Which Five College Campus Has the Highest Crime Rate? The Answer Might Surprise You

Abby Caliandri

2025-02-16

When thinking about campus crime, people might assume that the bigger the school, the bigger the problem. After all, this only makes sense – more students would naturally mean more incidents. However, recent data shows a shocking truth. Within Western Massachusetts’s Five College Consortium, the school with the highest crime rate is not the city-like campus at UMass Amherst. In fact, the face of the Consortium’s highest crime rate takes a much smaller form.

### The Numbers Tell a Different Story

According to the most recent 2023 Clery Reports, Hampshire College has the highest crime rate of the Five Colleges, with about **46 incidents for every thousand students**. This is over three times higher than the crime rate of UMass. Although Umass, with over thirty thousand students, reported almost five hundred crimes over the year, its crime rate remained at lower than 15 for every thousand students. This is the lowest in the Consortium.

Even though Hampshire only had 33 total reported crimes, the small student population of 716 means that despite this low number, their crime rate per capita skyrockets. In comparison, Amherst College and Mount Holyoke College also seemingly have high crime rates with about 32 and 35 incidents per thousand students respectively.

But does this mean that Hampshire College is an inherently dangerous campus, or is there something else at play?

### Why is Hampshire’s Crime Rate so High?

One factor is population size. With so few students, even a small number of reported crimes can significantly inflate Hampshire’s crime rate. To compare, Mount Holyoke’s 82 reported crimes among its 2,300 students results in a lower (but still high) crime rate, while UMass’s hundreds of reported crimes doesn’t make a dent because of its population.

Another factor at play could be the inconsistency in reporting practices across campuses. Each school determines the way a crime is categorized or reported, and this can create a discrepancy across campuses. It is possible that Hampshire is more transparent in its reporting than bigger schools like UMass.

### Is Hampshire College Really the Least Safe Campus?

Hampshire’s high crime rate doesn’t necessarily indicate a more dangerous campus. More likely, it highlights the statistical challenges of comparing schools of vastly different sizes and populations. Hampshire’s small population magnifies every reported incident, while UMass’s large student body means it can absorb the impact of a high number of crime reports, without it impacting their per capita rate too much.

Even though Hampshire College has the highest crime rate per capita out of the Five Colleges, a high crime rate doesn’t always indicate a higher risk of danger, just as a lower crime rate doesn’t always indicate security.

For students, parents, faculty, and staff, these numbers serve more as a reminder than anything else. That is, crime rates aren’t just about numbers, they’re about context. Understanding how schools collect and report crime data, as well as other environmental factors is vital to examining campus safety and making informed decisions.