



Study in the USA

WYCHK

George Wong
Consultant

Tel: 9476 7209

Email: gwong@maplewood-edu.com

Topics

College Application – Process and Strategies

- ◆ *Background*
- ◆ *How to Choose the Right School*
- ◆ *The College Admissions Process*
- ◆ *What Makes You Special?*
- ◆ *How to Build a Winning Application*

Background

- ◆ College admissions becoming very competitive
 - Baby-boomers' babies now going to college
 - Colleges becoming more selective
 - You only get one chance
 - *Start your planning EARLY*
- ◆ Understanding the U.S. college system
 - more flexible
 - more well-rounded education -> more room to explore
 - credit system – go at your own pace
 - easy to change major field of study
 - professional schools (e.g. business; engineering)

*The college admissions game is becoming very competitive**

University	2010	2009	2008	2007	# Applicants
Princeton	8	13	8	11	70 - 100
Yale	4	5	9	6	80 - 90
MIT	4	3	4	4	80 - 100
University of Michigan	46	22	27	46	200+

** Admissions statistics for Hong Kong area.*

Example: Ivy League Admission

School	No. Applied	No. Admitted	Admit Rate (%)	
			2010	2009
Brown	30,136	2,804	9.3	10.8
Columbia	26,178	2,397	9.2	9.8
Cornell	36,337	6,678	18.4	19.1
Dartmouth	18,778	2,165	11.5	12.0
Harvard	30,489	2,110	6.9	7.3
U of Pennsylvania	26,938	3,830	14.2	17.1
Princeton	26,247	2,148	8.2	9.9
Yale	25,869	1,940	7.5	7.5
MIT	16,632	1,611	9.7	10.7
Stanford	32,022	2,300	7.2	8.0

Choose the Right College

- ◆ Public (State) Universities (e.g. University of Michigan)
- ◆ Private Universities (e.g. IVY League)
- ◆ Liberal Arts Colleges (e.g. Williams; Grinnell)
- ◆ Community (Junior) Colleges

Ranking America's Best Colleges

Top 30 National Universities (2010)

1	Harvard University
	Princeton University
3	Yale University
4	California Inst. of Technology
	Massachusetts Inst. of Technology
	Stanford University
	University of Pennsylvania
8	Columbia University
	University of Chicago
10	Duke University
11	Dartmouth College
12	Northwestern University
	Washington Univ. in St. Louis
14	Johns Hopkins University
15	Cornell University

16	Brown University
17	Emory University
	Rice University
	Vanderbilt University
20	University of Notre Dame
21	Univ. of California – Berkeley
22	Carnegie Mellon University
23	Georgetown University
24	Univ. of California – Los Angeles
	University of Virginia
26	University of Southern California
27	Univ. of Michigan – Ann Arbor
28	Tufts University
	U. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
	Wake Forest University

Ranking America's Best Colleges

Top 30 Liberal Arts Colleges (2010)

1	Williams College
2	Amherst College
3	Swarthmore College
4	Middlebury College
	Wellesley College*
6	Bowdoin College
	Pomona College
8	Carleton College
	Davidson College
10	Haverford College
11	Claremont McKenna College
	Vassar College
13	Wesleyan University
14	Grinnell College
	Harvey Mudd College

14	Washington & Lee University
18	Smith College*
19	Colgate University
21	Hamilton College
22	Colby College
	Oberlin College
24	Colorado College
25	Bates College
	Bryn Mawr College*
	Mount Holyoke College*
	Scripps College*
29	Macalester College
30	Barnard College*
	Bucknell College
	University of Richmond

Choose the Right College – *for YOU*

- ◆ Do not base your selection solely on the ranking
- ◆ Consider your major field(s) of study
- ◆ Other factors such as geographical, cultural, financial, family ties, etc. may be just as important
- ◆ For undergraduate studies, there is really little difference if you choose any one of the top 50 schools. This is especially true if you plan on going to graduate schools afterwards
- ◆ **Look inward first – choose the college most suitable for YOU**

The College Application Process

How Many Colleges Should You Apply To?

- ◆ The experts recommend:
 - 3 or 4 reach schools
 - 3 to 4 good match schools
 - 2 safety schools
- ◆ Tools to help you pick (e.g. freshman class profile)
- ◆ Consider colleges with track record of admitting students from your high school
- ◆ Consider secondary campus of your favorite State University system (e.g. UC campuses other than Berkeley or UCLA)
- ◆ Certain School/Program may be more selective in some universities (e.g. Wharton School of Business at U Penn)

The College Admissions Process

What colleges look for in an applicant –

Academic credentials – the most important factor:

- ◆ Grades and Class Rank*
 - HKCEE scores (IB predicted scores)
 - Upward trend in grades
 - *School Profile*
- ◆ Strength of Curriculum*
 - Core courses – math, science, English, social science and foreign languages
 - Extra points for Honor, AP and IB courses (weighed GPA)
 - Completed A-Level courses for placement and college credits
- ◆ Standardized Tests
 - Test scores are the second most important factor. However, test scores seldom overshadow your transcript.

The College Admissions Process

What colleges look for in an applicant –

Personal Achievements

Personal Characters

- ◆ Awards/Extracurricular Activities/Community Services
- ◆ Recommendations:
 - Counselor (or Principal)
 - Teachers (preferably in your field of interest)
 - Coach and/or employer (if significant)
- ◆ Personal Statements

What makes you special?

Early Decision

- ◆ Early Decision – commitment on both side
 - Early deadline (Nov) and early decision (late Dec)
 - Commitment to attend if admitted
 - At some schools, your chances of admission are better if you apply for early decision
- ◆ Early Action
 - Applicants are notified in Dec but given until May to commit
- ◆ Rolling Admission

Standardized Tests

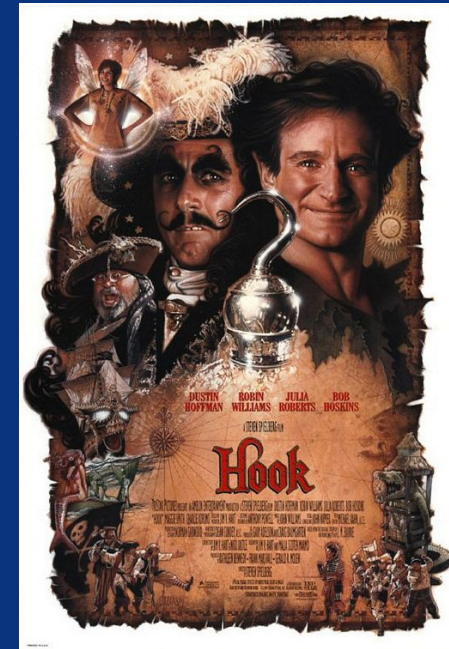
- ◆ You can take the tests multiple times (Score Choice)
- ◆ Consider taking both the SAT and ACT since the tests assess different skills. You may do better on one than on the other
- ◆ Many top-ranking colleges require two or three subject oriented SAT II tests (Math L2 mandatory for some) in addition to SAT I
- ◆ Preparation will certainly help improve your scores. There are volumes of books and test papers as well as prep classes (Princeton Review or Kaplan) which 'guarantee' to improve your scores by at least 100 points

How To Make Yourself A Winning Candidate



What Colleges Are Looking For

- ◆ Not necessarily a well-rounded candidate.... Colleges value diversity and seek to build a well-rounded freshman class.
- ◆ Scope and depth of experience more important than sheer numbers.
- ◆ You need to have a “HOOK” to stand out.
- ◆ *Essay Topics:*
“What would you as an individual bring to our campus community?” – In other words, what makes you special?





What Makes You Special?

“Pay attention to what makes you special, and what makes you interesting, and what is interesting to you...”

“If you can focus on those things, you actually have a chance at doing something unique, and something that will catch the attention of people down the road...”

“Strive to tell the story that you and you alone can make... The best advice I can give is, Be true to yourself...”

-- Mark Osborne, director of “Kung Fu Panda”



What Makes You Special?

The experts recommend that:

“Devote yourself to one or two subjects or activities you love and pursue them vigorously. If you can take a leadership role, so much the better ... Once you’ve found and pursued activities you care about, show colleges how your interests tie together. Use your essay or personal statement to connect the dots ...”

“Create and reinforce a picture of who you are by focusing on a few roles: leader, artist, musician, athlete, and/or scholar.”

Ref: US News & World Report – College Step-by-Step articles

How To Build A Winning Application

The Application

Some good advice:

- ◆ Don't wait till the last minute
- ◆ Be tidy, be honest, be thorough
- ◆ Answer *all* the questions they ask
- ◆ Don't pad the application with every trivial or dormant activities. Focus on a few *significant* activities that you have a passion for
- ◆ Be yourself. Don't try to second guess what the college may want to hear
- ◆ File your application weeks before the deadline

Good Advices for a Winning Application

- ◆ Take the initiative to get to know your counselor
- ◆ Start your planning EARLY
 - Get all documents ready
 - Allow plenty of time for recommendation letters
 - ◆ Get on the queue first way before the deadline
- ◆ Make use of the online application
- ◆ Make use of the common application
- ◆ Prepare your awards-services-activities profile first
- ◆ Choose essay topics carefully

Common Application

Member Institutions

- ◆ Brown University
- ◆ Carnegie Mellon University
- ◆ **Columbia University**
- ◆ Cornell University
- ◆ Duke University
- ◆ Harvard College
- ◆ Johns Hopkins University
- ◆ New York University
- ◆ Princeton University
- ◆ Stanford University
- ◆ University of Chicago
- ◆ **University of Michigan**
- ◆ University of Pennsylvania
- ◆ Yale University
- ◆ Amherst College
- ◆ Carleton College
- ◆ Claremont McKenna College
- ◆ Davidson College
- ◆ Grinnell College
- ◆ Haverford College
- ◆ Middlebury College
- ◆ Pomona College
- ◆ Smith College
- ◆ Swarthmore College
- ◆ Vassar College
- ◆ Washington & Lee University
- ◆ Wesleyan University
- ◆ Williams College

More Tips for a Winning Application

- ◆ Be tidy, be honest, be thorough (answer *all* the questions they ask)
- ◆ Be yourself. Don't try to second guess what the college may want to hear
- ◆ File your application weeks before the deadline
- ◆ Follow up to ensure that your application is complete
- ◆ Independent education consultants can help ease your way and improve your chance of admission to your best possible schools

Helpful Resources

(more at www.maplewood-edu.com/links.htm)

College Board

www.collegeboard.com

US News & World Report - Ranking

www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/rankings/rankindex_brief.php

College Confidential

College Discussion Forum

<http://talk.collegeconfidential.com>

Katherine Cohen, *Rock Hard Apps:*

How to write a killer college application

(Hyperion, 2003)

Joie Jager-Hyman, *Fat Envelope Frenzy*

(Harper 2008)

Jacques Steinberg, *The Gatekeepers*

(Penguin Books, 2002)

Loren Pope, *Colleges That Change Lives*

(Penguin Books, 2000)

Harry Bauld, *On Writing The College*

Application Essay (HarperResource, 1987)

Essay Samples

- **Parke Muth:** *Writing The Essay: Sound Advice From An Expert*
(www.virginia.edu/undergradadmission/writingtheessay.html)
- www.collegeanswer.com/appling/content/app_win_apps_ess.jsp
- www.layouth.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=Issue&action=IssueArticle&aid=1399&nid=13

Community College – What You Should Know

Community College under the microscope :

- ◆ Mediocre student body
 - Virtually everyone is accepted
 - Majority of students from bottom half of class
 - Majority of students are part-timer or commuter
- ◆ No campus life
 - No resident halls; limited facilities on campus
 - Majority of student body commute
- ◆ Transfer process can be very disruptive
 - Not all credits are transferable, or count towards your core requirements
 - Courses for professional programs (business/engineering) not available
 - Course selection can be limiting

Rolling the dice ...

Community College – What You Should Know

Even if successful in transferring to a top school ...

- ◆ Junior year is the most demanding
 - Need a period of adjustment in new environment
 - May have to make up for some core courses
- ◆ May need to re-apply to competitive programs (e.g., business school)
- ◆ Your grades from community college will not count

Q: Are you up to the challenge?

There are better alternatives:

many good 4-year universities welcome average students ... Consider:

- ◆ Liberal Arts Colleges in “Colleges that change lives”
- ◆ 2nd tier State U’s and then transfer to the flag-ship
e.g., Western Michigan -> U of Michigan; U of Wisconsin-Whitewater -> Madison

Q & A