



Hersh Narayan is a college sophomore to the University of Southern California, Los Angeles in the fall 2008 semester.

Having completed the responsibility of the Head Boy of one of the most reputed institutions of New Delhi- Modern School Vasant Vihar, he truly understands the needs and mindset of the student community.

It was, when he was in Class 7, at a young age of 11, he conquered hearts by playing and winning at the nationally telecast quiz game show "Kaun Banega Crorepati-Junior" with Mr Amitabh Bachchan, thereby making his school, family and friends extremely proud of him!

After having secured admission in one of the finest business schools of United States, Hersh being a 'peoples person' is sensitive to the concept of the confusion caused at a time when one needs to decide his/her career options!

So along with his own experiences he gathered information regarding education in the United States of America for the benefit of others!

So here is presenting Hersh Narayan's debut work-

" Destination: Campus USA "

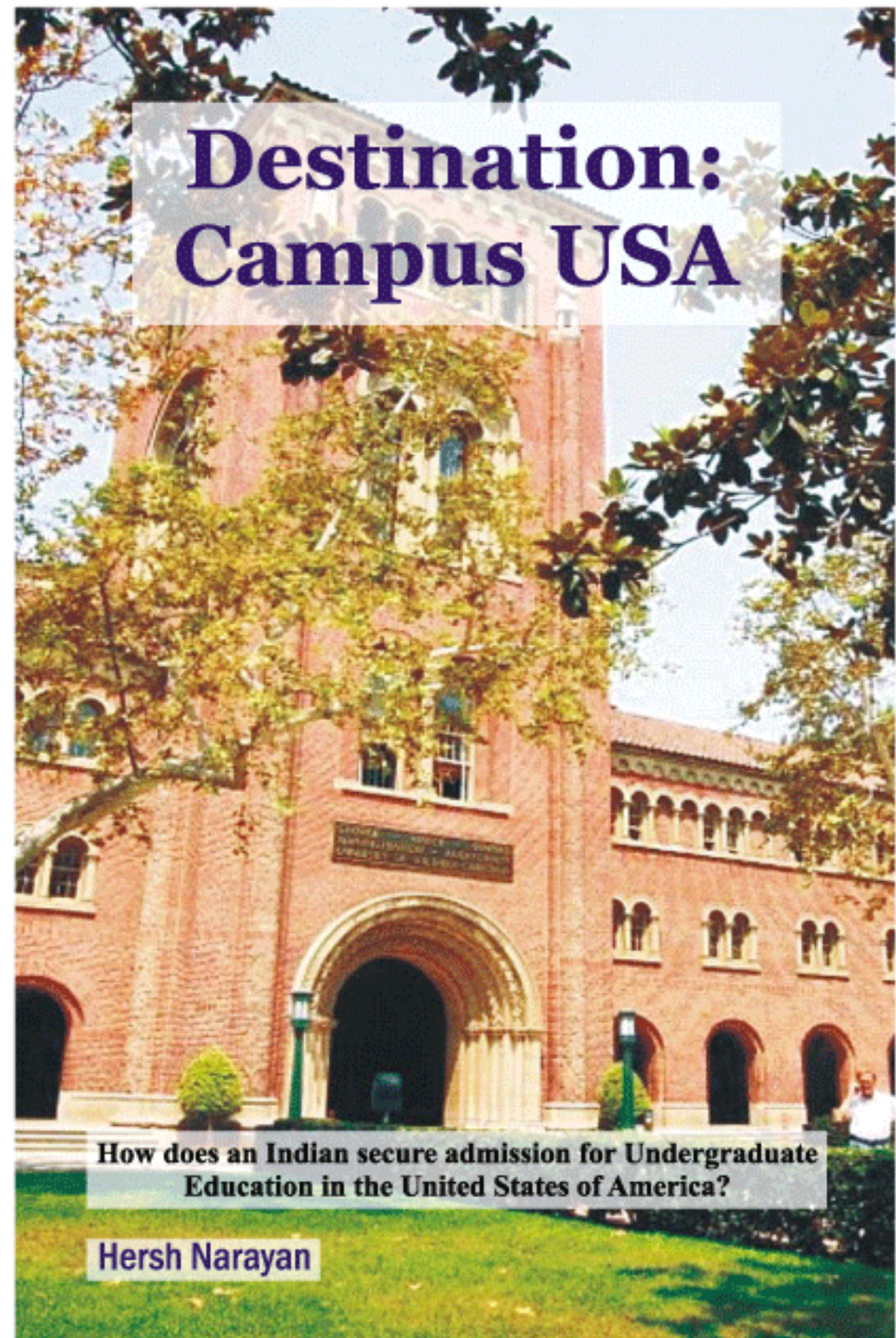
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304, Green Wood Plaza, 3rd Floor, Green Wood City,  
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Tel.: +91.124.4261117, Fax: +91.124.4261117  
Web: www.planetedumark.com



# Destination: Campus USA

**How does an Indian secure admission for Undergraduate  
Education in the United States of America?**

**Hersh Narayan**

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## PREFACE

Ever since a child is born, along with the moment of exhilarating happiness, comes a minute amount of anxiety for the parents. There are two major aspects of their worry. The first happens to be their child's health. Now at a young age of 18, I wouldn't want to comment on health! The second is about their child's education. And, this is the area where I would like to make more than just a few comments! This book deals with this aspect because education is the gateway to anyone's future.

Most of you would agree with me in saying that the teenage years are the most fun years. Of course, but along with that they are also the most constructive and formative years. However, it is also during these teenage years that the second aspect begins to surface as a continuous source of tension and that my friends, brings me to this book: how to secure a place at the best campus destination in the world.

Well let me begin telling you from personal experience. The first key thing to do is to go *Step by Step!* So here goes the first step!

**STEP 1:** Think of what you really want in life. Is it money that drives you? Or do you want success? Or fame? Or do you want all three? Most of you would greedily jump forward and ask for all three in life! But as I said, go step by step, and prioritize what you really want.

**STEP 2:** Once you have figured out what is it that you really want or at least prioritized what you want, the second step is to set your goals. Now mind you, what's important while setting goals is to first make an assessment of your own capabilities and how you want to bring out the best in yourself. A piece of advice: never be overconfident of yourself but at the same time do not underestimate your potential either! From these goals flows what education will be most appropriate.

**STEP 3:** This one is critical to making a success of your dreams and requires some systematic thinking and discipline. And that is to set a plan to achieve the goals you set for yourself in step number 2!

Once clear on these steps, the big question, which is very likely to come up is: where would one get the best education? Do you want to pursue education in a country like India, where opportunities are upcoming and growing at a fast rate? Or do you want to head towards a country like United States of America where opportunities are well established and overflowing?

That my friends, you need to ask yourself and an important piece of advice here...

Take time on this one...



## Why USA?

For times immemorial, we have been hearing of the Wild Wild West! Clearly that's not the reason why we want to pursue education in the United States.

United States of America is the world's super power in today's day and age. Education in the USA is well established and clearly highly regarded. With opportunities booming all around, it becomes much easier to grab an opportunity and that too of your liking in a country like the United States than anywhere else in the world.

As I see it, India is a country which is now beginning to do well but still has a long way to go where everyone has the opportunity to flourish in one's area of liking. While its economy is now growing fast with improvements in infrastructure and the demographic statistics are changing for the better, undergraduate level education in India is miles away from being the best in class. Hopefully, one day it will also get there but that day is still far away. Currently, undergraduate studies in most places in India are straight jacketed with little scope for creativity and flexibility that is necessary to develop every one's potential. For example: one will not hear of someone pursuing a science subject, say Physics and History together. Oh, well of course, physics once taught becomes history! But jokes apart, such an opportunity is not available in India, yet.

Countries like the United Kingdom had great education but in the past century, clearly the United States has emerged as the benchmark. Countries like Singapore, Australia and Canada have now begun to come in the limelight for their educational opportunities but are yet to acquire the standing of the United States of America. Now moving on to a factor every one is most worried about- the expense. Of course, it is expensive but where the quality is well worth it as quality education at this level is possibly the best investment one can make! Well, for different reasons one may go to these emerging education hot spot countries such as the cost factor, proximity from homeland and availability of jobs for the future but provided a financial deal can be worked out, why not go for the best?

### WHY to Choose US Education Summary...

- ✓ High Quality of Education
- ✓ Well recognized and established
- ✓ Globally accepted
- ✓ Guaranteed Job Prospects
- ✓ Immense International Exposure
- ✓ Booming Opportunities

## SELECTING THE UNIVERSITY

As you may already be aware, the selection procedure is quite a painstaking effort. In a nutshell- it's true! But don't worry. Like I said before, Go step by step...

The United States of America is host to over 3500 colleges and universities, which vary with several different courses and other factors which we shall go over in a bit. These universities maybe further classified as A or A minus, B plus or B minus and so on.



Each university has its own website. You could log onto the website of the university that you are keen on and browse through its academic requirements, extracurricular activities and majors offered.

You could also take some additional help by going to a career counselor or someone who is well informed about US education. In most cases, the counselors are only able to give you a brief on the universities and finally sending applications, so relying on them would not be a great idea. Hence, there is a lot of hard work



The USA boasts of universities which have a world class faculty, advanced technology and research, and apart from the highest quality, their biggest plus point is the flexibility offered in their curriculum.

Start by *searching the web*. The internet serves as one of the most convenient source of knowledge. Browse through a couple of websites, which shows the ratings of the universities in the specified course.



coming up for you! Now after all the advice, comes the tough bit. Proceed by short-listing; say approximately 10 universities that you may consider as appropriate for yourself.

### WHAT IS THE IVY LEAGUE?

If I were not too wrong, most of your top choices would have been listed as the Ivy League Universities.

Allow me to deviate a bit, as I would like to take a moment explaining what the Ivy League really is.

'Ivy league' originally referred not to academics but to sports. It brought together not minds, but football teams. These eight universities have some educational and institutional traits in common beyond their athletics programs. All are long-established, private universities, which are all located in the Northeastern U.S.

All these universities benefit from sizeable endowments and generous alumni financial support. Another common factor is that they are all, highly selective and are very expensive too!

The following are the eight U.S. universities that comprise the 'Ivy League', which is a small group of private universities that enjoy a reputation for providing excellent education, and attract top students.



- Brown University
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Harvard University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Princeton University
- Yale University

Yes, contradictory to popular belief, Stanford University is *not* an Ivy League College.

However, when you are going through the ratings do not be surprised if you do not find some Ivy League courses not in the top rankings. Several other Universities have significantly improved since the historical Ivy League times and indeed some of their courses are well ahead in the overall rankings in the USA.

We all have heard time and again that there is no substitute to hard work. I agree. Hard work leads to success but that needs to be backed up by making the correct choices. And the key device required while selecting a university is *Patience*. Analyzing the pros and cons of each of the ten universities is quite a strenuous process, hence you need to maintain patience and step by step assess each university as a whole. A university may have an excellent course and may be located in freezing weather half year round, then what would you chose? Now that is a very individualistic choice, but the game of prioritizing comes into play once again.



Meanwhile look up the political map of the USA in an atlas.

Keep the map in front of you and mark the location of the universities with a pencil.



To begin with, here are some considerations one may look into while selecting a university, though arranging them in order of preference is your choice!

- ✓ Academic Worth/ Ranking of the University
- ✓ Location of University
- ✓ Cost of University
- ✓ Faculty and Alumini
- ✓ Job Placements & Pay Packages
- ✓ Length of your stay at the University

### 1. Ranking of the University

The academic worth is one of the most important features that need to be kept in mind while making a choice of university. The course you plan to do must be as well regarded as possible keeping in view your own credentials. To know about the worth of a course, take a look at the rankings chart. But just seeing the rankings chart of the present year would be only half the work done. The remaining half of the work will take more of you! What is more important is to study and understand the trend of the rankings over the years. For example: the university you may wish to attend is listed as Rank 10 for the present year, that is, when you apply to that university. But while waiting for the result, the next year rankings are out and you find that the University of your Choice has declined and reach position 18. You shall then find yourself in a rather disappointed state. So do your homework intelligently and more importantly do your homework completely!

## BEST BUSINESS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM 2008

Rank	Name Of University
1	University of Pennsylvania (Wharton)
2	University of Virginia (McIntire)
3	Notre Dame (Mendoza)
4	Cornell University
5	Emory University (Goizueta)
6	University of Michigan (Ross)
7	Brigham Young University (Marriott)
8	New York University (Stern)
9	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Sloan)
10	University of Texas-Austin (McCombs)
11	UC Berkeley (Haas)
12	UNC at Chapel Hill (Kenan-Flagler)
13	Villanova University
14	Boston College (Carroll)
15	Washington University (Olin)
16	Indiana University (Kelley)
17	USC (Marshall)
18	University of Illinois
19	Georgetown University (McDonough)
20	Richmond (Robins)

(source: [www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com))

## BEST LIBERAL ARTS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM 2008

Rank	Name Of University
1	Williams College (MA)
2	Amherst College (MA)
3	Swarthmore College(PA)
4	Wellesley College(MA)
5	Carleton College(MN)
6	Middlebury College(VT)
7.	Pomona College(CA)
7.	Bowdoin College(ME)
9.	Davidson College(NC)
10.	Haverford College(PA)
11.	Claremont McKenna College(CA)
11.	Wesleyan University(CT)
11.	Grinnell College(IA)
11.	Vassar College(NY)
15.	Harvey Mudd College(CA)
15.	Washington and Lee University(VA)
17.	Smith College(MA)
17.	Hamilton College(NY)
17.	Colgate University(NY)
20.	United States Naval Academy(MD)

(source: [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com))

## BEST UNDERGRADUATE ENGINEERING PROGRAM 2008

(At schools whose highest degree is a doctorate)

Rank	Name of University	Peer assessment score (5.0= highest)
1	Massachusetts Inst. of Technology	4.9
2	Stanford University (CA)	4.7
3	University of California-Berkeley *	4.7

## BEST UNDERGRADUATE ENGINEERING PROGRAM 2008

(At schools whose highest degree is a bachelor's or master's)

Rank	Name of University	Peer assessment score (5.0= highest)
1.	Harvey Mudd College (CA)	4.5
2.	Rose-Hulman Inst. of Tech. (IN)	4.5
3.	Cooper Union (NY)	4.2

(source: www.usnews.com)

## UNIVERSITY PROFILES

Here are the university profiles of some of the most popular choices made by students in India. If you wish to see more university rankings and profiles, please visit the Education section of the website of US News.

### CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

#### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1891
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Quarter
Undergraduate student body	:	864
Setting	:	Suburban
Endowment	:	\$1,624,377,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 5
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$31,020
Room/board	:	\$9,540

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA- BERKELEY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1868
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	23,863
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$3,344,720,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	November 30
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 21
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$8,384 in-state, \$27,452 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$13,848

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA- LOS ANGELES

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1919
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Quarter
Undergraduate student body	:	25,432
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$2,906,498,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	November 30
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 25
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$7,034 in-state, \$26,102 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$12,420



## CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1900
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	5,669
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$936,797,424

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 22
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$35,984
Room/board	:	\$9,350

## UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1892
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Quarter
Undergraduate student body	:	4,807
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$4,662,286,438

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 2
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 9
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$35,868
Room/board	:	\$11,139

## CORNELL UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1865
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	13,562
Setting	:	Rural
Endowment	:	\$4,385,161,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 12
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,781
Room/board	:	\$11,190

## EMORY UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1836
Religious affiliation	:	Methodist
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	6,646
Setting	:	Suburban
Endowment	:	\$5,024,778,646

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 15
Application fee	:	\$50
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 17
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,336
Room/board	:	\$10,220

## GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1885
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	12,361
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$264,955,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 15
Application fee	:	\$50
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 35
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$5,234 in-state, \$21,348 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$7,294

## HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1636
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	6,715
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$29,219,430,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 2
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,998
Room/board	:	\$10,622

## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, URBANA- CHAMPAIGN

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1867
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	31,472
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$893,869,680

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 2
Application fee	:	\$40
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 38
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$10,503 in-state, \$23,896 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$8,196

## MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1861
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	4-1-4
Undergraduate student body	:	4,127
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$8,368,066,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 7
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,986
Room/board	:	\$10,400

## UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1817
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Trimester
Undergraduate student body	:	25,555
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$5,566,433,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	February 1
Application fee	:	\$40
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 25
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$10,341 in-state, \$30,154 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$8,230

## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1831
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	20,965
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$1,823,975,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 15
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 34
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$35,283
Room/board	:	\$11,780

## UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1740
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	9,730
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$5,300,000,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$70
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 5
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$35,916
Room/board	:	\$10,208

## PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1746
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	4,923
Setting	:	Suburban
Endowment	:	\$13,458,440,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 1
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$33,000
Room/board	:	\$10,980

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## UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1880
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	16,729
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$3,065,935,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 10
Application fee	:	\$65
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 27
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$35,810
Room/board	:	\$10,858

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## STANFORD UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1885
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Quarter
Undergraduate student body	:	6,422
Setting	:	Urburban
Endowment	:	\$14,084,676,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 1
Application fee	:	\$75
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 4
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,800
Room/board	:	\$10,808

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## UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AUSTIN

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1883
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	37,037
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$2,473,962,757

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	February 1
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 44
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$7,670 in-state, \$24,544 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$8,576

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## UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1819
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	14,676
Setting	:	Suburban
Endowment	:	\$2,466,810,166

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	January 2
Application fee	:	\$60
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 23
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	8,500 in-state, \$27,750 out-of-state
Room/board	:	\$7,435



## YALE UNIVERSITY

### General Information

#### Private institution

Year founded	:	1701
Religious affiliation	:	None
Academic calendar	:	Semester
Undergraduate student body	:	5,333
Setting	:	Urban
Endowment	:	\$17,949,088,000

#### Fall 2008 Admissions

Application deadline	:	December 31
Application fee	:	\$75
Selectivity	:	Most selective

#### U.S. News Ranking

U.S. News ranking	:	National Universities, 3
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#### Expenses

Tuition and fees	:	\$34,530
Room/board	:	\$10,470

(source: [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com))

## 2. Location of the University

The location of the University of your Choice will be of prime concern to you, as you have to spend a few years of your life there. Hence the location of the University in itself is quite an elaborate issue.

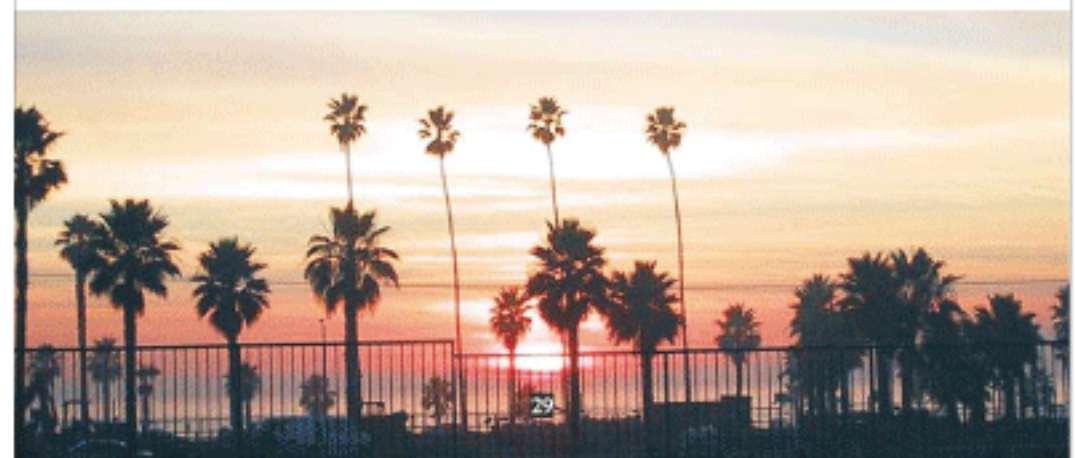
For starters, here are certain things one should consider having in the locality of the University.

### ❖ Weather:

The weather of the universities varies from place to place. Most universities, which lie on the northeast in States like New York, Philadelphia, Massachusetts, expect six months of cold weather with plenty of snow if you are nearer the Great Lakes. Virginia and Georgia are to name a few which bear extremely cold climate. On the other hand most universities which are located in central USA and the west coast offer a more temperate type of climate for most of the year. However the south west coast and the state of California are famous for its beaches and boasts of congenial weather all year round. California in itself boasts off so and so universities including the family of University of California's at Berkeley, LA, San Diego, Santa Cruz etc.

### ❖ Size:

We find that most universities are located in small towns, which are also known as campus towns and the campus is self sufficient with all the basic needs. For example: University of Indiana, Bloomington is located in a small town of Bloomington, similarly Carnegie Mellon University is located in a small city called Pittsburg. Some other Universities are located in the heart of large metropolitan centers like New York University, New York or University of Southern California in Los Angeles, which provide a very different life style exposure to the campus towns.



### ❖ Support System:

Many a times we find ourselves devoid of any sort of support system. Being in a situation where you don't know anyone in the city could get a bit lonely at times but that could also add to your adventure depending on your perception. Though it's always good to have some sort of family, friends or relatives who you could visit on weekends or stay with in short breaks and most importantly rely upon in case of any emergency, most Universities offer a campus support system which is not only good but quite important as one adjusts to a completely new environment. And your best support system is our university itself!



### 3. Cost of the University

Being rich in India does not mean that one is rich by USA standards. Undergraduate education in the USA is an expensive proposition for international students. With a high exchange rate of about Rs 42 to a dollar, the entire proposition of funding for a four year normal length of such programs in the USA can be a major deterrent. Short listing of universities on the basis of their cost is therefore a sensible thing to do. Now if you have a rich daddy to provide all the funds for your entire stay at the university without a problem then life's a breeze, isn't it?



But facing the harsh reality, this expensive proposition needs to be dealt with carefully. Hence here comes the role of our dear banks! Nowadays a number of Indian banks offer student loans which can be repaid after one has started earning post the education courses. Check their websites for details.

Also you must check for the availability of any form of scholarship. Some Universities will be willing to give part scholarship to students with strong credentials but generally, international students will be required to fund their undergraduate course expenses. In fact, without being able to demonstrate availability of at least the first year's full year expenses, it is unlikely that a student from India will be able to secure admission and visa.



Make sure that you are sensitive to this aspect while selecting your university as not all universities are open to giving out financial aid to international students. Most universities have Need based scholarships which are applicable only to US citizens and permanent residents. However, Merit scholarships are also available, depending on your merit excellence. You may have heard that applying for scholarship/ aid in the beginning can hamper your chances of getting admission, though my recommendation is that you must review their financial aid policies in order to be sure of being applicable for aid in the coming years. Having established that the chances of scholarship during admission are rare, but don't be disappointed as some universities allow you to re-apply for scholarship after your first academic year is over, depending on your grade point average (GPA), extracurricular activities and involvement on campus activities.

### 3. Faculty and Alumni

Another factor, which plays a crucial role in selecting the university, is the reputation of its faculty and alumni. The faculty of the university also plays a vital influence on its ranking as a particular course becomes popular once the faculty is well known. If you wish to see how your peers have ranked a professor of a university you can browse through websites such as [www.rateyourprofessor.com](http://www.rateyourprofessor.com). Along with the faculty, the alumni provides useful source of finding good contacts and great funding options. The donations made by the alumni are used for student welfare, be it developing a new recreational centre for the students or providing merit scholarships to deserving candidates.

### 3. Job Placements and Pay Packages

This is one aspect everyone looks out for with a lot of eagerness. It is well known that investing in education is the best investment made. Sending a child to an expensive college will definitely worry the parent, however it is the future aspects which may turn out fruitful. And for the fruit to be sweet, one has to be aware of an approximate pay package figure a future job may bring. Typically, starting salaries can be about equal to about one year's expense in business programs thus making this investment a four to five year payback project! That is how banks see it but be prepared; it may not turn out like this in all cases. Your aim should be to graduate with good GPA, along with an impressive resume to back it up in order for the fruit to be sweet!



### 6 Length of stay at the University

In most cases, one needs to pack his bags for a maximum of 4-5 years at the undergraduate level. But what you make of your stay is entirely up to you.

These years could shape up to be extremely informative and serve as an excellent chance for international exposure. One may wish to visit home in the holiday season on one hand, whereas on the other; one may pursue a specialized course, develop a skill or do an internship with a firm if not seeing some other part of the world. How to make the most of your stay at the university is entirely personal, but remember make the most of what you can! In terms of what your university may require, once you reach the university, you

should contact your academic advisor/mentor who can plan out the courses required for your major. Many universities provide you with the freedom to do a double major, or an added minor along with your existing major. In some cases, one might want to pursue a double concentration within the same major. The terminology can be best understood from the university website or can be explained by your advisor.



## ACADEMIC PREPARATIONS



To study in the United States, one has to put his best foot forward as far as academic preparations are concerned. Firstly, clearly chalk out the requirements. Then go ahead and fulfill them.

### WHAT IS THE SAT EXAM?

For studying in USA at the undergraduate level one typically needs to take for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for getting admission to a good University. There are however a large number of lesser ranked Universities which do not have this requirement. The best ones will ask for SAT I along with two SAT II scores as well. This SAT I consists of three sections-

- ✖ Reading Section : This is also known as the critical reading for which one must brush up one's vocabulary in order to understand the short and long passages in each of the reading sections. It is available only in English.
- ✖ Writing Section: The writing section tests your grammar. And in order to excel in this section one needs to be grammatically correct. The SAT exam begins by writing an impromptu essay, which is included in the writing section.
- ✖ Math Section: There are 3-4 sections of Math. These include basic principles of math and geometry. Math can also be one of the most scoring sections in the SAT exam as its general level is well covered in most schools in India.

Each section is worth 800 points summing to a total of 2400. It goes without saying the better the score the better the chances of acceptance in the university. A score of above 1600 would possibly be the lowest at a good University. When you see the rankings, also see the typical range of freshman SAT scores of the entering class on the chosen University website.

The SAT exam takes place 6 times a year and is 3 hours 45 minutes long in duration. The SAT scores can be improved by giving the examination again and the exam can be given up to a maximum of 6 times!

So chalk out the dates on which SAT is held and mark them on your calendar.

To know more about the examination such as the SAT dates and the examination fee, kindly log onto [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

The SAT examination is accepted by all the universities; however you may limit your options by giving only the SAT I examination.

The best Universities expect you to sit for the SAT II, the subject tests as well. You may sit for this examination in subjects like Math 1, Math 2, Physics, Chemistry, English Writing, English Literature, American History etc.

Each exam is of hour duration and requires a somewhat high level of preparation. Typically universities prefer 2-3 SAT subject test scores in your application.

For further details you may do the same as you would for SAT examination. The requirements for each University are available on their websites.

## WHAT IS TOEFL?

Further, in order to test one's proficiency in English one needs to appear for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which can be given on the internet. It is recommended for USA as all American Universities ask for an English proficiency test and their respective requirements are on their websites.

The TOEFL Internet based exam consists of four sections

- ✗ Listening Test
- ✗ Speaking Test
- ✗ Writing Test
- ✗ Reading Test



To know more about the examination such as the TOEFL dates and the examination fee, kindly log onto [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org). Till a few months back the TOEFL exam had two other mediums of taking the exam which were Paper based and the Computer based. But just for the records those media have been discontinued. And now the TOEFL exam is on the same lines as the IELTS Examination which is discussed below.

## WHAT IS IELTS?



Another exam that tests your English is the IELTS Examination.

The IELTS Exam is the International English Language Testing System. It is designed to test the language ability of the student who intends to work or interact in an environment where English is the language of communication.

An important note: Earlier on, US Universities relied only on TOEFL but of late a large number of US Universities have begun to accept IELTS instead. Remember to check your chosen University website to confirm if IELTS is now accepted by them too.

The test is available in two modules, Academic and General Training though the academic version is preferred as the General training is mainly for the work visa. Both modules can be taken under four categories of tests which are:

- ✗ Listening Test: This section lasts for duration of 30 minutes, wherein the candidates are made to listen to pre recorded tapes on the basis of which they answer their required questions.
- ✗ Speaking Test: This section tests the candidate's fluency in spoken English as well as communication skills. It lasts for 11-15 minutes
- ✗ Writing Test: is tested by assessing the candidates writing skills as he is allots two topics of essays on which he needs to write one short and one long answer essay. The time allotted in this section is that of one hour.
- ✗ Reading Test: consists of three paragraphs which require understanding of written English language. An hour is assigned for this section too.

Each section is marked out of a band score of 9. To get anything above a 7 certifies that the candidate is a very good user of the English language.

To know more about IELTS, the examination dates and fee, kindly log onto [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

Now assign a few tentative dates in your calendar as the work has just begun!

## ALIGN YOUR CALENDAR!



In India, it is sometime after you have finished with the class X board examination that you have a 3 month long vacation. Along with deciding on what stream to take up at the +2 level utilize your vacations to do a bit of planning.

Set aside a calendar and mark the tentative dates when you want to give the required tests. It is recommended that you must utilize your class XI in giving your SAT examination, that way you have greater time in hand in order to improve your scores. I am aware that you need to keep your class XI result in mind too and therefore leave aside time to make your school exam preparation of a good level.

Now that we have begun discussing the section of assigning our calendar, a US education aspirant must be aware of the technical terms which one may come across during his application process. So let me take you down the Information Highway!

As the year is divided into four quarters, the admissions are open from time to time depending upon the university! The fall session is the session for which maximum students apply. The fall session commences in the months of August/ September. Optional entry can

also be made into the winter session which usually begins in January. The spring/summer session too is possible but only at a few places. The submission time for an early action or early decision application will be different than that for the regular decision. This aspect will be discussed ahead.

Coming back to our planning- Just when you enter class XII, firstly do not panic about the boards. Utilize this summer in sitting for your SAT Subject tests. You could either give two subjects together or give them one after the other as you feel comfortable because we don't want to overwork ourselves.

Nor does the TOEFL or IELTS examination, require preparation of the level as SAT does. Hence in order to take these tests keep aside a week for its preparation.

Now, let me tell you a secret. What I just narrated above sounds like the ideal planning but most of us aren't this perfect in our planning. So don't worry about it, here is an alternative...

If you find that you are undecided about going to the USA even as your class XI has gone by, it is perfectly normal. However you need to make up your mind now. Because being in a state of two minds will lead you in a mess. Say, you are in a situation where the summer of your class 11 is over too, the only available months to sit for the SAT are October, November and December. These months may coincide with your school examinations as well. But here you need to make a choice.

Some students apply to the USA just as a back up option. In case they do not achieve their desired university in India they have something to fall back on. And in my view, it turns out to be a blessing in disguise! So make sure that even if you are not 100% sure, create this fall back option.

And now unleashing a bigger secret- I myself took the SAT only in October and carried on to take my school exams in the following months. Thereby leaving no time for taking the SAT Subject tests, and limiting my options, for only a select few universities accept an application only with SAT 1! However I managed to perfect my resume, recommendations and essays which are certain essentials that hold as much significance as the SAT score!

## EARLY DECISION VS EARLY ACTION



### WHAT IS EARLY ADMISSION?

Over time, early admissions programs have become increasingly common with a few of the top universities and colleges. The benefits and obligations involved in early admissions vary from a university to another. However it is important to know that there is a big difference in two very similar sounding terms! Therefore make sure that you understand early admissions and early decisions options.

Early admissions programs are divided into two categories and that is *early decision (ED)* and *early action (EA)*. Both these programs involve an earlier application deadline than the normal admissions process does, and hence an earlier notification of admissions decisions! The applicant who gets selected in early admissions can reap several benefits.

However, the most attractive aspect of early admissions programs is that colleges and universities tend to admit a significantly higher percentage of the early applicant pool than they do of the regular decision in lay man's terms, it means that you stand a better chance!

### Now here is the catch!

#### Early Decision

Early decision (ED) programs are usually 'Binding' which means that the applicant must agree to attend the university from the start if their application is accepted. This decision can surely not be taken lightly, as after getting admission in one college no other university is entitled to accept you. Hence you must aim for the best option for early decision. There are certain grounds on the basis of which you can seek release from an early decision obligation; that of financial hardship, if the financial aid package that is offered is genuinely inadequate.

An important drawback to early decision admissions is that it doesn't leave the applicant with any leverage to negotiate a better financial aid package as they are aware that you do not have another option in hand!

Early decision applicants are expected to submit only one early decision application. They can submit applications to other schools under normal application procedures, but agree that they will withdraw all those applications if they are accepted by the early decision school.

#### Early Action

Early action (EA) programs do not ask applicants to commit to attending if they are accepted. This turns out to be a better deal for most applicants as it gives the students, the benefits of early notification without the obligations of early decision. Even if accepted, students are free to apply to other schools and to compare financial aid offers.

# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

## WHEN TO APPLY?

The application process takes quite a while before an application is absolutely ready for sending. There are two methods of applying, one is the Paper Application and the other is the Online Application. I recommend the latter. It is always much easier to delete or redo a mistake on the computer than to keep filling fresh application forms.

Most universities accept both these options; however some universities may have only one of the two.

Here is a list of things that you need to complete an application. Always keep this check list in mind...

- ❖ Essays
- ❖ Recommendations
- ❖ High School Transcript
- ❖ A School Profile
- ❖ Resume
- ❖ Financial Documents
- ❖ SAT Score Reports
- ❖ TOEFL/IELTS Score Reports



The above must be sent in to the university well before the deadline. Most deadlines are around January 1<sup>st</sup> or February 1<sup>st</sup> for the fall session and somewhere around July to October of the previous year for the spring session. Make sure all your documents are in anywhere from November to March but no later than that.

The application processing takes a long time before the admissions get declared. The universities begin to grant admissions anytime from March to June.

Now let's look into each aspect on the checklist of our application a bit more closely!

# ESSAYS

Each university has a couple of topics on which you need to write. Generally, the pattern is as follows:

- ✗ One Main Essay
- ✗ A Statement Of Purpose
- ✗ How would you add to the University
- ✗ Academic Goals and Aspirations

## 1. The Main Essay

The university may give you an option to write from, or give out one common topic and test your creativity and flair for writing. Your main essay must be very powerful. You may have a brilliant score in the SAT but your essay needs to be equally brilliant if not better. A piece of advice, the usage of extremely complicated or high level English does not make your essay good and neither the usage of flowery language makes your write up a great essay.

Make sure that your essay is well written, have a flow in your writing and above all is grammatically correct. An essay with spelling and grammatical errors would be a big put off. Use simple English and make sure the sentences are well formed. Another suggestion, do not copy essays from anywhere. Do not cheat from anyone's essays nor give out your own. Each person is different and has his own unique style of writing. So believe in yourself and your writing.

## 2. Statement of Purpose (SOP)

The statement of purpose is one of the most important documents. It is via this, that one is able to convey one's capabilities and future aspirations. One must include as to why you selected the university in question and as to how this university will help in achieving your goals. The next thing which needs to be included is what you shall add to the university and as to why from many a thousand applicants, they should select you. So the gist of the SOP is to bring out what sets you apart from the rest!

## 3. How will the university benefit from you?

One must be aware of the art of marketing oneself. In this part of your essay, you need to convince the university as to how much they would benefit if they would offer admission to an applicant like yourself. In order to do this, highlight all your positive aspects and focus on them even if they are just a few! And once said, prove to be an asset to the university.

## 4. Academic Goals and Aspirations

If the university wants to offer you admission, they would do so only once they are aware of how you intend to use their university brand to achieve your future goals. The university is keen to offer admission to an applicant who has his future goals and aspirations and priorities clearly chalked out! So once the goals are decided upon the next step is to word it as beautifully as you see yourself achieving those dreams which you have set aside for the future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For most universities the number of recommendations varies from two-three. And these recommendations are generally to be given by

- |    |                           |             |
|----|---------------------------|-------------|
| A. | The High School Counselor | (required)  |
| B. | A Subject Teacher         | (required)  |
| C. | Another Subject Teacher   | (preferred) |

As the university does not know you at a personal level, they need to learn of your reputation that you have established over the years in your school. Therefore a recommendation from your school counselor, mainly highlighting your best qualities and your contribution to the school is a must. For a subject teacher must bring out your skills and your level of interest in that particular subject.

Now here is a suggestion, when you come to think of it, a teacher has about more than a 100 students. To remember the best qualities on hand, would be expecting a bit too much off the teacher. So in order to make things easier for the teacher, you could submit your resume to him/her and that topic shall be discussed shortly.

Remember that your overall achievements are important not just your academic ones at school. Extracurricular activities including sports and service to charitable institutions carry weight while evaluating a particular student.

Your resume or your curriculum vitae is of great importance. A resume is looked at for just a few minutes, as the application committee is loaded with an extremely large number of applicants. But within those few minutes, the committee is able to access your potential and take a decision of how to treat your application further.

Here is a sample of how one can go about making his resume:Go step by step and present your resume in the following order First give out your name and address and contact number on the top of the resume and try to fit your achievements within a page as the resume is only glanced at.

## RESUME

**Nanette Ana Maria Villanueva**

1965 Born January 14 in the Philippines  
 1982 enrolled in the College of Fine Art, Painting at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila  
 1984 emigrated to the U.S.  
 1991. obtained degree in arts at the University of Santo Tomas,  
 present living & working in New York

### Selected Exhibitions

#### Group

1993 Malate Cafe, Manila Philippines  
 1994 Women in Art, Casa Victoria Gallery JC, New Jersey  
 1995 Two-Man Exhibit, East Meets West Gallery New York City  
 1996 Streamline Heritage Gallery Manila, Philippines

#### Solo

1992 Long Island City Private Show, New York  
 1993 Images of a Woman's Passion, West Gallery Manila, Philippines  
 Echoes of Serendipity, Ayala Museum Manila, Philippines  
 1996 Vitaeary Characters, Condillon Bar & Grill SOHO, New York City  
 Reflections Emotion, Philippine Center Gallery Fifth Avenue, New York City  
 Blue Males, Inscribed Images, Lopez Museum Manila, Philippines  
 1997 Reflections of Emotion, La Galeria, Alliance Francaise Manila, Philippines  
 Windows of the Soul, United Nations, Secretariat Bldg., New York City  
 1998 Portrait of the Mind, a continuing series of Blue vision West, Gallery, Manila Philippines  
 1999 Living Ashes, Fleet Bank, Exchange Place JC, New Jersey

1999-2000 created series of pen & ink drawings, some graphic design

2001 Group Show, "Wala Mala", Condillon Soho, New York City

2001-present documenting & cataloging all artworks

Other various private collections in New York, New Jersey & in the Philippines

contact: [nanam01@aol.com](mailto:nanam01@aol.com)

- ❖ Education (Schooling)
- ❖ Awards and Honors (Year wise)
- ❖ Extracurricular Activities. (A Must)
- ❖ Community Work (A Must)
- ❖ Work Experience (If Any)

And Lastly, don't forget to remember the art of marketing your achievements in the best possible manner and your resume is one of the most important documents which allows you to do just the above!



## HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

The high school transcript is a must. An incomplete application is put aside till the time the original high school transcript has reached the university.

### WHAT IS THE TRANSCRIPT?

The transcript is nothing but a document, which displays the academic performance of a child over a couple of years along with their marks and grades in their particular subjects. Instead of sending your report card for each term over 3 years, it is simpler to put the best grades on one page making it easier for the examiner to view it.

The years to be included in a transcript are Class IX, Class X and Class XI. It must also include your GPA or position in class as the case maybe. Hence try to make sure most of your transcript is dominated by A's!

And most importantly the transcript must be signed by the highest authority of the school that is the principal. Once the document is signed it becomes official. It is recommended that the transcript is printed on a school letter head, just incase the university wishes to recheck the grades in your transcript from the school authorities.

### ABIGNO

Here, is an important piece of advice. Do not attempt to forge your grades. Even if you don't have the best grades, faking your scores and reports could backfire and turn into an expensive price to pay. Your application will definitely be disqualified and you may even be debarred of applying to that college ever again! So be honest in your application. That quality will surely take you a long way!

## FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

The financial documents serve as proof of the funds that your family/sponsor owns. It is necessary to show the worth of the assets that your sponsor has. The minimum amount to be shown in these documents is the usually the fee for the first two years of the undergraduate program at the university.

The bank or a financial institution will be required to confirm the availability of funds. Documents with their stamp will be required as proof. Sometimes it is necessary to furnish a duly notarized affidavit in support.

Here are the samples which you may like to use/ send to your bank in order to verify the proof of funds. Take a look.

### Bank Certificate on Bank Letter Head

This is to certify that Mr. /Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ R/o \_\_\_\_\_

has a savings A/c No. \_\_\_\_\_ with our Branch,

the balance of which is Rs. \_\_\_\_\_ equivalent to

(US\$ \_\_\_\_\_ @ 41 a dollar) as of today, \_\_\_\_\_.

Stamp and Signature  
Manager

## Affidavit on Rs.10/ Stamp Paper

I / We \_\_\_\_\_ S/o \_\_\_\_\_ resident(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ do here by solemnly affirm and declare as under:

That I/ we the above named deponent(s) do hereby declare to sponsor my/our son / daughter \_\_\_\_\_ for his/her \_\_\_\_\_ study in USA for the academic course of \_\_\_\_\_ starting from September 20\_\_ for a period of 2/4 years. I/we shall bear the entire financial expenses in USA for the required duration of the course.

I/we further declare that, I/ we have sufficient funds to financially sponsor him/ her for the requisite period.

Deponent(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Verification:

Verified at (name of city) on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ (month) 20\_\_\_\_ that the contents of the above affidavit are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief and that no material has been concealed there from.

Deponent(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_

## HOUSING

After you have been granted admission to the university of the many things that you need to decide, your housing is the most important factor. What is going to be your home for the next academic year and the years ahead is something that you need to think of now. Again, the housing of most universities is based on first cum first serve basis. The housing application must be filed in much in advance of its deadline.



Housing options vary from university to university. But what is common to all universities is a large pool of international applicants of which a large proportion is from India. There is a large number of universities which have a housing option known as the

International Residential College (IRC). This is an internationally themed dorm which hosts maximum international students in their freshman year.



Each dorm/housing option has a large number of cultural activities throughout the week and shows/performance on weekends. The biggest advantage that an IRC showcases is the level of international exposure. As mentioned before, the type of exposure one receives in the USA is unmatched by any other country.

Now, what I would recommend is that you should log on to your university's website and visit the housing page. That will provide you with most information that you are looking for. Some universities have very well equipped websites and offer

virtual tours of the dorms available. This is indeed extremely helpful for someone sitting so far away from the actual building. The virtual tour will showcase your room, the furniture provided and the space that you are allotted.

A lot of choices in the housing category would make your decision tougher; however you need to be clear of your requirements. But the choice is completely personal. It varies from person to person and in your case only you know what would suit your convenience the best!





However, there could be certain questions which you may need to answer in your mind, like should I go in for a dorm or apartment in the freshman year? Would you prefer a single or a double room? The proximity of your academic building should be another important factor while selecting your housing as you do not want to be late for class!

Another suggestion- Do read the housing instructions as listed by the university in their housing booklet. In some cases you may be required to write an essay regarding why you should be considered to be allotted a room in the dorm mentioned, wherein you will have to project yourself in such a manner so that the housing department thinks that you shall add to the luster of that particular housing building!

Living in a dorm is poles apart from the kind of lifestyle most of us are used to. Anything and everything from cleaning your own room to changing bed sheets, doing laundry and folding your clothes and washing your glasses and plates after eating, are things that you will have to do yourself as there is no domestic help available in dorms! Get ready to finally learn the household chores that you have always avoided!

Living in a dorm as a freshman can be one of the most fun experiences as it allows you to meet so many new neighbors and friends. Its generally a good idea to move into an apartment on or off campus in the second year onwards. The apartment not only gives you larger room, but also provides you with the option to cook. A standard apartment includes a bedroom (shared/single), a kitchen, a bathroom and a small living room.

Further, on your arrival, you will be required to do up your room with your own assets. But this list of things will be recommended by your university. The basic shopping should be done from the city of the university as carrying items like bed covers, bed sheets, pillows, lamps, storage boxes would consume unnecessary space of your baggage.



## THE VISA PROCESS

Once all the formalities are complete, comes the role of the Visa Application which in itself is a long procedure. There is list of documents that are required for acquiring the US Visa.



Here is a check list.

1. Valid Passport
2. Visa Fee receipt issued by HDFC bank
3. Interview Appointment Letter
4. Original signed visa application forms DS 156, DS 157 and DS 158
5. Photograph must be as per specification i.e. 50cms by 50cms.
6. SEVIS generated Form I-20 in original approved and signed by the University authority.
7. Proof of SEVIS fee receipt I-901. This too takes a \$100. Carry a print out if electronically paid as original receipt takes time to get from the US.
8. Evidence of financial resources: proof of liquid assets sufficient to pay for the entire first year of education and living expenses as well as proof of readily available funds to cover the remaining years of studies.
9. Original degree certificates and mark sheets i.e. Class X and XII
10. Original high school transcript with mark sheets from previous institutions attended.
11. Relevant test scores- SAT, TOEFL or IELTS.

Remember that when appearing for the interview for Visa, your documents and what you say tally! Do not give any false statements. Normally, the Embassy needs to be satisfied that you are a bona fide student and that your purpose of going to the USA is to study not immigrate. Given the current security situation, the Embassy has very strict regulations to satisfy itself that you will not in any way cause harm in the USA. Students are normally granted an F1 visa provided all the requirements are in order.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA

Having read the above check list, one must start gathering the documents needed as they take time to collect. A good time to take a date for a visa would be somewhere in the month of May, as dates are easily available due to low rush. However a date in June or even July is normal but the availability of dates decreases immensely. Come to think of it, it's not just you who needs the US visa! There are other undergraduate students going to different universities, students going to the US for their post graduation, doctorates or even PHD'S. The other sector that we tend to neglect is the summer break of schools in India. Most schools are given off in the months of May and June and for those families which have chosen USA as their vacation spot also need a Visa appointment!

So therefore, earlier you apply, less the worries!

Before you can start filling the required forms online, you need to pay a nominal fee at the HDFC Bank near you. The fee varies though the standard fee is \$100 along with Rs 322 as tax. The officer at the HDFC counter will give you two HDFC receipts. (One will be in pink and the other in yellow.) You will notice that there will be a 10 digit serial number that will be pasted on your receipt. This is your bar code number. You will need this while creating your online application. After two business days of getting the HDFC receipt you can begin your online application.

The visa forms can be most conveniently filled online. The DS 156, DS 157 and DS 158 forms are available online and can be filled in as per instructions. Once you have completed these forms take a print out as instructed. Further, fill up the SEVIS fee which requires 100\$ to be paid by credit card. This can be done online as well, by visiting [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). Take a print out of the SEVIS receipt. The original receipt may take longer to come by post.

Now choose a date which is most convenient to you. Remember leave enough time for yourself to gather all the necessary documents as you do not want to reach the interview with an incomplete application!

Once the date has been selected, you will automatically be offered a time slot for that day depending on the availability of time. Don't forget to take a print out of your appointment letter. This letter needs to be shown before entering the line for the visa on the day of the interview.

After collecting all the original documents, make a copy of the same for your own reference. Before putting all the original documents in a file, cross check with the check list given before.

Now be confident about what to say in your interview. Do not make a statement which will make the person taking your interview raise his eyebrow. Be clear and give precise answers to the question he puts forward to you. In most cases the kind of questions asked are as to who will be funding your education? How long do you intend to stay there? Who will you stay with? Do you plan to take up a job in the United States to which the answer must be said No as that will give the interviewee a feeling that you wish to settle down in US. When you go in for your interview you will be asked to give your finger prints. Do as the interviewee asks you to do.

Make sure that the interviewee is convinced that your soul motive of going to the United States is for the purpose of pursuing under graduate education and NOT migration!

So good luck with your visa interview! Once your interview is done, you can find out about your passport and application details by logging onto [www.vfs-usa.co.in](http://www.vfs-usa.co.in). This site enables you to track your passport, verify your application status etc. If the visa has been given, generally, the passport is given in two to three business days. You can collect it from the vfs office or wait for it to get delivered on the address that you provide them with.

If the visa is denied to you, which happens in a rare case, then kindly, contact the US Embassy or the vfs office in your city.

After the visa is done I can only wish you a Happy Journey! But wait, have you bought your tickets yet? ... I don't think so...

**UNITED**  
BRITISH AIRWAYS



**FLYING HIGH...**



Well just when you think that all the formalities are done comes in the role of the tickets on the airline you wish to fly. Most universities begin somewhere in the mid to end August. In my view it is recommended to reach at least 2 days in advance of the orientation for the international students, in order to get used to the place which will be your home for the next couple of years.

Like in the case of the visa date, similarly booking your ticket in the months of June or July will be a good idea. Due to the rush, you may not get the desired airline or for that matter the route which you intend to take. You could take help from a travel agent, who will be able to assist you getting the flight of your preference along with sharing details on the amount of luggage etc.

From personal experience, I tried for tickets on an airline in the month of June that too 10 days prior to the day of my orientation and I found the airline absolutely booked. So as bizarre as it may sound book your tickets as soon as you get your visa!

**THERE,  
NOT  
QUITE...**



Now that all the work seems to be done- got the visa in hand, booked tickets on the convenient airline and bags packed... Umm...Not quite. Now that's what we need to get to now, getting the bags packed!

Since you are traveling with a student visa in hand, there are various concessions that you shall receive. You are permitted to carry two large check in baggage weighing maximum 30 kilograms each. As per the tourist visa you are allowed only one check in bag that too 25kgs as the outer weight.

Now how you fill up these 30 kilograms each is what you have to decide but here comes another piece of advice. First chalk out the list of things you need to carry with you. Firstly, pen down the essentials and then the secondary items. By doing this, you will realize that its high time you went shopping as there may be a couple of things which you need to carry with you which you don't have!

Here is a list that may help you! Carry with you only the necessary items as you shouldn't overload yourself with the items which can be bought from the university or its city itself!

- ❖ Winter Clothes- if you are going for the fall session and depending on the weather.
- ❖ Summer Clothes- if you are not coming back in the Christmas break!
- ❖ Laptop- a must, as all your assignments will be done on it.
- ❖ iPod- if you like music
- ❖ Camera- for sending pictures home!
- ❖ Mobile Phone- a necessity which can be fulfilled there too. In order to have a phone number in the USA, one needs to be a part of a phone plan, which is offered by phone companies such as AT&T, Verizon, Sprint etc.
- ❖ Food: Maggi is one of the most popular food items, which can be found in every Indian's room! Along with that, you can carry namkeens, and packeted food of your choice.

Most items such as bed sheets, pillows etc should be bought from the university town itself. And once again, the things you wish to carry are also entirely personal!

Each university gives out a list of things that one must carry with him to the university. So get ready for some college shopping!

## “I WISH YOU ENOUGH”

So before you finish reading the book, I have something to share with you.

When you leave home, at a tender age of 17 or 18 in most cases, you think you are ready to take on the world. Even if you are not, never let go of your self-belief. Have utmost confidence to take on the world by storm. It is very important for you to know exactly what you are in for before you take this huge step of leaving your country for a few years. Stick to what you believe in. If your mind tells you that you wish to migrate to the United States, then go with that mindset, however on the other hand if you plan on returning to your country after completing your education, then respect that decision of yours and relish the best of both worlds.

Everyone talks about adjustment problems. If you ask me, it is only as difficult or easy as you want it to be. Agreed, culturally USA and India are very different but you need to do a little preparation. Not to suggest that you forget your own culture, but go with an open mind to adopt, assimilate and imbibe whatever you like. People differ in personalities but my humble request to you all would be to go prepared to adopt change. If you are an introvert by nature then college could be an experience, which could change this trait of yours. Don't be shy and isolate yourself because you surely don't want to be lonely. Keep your focus intact, but rediscover yourself by keeping yourself involved with whatever interests you. Make the most of all the opportunities the university has to offer. Soon you will find, that you are meeting people from all over the world, some of whom you may fall in love with, some of whom you become friends forever with and some of whom you dislike, but they don't deserve a mention!

Remember, each day is a sacrifice of not seeing your parents and being away from your loved ones. So at the end of each day, look back and ask yourself whether you have made it worthwhile and if not, then don't be depressed because each day has something new to offer and as the new morning comes, make your stay worthwhile.

My teacher once narrated a story where a father was saying his final goodbye to his daughter and along with that he says “I wish you enough”. When asked by a lady as to what he meant, he replied saying that he wanted her to have a life filled with enough good things to sustain them. He shared:

*“ I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright. I wish you enough rain to make you appreciate the sun. I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive. I wish you enough love so you know just how special you are. I wish you enough pain in that love to make your memories even sweeter. I wish you enough dreams to cause your imagination to soar. I wish you enough failure to keep you humble. I wish you enough dependence on god to keep those goals going in the right direction. I wish you enough 'Hello's' to get you through the final goodbye.”*

This may not be our final goodbye, but I wish you enough!