; visit the web site for the latest information.

## Colleges Offering All Three Watersports

Arizona State University  
Baylor University (TX)  
Michigan State University  
North Carolina State University  
Ohio State University  
Oklahoma State University  
Pennsylvania State University  
Purdue University (IN)  
University of Georgia  
University of Illinois  
University of Iowa  
University of Minnesota  
University of North Texas  
University of Tennessee  
Virginia Tech

water has included much navigation and you like working with maps, look into some of the programs in cartography, or its computer-age equivalent, geographic information systems (GIS).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' latest Occupational Outlook Handbook projects that "overall employment of surveyors, cartographers, photogrammetrists, and surveying technicians is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2016" — increasing by 21 percent.

Although our main focus here is on undergraduate majors, one master's pro-

## Now, For The Fun Part

For those who seek top-level competition, collegiate boating offers plenty of sport, and a great way to spend regular time on the water with like-minded pals. College watersports are just quirky enough to elude regulation by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Instead, each of these sports — waterskiing, sailing, and bass fishing — is governed by an organization of its own, each one different from the others. Visiting the web site for the governing body of your favorite watersport will give you an overview of the



The Williams-Mystic Maritime Studies program holds an outdoor lecture in northern California.

gram deserves a look: The Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire ([www.ccom-jhc.unh.edu](http://www.ccom-jhc.unh.edu)). In affiliation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, UNH has committed to developing the state of the art tools and technologies for measuring and defining "the bottoms and adjacent land areas of oceans, lakes, rivers, harbors, as well as the tides and currents that occur in those bodies of water." For a broad look at the field, the Association of American Geographers ([www.aag.org](http://www.aag.org)) offers tips for planning both the studies and the career.

These are just a sampling of the marine-related programs. Whatever your own academic interests, there are plenty of opportunities around the country to combine your love of boating and the water with your studies or your career.

programs across the country:

— **The Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association of North America** ([www.collegesailing.org](http://www.collegesailing.org)) dates back to 1928 with roots into the 1890s, and officially prohibits giving scholarships for sailing ability alone.

— **The Association of Collegiate Anglers** ([www.collegiatebass.org](http://www.collegiatebass.org)) was formed five years ago to attract younger enthusiasts to its sport.

— **The National Collegiate Waterski Association** ([www.ncwsa.com](http://www.ncwsa.com)) invites its top-level competitors to pursue professional opportunities in waterskiing alongside their college competitions, and publishes a "Scholarships" link on its web site.

Marc Bedsole coaches the waterski team at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, a school with its own skiable lake



Sperm whales are observed by students from the Marine Mammal Institute and Oregon State University aboard the school's *Pacific Storm*.

on campus. "The great thing about college waterskiing," he says, "is that you've got kids who are very recreational at tournaments all the way to world champions."

College waterskiing is a fall sport, which ends with national championships in October — in deference to northern campuses, where winter comes early. Not surprisingly, the big winners at last year's finals were all southern schools: University of Louisiana (both Monroe and Lafayette campuses), Florida Southern College, Arizona State University, and the University of Alabama. But they don't have a lock on the competition; the NCWSA named the University of Cincinnati team of the year for 2008. "The team was mostly made up of skiers that learned about competitive skiing while in college," read the awards announcement. "These skiers got the bug," qualified for nationals for the first time in the history of their school, and brought home the Division 2 tournament crown.

"When I was looking at schools," said Rollins sophomore Michaela Collins, "I tried to find ones that would at least have a place to ski. Now that I'm on a ski team, I'd never go to a school without one. It's fun to be part of a team with people who share your passion."

Tomlin Wilson, a corporate financial management major, had skied competitively for 14 years when he enrolled at the University of Alabama; he also considered Louisiana State University. "Waterskiing was the major decision factor in choosing Alabama," he said. "I loved the campus and the opportunity here to train at an elite level." Wilson won the gold medal in the trick event at the first collegiate nationals he attended; this year, he skied with the USA University World Team in Beijing, where he won a silver medal. NCWSA rules

don't prohibit college skiers from competing professionally, and avid skiers have ample opportunity to compete through the off-season apart from the college circuit.

College sailing, on the other hand, is a two-season sport. "We're sailing pretty much every day of the school year except for finals week," said Gerard Coleman, sailing coach at Texas A&M, in addition to his teaching duties in marine engineering. "That's quite different from the Northeast schools that stop in November and don't resume till the ice breaks up."

The ICSA divides collegiate sailing teams into seven regions; the highest level of competition tends to be in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. College sailing "made me grow up on the race course," said Old Dominion (VA) Hall of Famer Terry Hutchinson, the 2008 Rolex Yachtsman of the Year.

Like waterskiing, many college sailing teams cater to a wide range of expertise. "Eighty percent of our team have never sailed before," said Coleman, former member of the U.S. Sailing Team. "One of the hallmarks of our program is teaching a lot of people how to sail pretty well. But I also admire the fact that there's a great opportunity for experienced sailors to excel." Visit the Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association site for the latest details on particular college sailing programs.

Bass fishing may be relatively new by college-sports standards, but it's burst out of the gate. Since the Association of Collegiate Anglers was formed in 2004, it's hosted several national championship events where anglers compete for scholarship money. Also, the events are televised, originally on Fox College Sports and, more recently, the Versus cable network. BoatU.S. is a title sponsor of the national

## The 2009 Top-Ranked Waterskiing Schools

University of Louisiana at Monroe  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Florida Southern College  
Arizona State University  
University of Alabama  
Purdue University (IN)

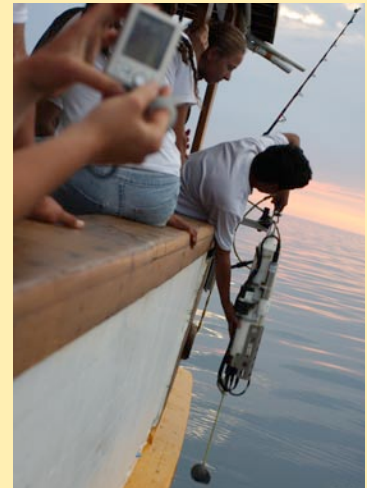
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Iowa State University  
University of Texas

University of Michigan  
University of Cincinnati (OH)  
California State University at Chico

Clemson University (SC)  
Missouri State University  
Texas State University  
California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo (CA)  
Texas A&M University  
San Diego State University (CA)  
University of Illinois  
Rollins College (FL)

Source: *The National Collegiate Water Ski Association* ([www.ncwsa.com](http://www.ncwsa.com))



A student gets ready to drop a conductivity-depth-temperature profiler off the research vessel *Don Jose* in the Gulf of California.

Visit [www.BoatUS.com](http://www.BoatUS.com) for links to all the schools, and our exclusive search engine for cross-referencing academic and extracurricular programs.

## The 2008 Collegiate Bass-Fishing Champions

University of Arkansas  
Texas A&M University  
Texas Tech University  
Texas A&M University  
at Kingsville  
Baylor University (TX)  
Faulkner University (KY)  
Northwestern State University (LA)  
Murray State University (KY)  
Stephen F. Austin State (TX)  
University of Alabama  
Eastern Kentucky University  
Southeastern Missouri  
State University  
University of Alabama  
North Carolina State University  
Tarleton State University (TX)  
Virginia Tech  
Auburn University (AL)

Results of 2008 National Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship. BoatU.S. was a title sponsor of the event. For 2009 results go to [www.CollegiateBassChampionship.com](http://www.CollegiateBassChampionship.com)

## BoatU.S. Magazine's Guide To Marine Technical Schools

Check our upcoming issues for part two of our groundbreaking series on marine education. We'll look at technical training, the best programs across the country, available careers, and the state of the marine industry.



Engineering students get hands-on at the Webb Institute in Glen Cove, NY.

events, which have grown from just 24 schools in 2006 to over 100 two-person teams from more than 60 schools. Regional competition is also intense; in all, roughly 200 schools have registered teams with at least six members.

"Fishing has taught me many things about myself and other people," Casey Sobczak, a sports-marketing major at Austin State University told reporters at Lake Lewisville near Dallas. "You really meet many people through fishing and consistently make new friends. It's a great way for me to get away from my studies when things get stressful, and it brings me to a new level of enjoyment, more than anything else I do. Fishing also gets me away from the nightlife of the normal college student. No bars, just fishing when I have to wake up at 4 a.m. for a tournament." Find out more about college angling — including schedules of the television coverage — from the ACA or from The Bass Federation ([www.bassfederation.com](http://www.bassfederation.com)).

Of course, college campuses offer plenty of other clubs and teams devoted to watersports — wakeboarding, wind surfing, scuba diving, rowing. Depending on the school, you'll find them through the offices of recreation or student life.

## These Programs Stand Out

You'll do some digging on your own to find the college boating programs that fit you best, but before you do, let's just look at a few stellar programs. Take Williams-Mystic, the maritime program of Williams College and Mystic Seaport ([www.williams.edu/williamsmystic](http://www.williams.edu/williamsmystic)). Bringing together 20 students, their backgrounds evenly divided between science and the humanities, this 17-week semester-long program will take you to three coasts, as well as offshore for 10 days on a tall ship. "Students come to Williams-Mystic to spend one-eighth of their college career exploring three-quarters of the world," reads an introductory brochure. "More than 1,200 students have joined us to explore the history, literature, policy, and science of the world's waterways."

Check out the Waterfront Program at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida ([www.eckerd.edu/waterfront](http://www.eckerd.edu/waterfront)). Eckerd students are free to use its facilities — including sailboats, canoes, sea kayaks, sailboards, and powerboats — without membership in a club or organization. In addition to fielding teams for waterskiing, sailing, and fishing, Eckerd uniquely offers a search-and-rescue team, originally founded to watch out for participants in the college's own

watersports program. But ever since being among the first responders to the Sunshine Skyway Bridge disaster in 1980, the team has street cred; these days, its members assist some 500 boats every year.

Perhaps my own favorite course, if I had it all to do over again, would be the "Holistic Biology: Monterey Bay and the Sea of Cortez" offered by Stanford University ([www.seaofcortez.org](http://www.seaofcortez.org)). It's a course — again, interdisciplinary, integrating biology, history, philosophy, and literature — that follows the 1940 voyage and research of John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts, which Steinbeck recorded in his bawdy and brilliant book *The Log From The Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*.

The first half of the course takes place at the Hopkins Marine Station in Monterey Bay; the second half is a voyage and sojourn in Baja where, as Steinbeck wrote, "the abundance of life here gives one an exuberance, a feeling of fullness and richness. The playing porpoises, the turtles, the great schools of fish which ruffle the surface like a quick breeze make for excitement."

Finally, for the sheer scope of its marine-related college programs, one school stands out. "A common trait of all TAMUG students is a desire to work and study in an ocean environment," reads an introduction to the Texas A&M at Galveston campus. This is a single campus situated on a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico that offers all three of our aforementioned extracurriculars, plus an offshore sailing team, a SCUBA team, and physical-education classes that range from beginning dinghy sailing to full-on offshore racing. It's a school that maintains a fleet of powerboats to teach students boat-handling skills.

And the academic menu is full, offering both bachelor of science and bachelor of arts degrees in such majors as marine engineering technology, maritime systems engineering, marine biology, marine fisheries, marine sciences, ocean and coastal resources, maritime administration, marine environmental law and policy, marine transportation, maritime studies... and a handful of graduate programs, too. Plus, it shares a campus with the Texas Maritime Academy, so students can choose between a more or a less regimental college lifestyle. Add it all up, and Texas A&M at Galveston might just be the boatiest school in America.

Tim Murphy is an independent editor and writer based in Portsmouth, Rhode Island.