



## The Minerva Project – An Overview

The Minerva Project is launching a top-tier university built to accelerate the life trajectories of the world's brightest and most motivated students. Opening in Fall 2015, Minerva will draw on the best traditions of a research-based university education while leveraging cutting edge technologies and harvesting decades of research on student learning and success. Minerva is committed to providing an unparalleled educational experience for preparing global leaders and innovators for the 21st century.

Minerva was founded by CEO Ben Nelson in 2011 and received a \$25 million seed investment from Benchmark Capital in 2012. An academic advisory board was formed early on to provide guidance and support as Minerva began to reimagine every aspect of an undergraduate education. Former Harvard University President Larry Summers serves as chairman of the Advisory Board, which includes Patrick Harker, Bob Kerrey and Lee Shulman. Over the past six months, a team of experienced and proven professionals has joined Minerva's Executive team to bring a wealth of experience in academics, accreditation, product development, marketing, student services, recruiting, business development, operations and business management.

Because of our strict no-quota, non-discrimination policy, we expect Minerva to attract attention and interest from prospective students throughout the world. Minerva intends to have more stringent admission criteria than traditional Ivy League Universities, screening not only for a strong intellectual and leadership background but also for analytical capabilities, creativity, drive, leadership ability, and grit. Minerva will give no preference to legacy, athletics or geographical diversity. Minerva guarantees admission to any applicant who meets or exceeds our qualification criteria.

To best serve students with different academic interests, Minerva will include five colleges—four Colleges in the School of Arts and Science as well as a School of Business. Each college will have a distinguished Master recognized for academic leadership and able to reimagine the best in education in their field. The Master will be responsible for recruiting and training the faculty of the college, creating a cornerstone course and developing the curricular offerings for the college. Although Minerva will have five distinct colleges, Minerva is committed to a deeply interdisciplinary approach. Minerva will have no departments, and will strive to break down the traditional boundaries between fields and other aspects of university administration. We expect professors who would be housed in a given department in a traditional university may in fact find better intellectual homes across any one of the five colleges, depending on their particular focus of study.

A unique aspect of the Minerva educational experience is that no classes focus on disseminating content and no classes present standard introductory material. All classes will be taught in discussion-intensive formats using a proprietary software

platform that has been designed to maximize student interactions with the professor and with each other. All classes will be seminar style and directed in real-time by faculty. Students will be expected to do significant work on their own ahead of class. Classes will be limited to a maximum of 25 students with the vast majority under 20 students.

The curriculum being created is based in part on studies of human motivation, learning, and memory and will be truly unique to Minerva. For example, we are taking a fresh approach to the first-year curriculum. To ensure that all students begin their Minerva experience by learning the foundational skills necessary to succeed in college and professional life after graduation, all students will take the same four cornerstone courses during their first year.

- Theoretical analysis, including a rigorous immersion in advanced concepts in math, statistics, and formal systems.
- Empirical analysis, focusing on the ability to use the scientific method to frame problems, test hypotheses, and engage in informed conjecture.
- Complex systems analysis, helping the students to develop skills in understanding complex systems such as economic and social systems.
- Multimodal communications, including learning to read and write effectively at a high level, public speaking, group project collaboration, visual communication, and formal debate.

Case studies will form a key component of these courses, and will serve to integrate the learned material with concepts in real-world contexts. The foundational skills students develop in their first year will be drawn upon in coursework throughout the following three years of study. Students will select a concentration during the middle of their sophomore year and culminate their Minerva experience with a capstone project.

As well as enabling a classroom with fellow students participating from any corner of the world, our proprietary software will allow us to assess every student interaction (including in-class participation and group projects) to provide students and faculty immediate feedback on student learning and performance. Feedback will not only be information about how well the student understands the material, but also information about how well the student can use the material creatively. Because the learning experience can be greatly enhanced by leveraging this feedback, all classes will take advantage of the interactive learning platform.

Complementing classroom learning, Minerva students will be encouraged to live and study in Minerva-designated housing in up to seven different cities during their four years of studies. The undergraduate years are the ideal time to enable students to experience first-hand what the world's greatest cities have to offer. Minerva residence halls located around the world will enhance the academic experience and provide students with a unique cultural, social and political experience.

Combining a redefined student body, a reimagined curriculum, rigorous academic standards, and an immersive global experience, Minerva will deliver an exceptional liberal arts education for the future leaders and innovators of our world.