

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS

David Hawkins

Counsellor, Syzygy Global Education

DAVID@HAWKINGSGLOBALEDUCATION.CO.UK

BACKGROUND

- 2007-2014: Taunton School, Somerset, UK
 - History Teacher
 - Boarding Tutor
 - Head of Careers
- 2014-2016: International School of Brussels, Belgium
 - Head of College and Careers Counselling
- Professional Memberships:
 - International Association for College Admissions Counseling
 - Council of International Schools, Affiliated Consultant

NOW

- I work as an independent advisor. I am contracted by families in the UK and internationally to add bespoke, individual and comprehensive guidance and support with university applications to the help students receive from their schools, for applications to:
 - The UK
 - The USA
 - Canada
 - Europe
- I am part of Syzygy Global Education, a team of university advising experts based in the UK and USA

A SELECTION OF PLACES OUR
STUDENTS GAINED OFFERS THIS YEAR

Harvard

Oxford

Yale

Stanford

*Durham
University*

*Amsterdam
University
College*

*Bishop's
University
Canada*

*IE University
Spain*

*Universita
Bocconi, Italy*

*University of
Colorado
Boulder*

*Syracuse
University*

*King's College
London*

*University of
Bristol*

*Northeastern
University*

*University of
Pennsylvania*

*University of
Southern
California*

*University
College London*

*University of
Virginia*

FORGET THE UK UNIVERSITY MODEL

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

01

Lack of
centralised
systems

02

Deadlines

03

What has to
be submitted

04

Deposits

THE USA AS A DIFFERENT MODEL:

What do you apply for?

Role of the Liberal Arts

College vs University

Major and Minor

Cumulative assessment

Ability to change paths

Integration of extra-curricular options



WHAT KIND OF UNIVERSITY?



THE KEY POINT: WHEN YOU APPLY TO A US
UNIVERSITY, YOU AREN'T APPLYING TO
STUDY ONE DEGREE PROGRAMME

THE US SYSTEM EXPLAINED...



UK degree
Set menu & final assessment



US degree
Buffet style & continuous assessment

GPA system:

A: 4

B: 3

C: 2

D: 1

MIT

For the Bachelor of Science degree, students must complete a core requirement that is equally divided between science and mathematics, and the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

The science/mathematics requirement includes chemistry, biology, physics, and calculus, as well as laboratory and science electives.

The humanities, arts, and social sciences requirement must be fulfilled by taking one course each in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, along with a three-subject concentration. Students must also complete a four-subject communications requirement.

BROWN

Unlike other American colleges and universities, Brown has no required core curriculum or distribution requirements that students must complete in order to graduate. Students at Brown have unparalleled freedom to shape their own education and to make their college curricula a more thorough reflection of their own interests and aspirations.

The only specific curricular requirements at Brown are that all students must successfully complete at least 30 courses in eight semesters, that every undergraduate must complete at least one concentration program (often called a “major” at other colleges), and that students must be able to demonstrate excellent skill in written English before they graduate.

A DIFFERENT WAY OF APPLYING: THE USA



Standardised Testing



Finding your list



Application essays
(see example)



Different application
portals



Regular vs Early
Decision vs Early
Action vs Rolling



Demonstrated
Interest and Legacy

THE COLLEGE ESSAY: THE GENERAL ESSAY

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?

COLLEGE SPECIFIC ESSAYS...

Imagine you've struck a deal with the Dean of Admissions himself, Dean Nondorf. It goes as follows: you're guaranteed admission to the University of Chicago regardless of any circumstances that arise.

This bond is grounded on the condition that you'll obtain a blank, 8.5 x 11 piece of paper, and draw, write, sketch, shade, stencil, paint etc., anything and everything you want on it; your only limitations will be the boundaries of both sides on the single page.

Now the catch... your submission, for the rest of your life, will always be the first thing anyone you meet for the first time will see. Whether it's at a job interview, a blind date, arrival at your first Humanities class, before you even say, "hey," they'll already have seen your page, and formulated that first impression.

Show us your page. What's on it, and why? If your piece is largely or exclusively visual, please make sure to share a creator's accompanying statement of at least 300 words, which we will happily allow to be on its own, separate page.

PRINCETON

A Few Details

Your favorite book and its author: *

Your favorite movie: *

Your favorite website: *

Two adjectives your friends would use to describe you: *

Your favorite recording: *

Your favorite keepsake or memento: *

Your favorite source of inspiration: *

Your favorite word: *

Your favorite line from a movie or book and its title: *

Fordham University +

Northeastern University +

Princeton University -

Application

(0 of 3 Completed)

☐ Questions

☐ Recommenders and FERPA

☐ Review and Submit - Common App

Writing Supplement

(0 of 2 Completed)

☐ Questions

☐ Review and Submit - Writing Supplement

Tufts University +

Tulane University +

University of Chicago +

University of Colorado Boulder +

University of Houston +

In addition to the essay you have written for the Common Application, please write an essay of about 500 words (no more than 650 words and no fewer than 250 words). Using one of the themes below as a starting point, write about a person, event, or experience that helped you define one of your values or in some way changed how you approach the world. Please do not repeat, in full or in part, the essay you wrote for the Common Application. *

- ☐ 1. Tell us about a person who has influenced you in a significant way.
- ☐ 2. "One of the great challenges of our time is that the disparities we face today have more complex causes and point less straightforwardly to solutions." Omar Wasow, assistant professor of politics, Princeton University. This quote is taken from Professor Wasow's January 2014 speech at the Martin Luther King Day celebration at Princeton University.
- ☐ 3. "Culture is what presents us with the kinds of valuable things that can fill a life. And insofar as we can recognize the value in those things and make them part of our lives, our lives are meaningful." Gideon Rosen, Stuart Professor of Philosophy and director of the Behrman Undergraduate Society of Fellows, Princeton University.
- ☐ 4. Using a favorite quotation from an essay or book you have read in the last three years as a starting point, tell us about an event or experience that helped you define one of your values or changed how you approach the world. Please write the quotation, title and author at the beginning of your essay.

[Clear](#)

YALE

3. You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called? *

4. Most first year Yale students live in suites of four to six students. What would you contribute to the dynamic of your suite? *

Prior Education

Has any of your education prior to secondary school taken place outside of the country where you currently reside? *

Essay

Please choose two of the following topics and respond to each in 250 words or fewer.

1. What do you most enjoy learning?
2. Reflect on your engagement with a community to which you belong. How do you feel you have contributed to this community?
3. Write about something you would like us to know about you that you have not conveyed elsewhere in your application.

Please indicate the number of the topic you are writing about at the start of each essay. For instance, 'Topic #3.'

First Essay Choice: *

Tulane University	+
Tulane University	+
University of Chicago	+
University of Colorado Boulder	+
University of Houston	+
University of Miami	+
University of Michigan	+
University of Pennsylvania	+
University of Southern California	+
Vanderbilt University	+
Wagner College	+
Williams College	+
Yale University	-

Application
(0 of 3 Completed)

Questions

- ☐ Recommenders and FERPA
- ☐ Review and Submit - Common App

Why Yale?

What is it about Yale that has led you to apply? (125 words or less) *

Words entered: 0

Min: 1 / Max: 125

Short Takes

Please respond in no more than **200 characters** (approximately 35 words), to each of the following questions:

1. What inspires you? *

2. Yale's residential colleges regularly host intimate conversations with guests representing a wide range of experiences and accomplishments. What person, past or present, would you invite to speak? What question would you ask? *

A DIFFERENT WAY OF APPLYING: NETHERLANDS

1

Identify the
programme

2

Read their
requirements

3

Either contact
them or register
in Studielink

4

Complete their
specific
application

5

Possibly go back
to Studielink

GERMANY

Students with A Levels must have:

A language

Maths, or one of Biology, Chemistry or Physics

They only consider various subjects as being acceptable

IB students must have:

2 languages (including one language as language A1)

Maths

Biology, Chemistry or Physics

History, Geography, Economics, Business and Management

One subject of choice



A different concept of teaching and learning



Hidden gems



FINANCES

Student Loan is not portable

Financial Aid

Merit Scholarship

Athletic Scholarship

EU / non – EU fees

WORKING WITH AN IEC

WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT COUNSELLOR?

- Different to an agent: an agent is paid by a university for successfully recruiting students and only has relationships with certain universities; a counselor is paid by a family and advises on the 'whole market'.
- In the UK, there are many different companies purporting to help students make university applications, most prominently to the USA but also for Oxbridge, Medicine, portfolio review, etc.
- In the USA, it is a regulated profession with considerable professional guidelines as well as codes of conduct and professional associations:
 - HECA
 - IECA
 - Internationally, independents can become members of the International Association for College Admissions Counseling and the Council of International Schools

FROM GEORGIA TECH

- *"To the family about to shell out thousands of dollars to an independent consultant (who has no background in college admission other than a son who got into Vanderbilt two years ago), I am asking you to sit quietly in the waiting room for a few days. Does your student need that additional outside help? Perhaps. And there are some fabulous independent counselors who provide meaningful and helpful aid... But before you simply show up in an office, do your homework to know why you are there, and if they have the credentials and background your family needs."*

INTERNATIONAL ACAC CEPP

Issued by NACAC, the governing body for US college counselling and admissions. All International Association for College Admissions Counseling members must abide by these.

All counseling members should:

- provide programs of counseling that introduce a broad range of postsecondary opportunities to students;
- encourage students and their families to take initiative in learning about colleges and universities;
- urge students to understand and discharge their responsibilities in the admission process in a timely manner;
- counsel students and their families to notify and withdraw applications from other institutions when they have accepted an admission offer;
- encourage students to be the sole authors of their applications and essays and counsel against inappropriate assistance on the parts of others;

- “urge students to understand and discharge their responsibilities in the admission process in a timely manner”
 - Honesty over number of A Levels
 - EA, ED
 - Double depositing
 - US / UK

- “encourage students to be the sole authors of their applications and essays and counsel against inappropriate assistance on the parts of others”

CIS AFFILIATED CONSULTANTS

CIS knows that sometimes families need outside help when considering post-secondary education opportunities, and that finding the right resources can be a daunting and time consuming task. CIS has established a network of consultants to help families at CIS schools find high quality consultants who have experience supporting students around the world. Independent University Consultants (IUCs) are professionals who provide guidance to students and families in the university research and planning process, and they can help to guide the student through the university application process

The counsellors that are part of the CIS Affiliated Consultant network have been evaluated by CIS to ensure they meet standards for quality service according to stringent application requirements. CIS provides the referral to consultants. Students and families then contact the counsellors directly to engage their services

Bryant: submission
issues

Assisting with
arrangement of
visits

IE University:
collaboration with
UK-based staff

IMPORTANT FOR
RELATIONS WITH
UNIVERSITIES

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1

An independent counselor cannot make contact with the client's school without direct permission from the family. However, they should encourage the family to allow this to ensure clear and open lines of communication.

2

International ACAC and CIS member counselors have had to be vetted and approved before gaining such membership, and as a result are trusted partners of both universities and secondary schools in the admissions process.

3

Any accredited counsellor falling foul of these rules can be reported and, if found to be in breach, 'struck off'.

SOME FEARS

Agents of international boards often have murky relationships with some independent counsellors.

The family feel that using an independent counselor is their 'ticket' to a university that they otherwise wouldn't be able to get into.

A disconnect between what is in the student's best interests and the counselor's best interest.

What qualifications or accreditations do many advisers actually have?

Counseling students for marketing purposes: designer colleges over best fit

WHY USE AN IEC?

International university applications bring added complexity, and it is here where most international counsellors sit in the market. US applications are the most common area.

Independent counselors can bridge the gap between a student's aspiration and a school's ability (either through time or expertise) to assist them in realising this. It should be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Some students and families also genuinely require additional help which can be too time consuming for a school to provide

QUESTIONS?

david@hawkingglobaleducation.co.uk

Twitter: @UniGuyDavid

+44 7392 846307