

What are the best things about attending LSU Dental School?

LSU School of Dentistry is located in the unique and always busy city of New Orleans, Louisiana. New Orleans is known for its southern charm and hospitality, and the same applies to LSU-SD. I know many schools claim that they have a feeling of comradery and that professors are helpful, but the relationships between students and faculty is unmatched here. In my first year of dental school, my operative professor would stay at school helping students after hours multiple nights a week for an entire semester, sometimes until 11pm. Others bring their families to socials and events with students. Faculty often remind us that we are their peers and will soon be their colleagues, and I can truly say we are treated as such. Most professors value our opinions, strive to improve their courses, and make accommodations to move exams if we feel overwhelmed. I don't know many schools where several professors give you their personal phone number to text them if you ever need help or reply to your late night email right before an exam, but that is the case here.

Additionally, each class treats each other like family. We share everything: study guides, online flashcards, and recordings of lectures. If you attend LSU, you will never find yourself without a study buddy or someone to vent to when things get difficult. In fact, we have a big-little system where you are assigned a "family" of one member from each year called a mini-clinic. This is a built-in mentor system to help you navigate through school. You also work with your mini clinic as a team when treating patients.

Another aspect that is a positive for LSU-SD is grading is extremely fair. Students are assigned "mystery" numbers for projects and assignments to preserve anonymity. Multiple professors often grade assignments with each grading a specific category so everything is always graded at the same level of difficulty. Additionally, professors are open and sometimes encouraging of challenging written exam questions if you feel a question is unfair and often give points back if you make a real case. Lastly, you see patients VERY early at LSU. I saw my first patient in February of my first year for an exit exam and did my first cleaning in May of my first year. Second years see patients on Fridays and by third and fourth year, you are seeing patients almost all day every day.

What are the worst things about attending LSU Dental School?

LSU's recent class expansion has caused several kinks in the road that are still being sorted out. Although our class size has expanded, clinical courses still had the same amount of faculty and our senior clinic spaces do not currently accommodate 75 people. This often caused a back-up of students in line behind one or two professors waiting to get assignments checked before being allowed to move to the next step. It also initially triggered some chaos and disorganization when using clinic and lab areas. Although very new, the wet lab is just not built for that many students at once.

Professors have started to accommodate by sometimes breaking us into smaller sections for lab activities, but this ultimately means more outside of class work and less contact time with professors.

Another downside in the early years of dental school is the mixed faculty from the medical school and dental school. There are a few classes taught in the first and second years that are directed by the downtown/med school campus and they organize different lecturers every day. This became a problem in a certain course because the course director was not present during the course. This was the outlier and not the norm. It's great to hear a lecture from an expert in a certain topic, but I do think this style is more difficult to test because each lecture is given by a different person and they each individually submit questions for the exam. However, most classes are taught by dental faculty that are present every lecture.

What do students need to know/what do you wish you knew before attending LSU Dental School?

The biggest change here at LSU-SD that many applicants are not aware of is that the class size expanded from 65 to 75 students in 2018. Additionally, in my opinion, we have very recently become more out-of-state friendly than in past years. Preceding classes were not allowed to have more than 5 out-of-state students, and often there were just 2 or 3 (excluding Arkansas which has 4 guaranteed separate reserved spots). However, the incoming class in 2019 has around 7-10 students from out of state (again, not including Arkansas). I was previously under the impression that you always needed a connection to Louisiana either by education, work, or family to even be considered when applying out-of-state. That definitely still helps your application, however, it is now not impossible to be considered without these strict connections. My best advice to an out-of-state student who would like to attend LSU without ties is to show interest early, attend an LSU-SD sponsored pre-dental event, and try to network. Like many schools, it is still very competitive as an out-of-state applicant.

Other things to note when considering LSU-SD is that our lab areas are very new and were just finished in 2017. We also have a library on campus that is solely devoted to dentistry. It has materials on any dental topic you imagine, old exams for boards, and even extracted teeth to quiz yourself with. However, I would not count on that as a place to study late because the hours are not the best. The school including lab areas are open 24/7 so many study in classrooms or at open tables found everywhere on campus instead of the dental library.

Lastly, our campus is located separate from the downtown/medical school in a more convenient area that is closer to typical residential neighborhoods. I love the location because downtown is only 15 minutes away and you can go explore when you want without having to live in the typical busy New Orleans area. You have access to all

facilities and parking lots downtown if you ever want to go to the library open late or use the recreational facilities, but I do not know of many students that do.

I hope this gives you a better, more up-to-date and genuine feel for the atmosphere at LSU School of Dentistry. No school is perfect, and we are no exception. However, I truly believe it is a welcoming environment with lots of support and guidance throughout a rigorous curriculum.