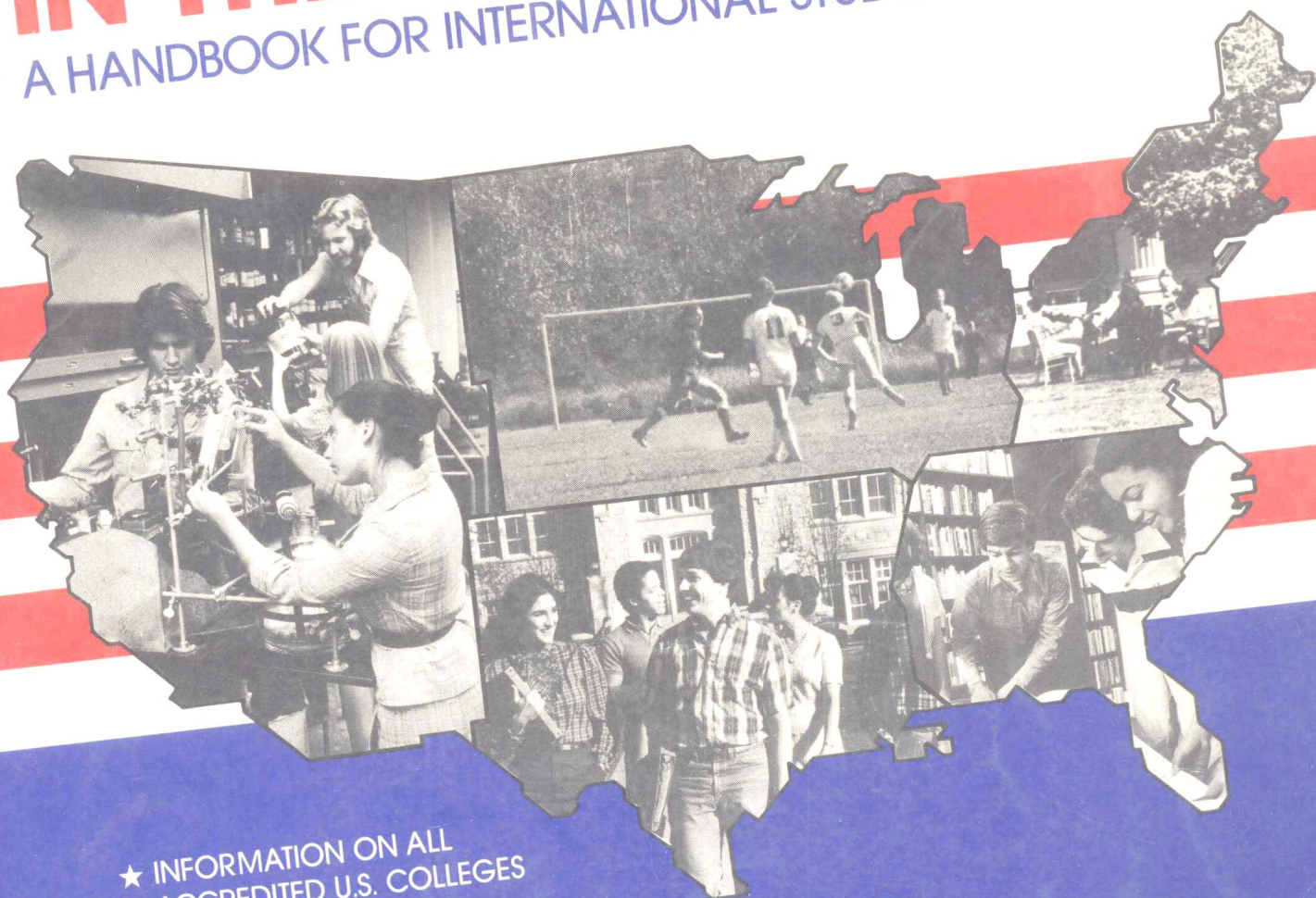


Peterson's

APPLYING TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

A HANDBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



- ★ INFORMATION ON ALL ACCREDITED U.S. COLLEGES
- ★ DIRECTORY OF MAJORS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- ★ DIRECTORY OF COLLEGE PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- ★ ADVICE ON CHOOSING A COLLEGE
- ★ HOW TO APPLY
- ★ HOW TO HANDLE FINANCIAL MATTERS

Introduction by DANIEL M. LUNDQUIST,
Associate Dean of Admissions and International
Admissions Specialist, University of Pennsylvania,
and JOHN F. REICHARD,
Executive Vice President,
National Association for Foreign Student Affairs

A large, stylized outline map of the United States serves as a background for the title. The map is white with black outlines for the states and the coastline. The title text is centered within the map's outline.

APPLYING TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

**A HANDBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS**

Amy J. Goldstein
Editor

Andrew T. Rowan
Data Editor

With an introductory section by
Daniel M. Lundquist
Associate Dean of Admissions and International Admissions Specialist
University of Pennsylvania
and
John F. Reichard
Executive Vice President, National Association
for Foreign Student Affairs

Peterson's Guides
Princeton, New Jersey

Copyright © 1985 by Peterson's Guides, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—except for citations of data for scholarly or reference purposes with full acknowledgment of title, edition, and publisher and written notification to Peterson's Guides prior to such use.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Applying to colleges and universities in the United States: a handbook for international students.

Includes index.

1. Universities and colleges—United States—Directories. 2. Universities and colleges—United States—Curricula—Directories. 3. Students, Foreign—United States. I. Goldstein, Amy J. II. Rowan, Andrew T., 1962– III. Peterson's Guides, inc.
L901.A63 1985 378.73 85-3496
ISBN 0-87866-273-1

Composition and design by Peterson's Guides

Cover photographs (clockwise from left) courtesy of Loyola University, New Orleans; Dominican College of Blauvelt; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Pomona College; and Central Missouri State University

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For information about other Peterson's publications, please see the listing at the back of this volume.

Contents

Applying to Colleges and Universities in the United States: An Introduction	<i>1</i>
Map of the United States	<i>24</i>
Profiles of Four-Year Colleges	<i>27</i>
Directory of Colleges with ESL Programs	<i>224</i>
Majors Directory	<i>227</i>
Table of Information on Two-Year Colleges	<i>272</i>
Index to Colleges	<i>294</i>

Applying to Colleges and Universities in the United States: An Introduction

by Daniel M. Lundquist, Associate Dean of Admissions and
International Admissions Specialist, University of Pennsylvania,
and John F. Reichard, Executive Vice President,
National Association for Foreign Student Affairs

If you are reading this book, you are probably a student from outside the United States who is considering coming to America for undergraduate college or university studies. The main part of this guide provides you with specific facts and figures about the 3,300 colleges and universities in the United States. This introductory section gives you a broad idea of what higher education is like in America and takes you through the various steps of the application process. The glossary at the end of the section defines terms that you are likely to find both in this book and in the U.S. educational system in general.

The annual census of international students in the United States is entitled *Open Doors (Report on International Educational Exchange, Institute of International Education, New York)*, which suggests that U.S. higher education is very accessible to students from other countries. Indeed, one third of the million students who study in other countries each year (about 340,000 people) now study in the United States. This substantial and growing number represents not quite 3 percent of the U.S. student population. The most chosen fields of study are engineering (23 percent), business management (19 percent), and mathematics and computer programming (9 percent), but international students in the United States pursue degrees in almost every academic discipline. Nearly 60 percent of these students are undergraduates; 30 percent are women. The majority of international students in the United States are supported by their personal resources or their government. Various U.S. government programs provide primary financial support to fewer than 4 percent.

The United States welcomes international students for many reasons. They enrich American campuses and communities and help internationalize academic curricula, they are prospective leaders in the economic development of many countries, and they are colleagues with whom Americans can work jointly in addressing issues of world hunger, health, the environment, and even war and peace. The spirit of "open doors," however, does not mean that students wishing to study in the United States need not fulfill certain academic, financial, and legal requirements. *Applying to*

Colleges and Universities in the United States seeks to help potential applicants understand the nature and procedures for meeting these requirements.

International students now study productively in more than 2,000 American colleges and universities. The overwhelming majority of these institutions of higher education are highly responsible about their role as educators of students from other countries. There are many "right" schools for every international student. However, as in all human activity, especially one as diversified and decentralized as U.S. higher education, a small number of colleges and universities do not act responsibly. They may employ representatives abroad who promise prospective students academic programs they cannot furnish. These institutions may fail to observe appropriate procedures in evaluating applicants' educational credentials, in meeting their responsibilities with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or in providing professional counseling for their international students. With accurate information, you will not make the mistake of applying to one of these institutions.

This publication suggests many resources that can provide information on U.S. higher education: U.S. government representatives serving in missions in your country, alumni of colleges who are nationals of or are living in your country, various higher education organizations that are active in international student affairs, and especially teachers and administrators in your own school who may have knowledge of the United States. It is important for you, in contemplating study in the United States, to read this guide carefully and to investigate every source of information available to you about specific colleges and universities. Beware of literature or individuals who try to apply pressure on you to make a quick decision or who promise what seems to you unrealistic support. Two good sources besides this book are the *Guide to the Foreign Student Information Clearinghouse: A Service for Students from Overseas Who Plan to Study in the United States* (National Liaison Committee for Foreign Student Admissions, College Board, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036) and the *Directory of*

Overseas Educational Advising Centers (College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, New York 10101). The directory is a comprehensive listing of American embassies, United States Information Service missions, binational commissions, American centers abroad, and counseling centers of the Institute of International Education and AMIDEAST, all of which form an extensive overseas counseling network.

Higher Education in the United States

Types of Schools

The United States is a country of vast educational opportunities. One of the greatest advantages of American higher education is the extremely broad range of options from which students may select. With about 3,300 colleges and universities to choose from, one can well imagine that there is a school for everyone in the pluralistic American system. In fact, there are often many that will comfortably meet the academic and social expectations of each student. Schools in the United States range from large research institutions with 20,000 or more students to small colleges of fewer than 1,000 students; from universities with graduate studies in medicine, law, architecture, and government to schools offering only the four-year bachelor's degree; from urban schools in America's largest cities to rural institutions located in the countryside far from metropolitan areas.

American colleges and universities can be divided into several large, general categories. At the undergraduate level, two-year colleges grant the associate degree as their highest undergraduate degree, while four-year colleges award the bachelor's degree. Graduate degrees, which require further study, may also be available at the school you eventually choose. The American system can also be broken down into publicly supported, private, religiously affiliated, and proprietary institutions. The curricula of all of these institutions vary widely, and courses are available in technical areas, such as computer programming; in professional areas, such as business and engineering; and in liberal arts and sciences areas, such as history and biology. It is important to note that often there is no clear distinction between these areas, and many students' studies cross these somewhat fuzzy boundaries. Many students take some courses in areas completely unrelated to their major. In addition, interdisciplinary courses and programs are becoming increasingly popular and relevant in U.S. higher education.

Two-year colleges are also known as junior and community colleges. They typically award the Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree following two years of study.

Four-year colleges award bachelor's degrees, usually a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.), at the completion of, typically, four years of study. Bachelor's degrees are also available from upper-level, or senior, colleges, which are two-year institutions that cover the second half of undergraduate studies. After completing the first two years elsewhere, students can transfer to these colleges or to regular four-year institutions.

Universities are usually large institutions that award both undergraduate and graduate degrees. However, the words "college" and "university" in the name of a school do not always indicate which degrees are offered. "College" is the word generally used in the United States to mean undergraduate studies or places where one can receive an undergraduate degree. In this book, the word "college" usually covers all undergraduate education available in the country, at both colleges and universities.

Publicly supported schools are generally state schools or two-year community colleges. These institutions receive the majority of their funding from the states in which they are located. In acknowledgment of this financial support, students who are residents of the sponsoring states often may enter these schools at lesser costs than those for students coming from other states or from outside the United States.

A number of private schools are viewed as some of the most prestigious institutions in America. This perception varies from school to school and state to state, since the quality of both public and private schools themselves varies. Private schools, because they do not receive the same primary financial subsidies from state and federal governments, have higher costs. They do not have a differentiated fee schedule; all students pay the same amount regardless of their place of residence, although some academic programs (generally at the graduate level) have higher fees than others at the same institution. Private colleges and universities have often been viewed as providing some of the most desirable academic and social opportunities for students, although that perception has been changing recently, particularly as costs at these institutions have been escalating.

The religiously affiliated colleges and universities, which are all private but which may receive state support for some programs, vary a great deal amongst themselves. They are predominantly Christian (Roman Catholic and Protestant), although there are a small number of

Jewish institutions. Many colleges have very active ties with their sponsoring church, and at these schools religious life is a hallmark of the campus. Others might have a much looser affiliation that might best be described as a historical, rather than active, relation with a specific church. One need not be a member of a particular church or religious group to attend a religiously affiliated college in the United States. Enrollment in such an institution will not interfere with one's own religious views. There are, however, a few exceptions. Some colleges that emphasize in their literature that they are Christian are often organized according to fundamentalist principles. Students from a fundamentalist background will be very comfortable on a campus where Bible study may be required and students' social life is strictly regulated. Read the literature of such colleges very carefully. They may offer the setting you seek, but then again, they may not.

Proprietary institutions differ from the other types of schools only in that they are privately owned and run for a profit. They are "educational businesses" providing services and courses similar to other institutions. Proprietary schools are almost always two-year colleges, offering the associate degree, and their curricula tend toward, but are not limited to, technical and preprofessional courses of study.

Almost all colleges in the United States are now coeducational, meaning that both men and women attend. There are also single-sex schools, some for men and some for women. Faculty, administration, and staff members are likely to be of both sexes at any college.

The U.S. educational system is a flexible one in many respects. It is generally assumed that American undergraduates should have one or two years of general education beyond secondary school to expose them to the principal academic disciplines and to show them the interrelationships between various fields of knowledge. Students entering the U.S. system from educational systems in other countries, however, often believe that they have completed the necessary general education at home, and, indeed, some are given credit for their preuniversity study. However, the following example demonstrates the American rationale for general education requirements and will help you to understand the U.S. system.

Let us take the case of a student who is prepared to enter a university but is not yet—at the age of 17 or 18, when students typically begin their university-level studies—certain of what he or she would like to specialize in. The American educational system is well suited to this lack of specific direction, since the typical U.S. college or

university allows and even *encourages* students to spend the first two years of a four-year undergraduate curriculum in general studies. Under this option a student may elect courses in a wide variety of subjects to acquire a broad-based foundation for the specific concentration that will follow. At the same time, this exploration allows the student to discover which field will eventually be his or her major focus.

Perhaps our undecided student will enter a university with a broad base of academic preparation and continue to sample, during the first year or two, courses in languages, natural sciences, business, and engineering. Proceeding through the general curriculum in this manner and assisted by the advice of a faculty adviser, the student will realize, through the experience of successes and failures and discovery of new interests, that there is a specific direction that best suits his or her individual talents and goals. At this stage our student is ready to move away from general studies, committing himself or herself to concentrated studies in business administration, for example, which would culminate in a bachelor's degree in that subject at the end of the fourth year. Other students may discover interests in and commit themselves to study of psychology, mechanical engineering, art history, computer science, or any one of the literally hundreds of specializations available in American colleges and universities. One's development, the evolution from uncertainty toward specific commitment, is supported well by the flexibility of the U.S. system.

To many students from other countries, this general education approach is thought to be an unnecessary duplication and a waste of valuable time. Often the student from abroad knows exactly what his or her specific academic goal is and wishes to get on with it. In the view of many counselors of international students, he or she is to some extent correct and to some extent incorrect. Many college administrators will attempt, because U.S. undergraduate education is flexible, to make some concessions to students who believe that they are ahead of their American counterparts. On the other hand, general studies at the undergraduate level contribute much to an American education. Such studies can give international students a useful knowledge of the bases and values of American society, knowledge that may be missing in similar subject matter pursued in another culture. International students' advisers can be very helpful in making these important academic decisions.

Some American students do know *exactly* what they wish to study, what degree they want to earn. The same college or university system that offers a period of general studies is generally equally ready

to engage specifically directed students from the first day of their university career, although there is often a requirement that a student who seeks a degree in finance, chemical engineering, or anthropology, for example, must defer the most intensive courses in these fields until the later years of his or her university studies. So while the American system allows a student to "shop" through the curriculum for a year or two, it also offers an immediate opportunity for immersion in a specific area. The choice of a course of studies, as well as the option of what degree of flexibility to exercise, is generally left to the student. The common factor in the American system is the general accommodation to the student's individual talents and ambitions. However, there is some movement in American colleges to return to a set core of courses, producing a curriculum that does not permit students to sample quite as freely as in the recent past. Also, in the past several years, the numbers of both American and international students applying to colleges to pursue work in engineering, computer science, and business administration have become so great that some public institutions have begun to limit severely international student enrollments in these fields. A few major state universities have temporarily decided not to accept any new international student applications.

The Academic Calendar

The American school year has three main types of calendars that divide the year into terms: the semester, trimester, and quarter systems. The main academic year, regardless of how it is divided, is approximately nine months long. The semester system cuts that nine months in half, producing the fall and spring semesters. Schools that use the trimester and quarter systems divide those same nine months into three 3-month-long terms. (The summer term is the fourth quarter in the quarter system.) Most institutions' academic year runs from September to May, although some schools operate all year long, and students may remain over the summer term if they wish. Most U.S. students attend only three terms in the quarter system, but attending the year round is an option for the international student in a hurry to complete a degree. There is an additional cost, approximately one third of the annual tuition cost, if a student desires to take courses through four quarters. Examination periods are usually in the middle of each term and then again at the end. Holiday schedules vary with each school, but there are usually a number of short holidays in each term, a longer break in December and January, and a weeklong vacation period in early spring. International students wishing to live on campus

during holiday periods should inquire of college officials as to whether dormitory space is available during holidays and if there is any additional charge for remaining on campus during holiday periods.

Faculty Members and Methods of Instruction

Perhaps the aspect of the academic side of American education that is the most unexpected by international students is the method of instruction and the relationship between students and teachers. In general, students and faculty members interact much less formally than they do elsewhere in the world, often developing a close partnership or collegiality. Naturally, the tone of such a relationship will be largely determined by the individuals as they are brought together in seminars, lectures, and laboratories. It may even become a social one. Professors might invite students to their homes, join them for lunch, and participate with them in community activities. Of course each individual professor has his or her own style, but in general faculty members are more accessible, in terms of both their attitude and their availability, than many of their international counterparts.

The classroom experience is generally characterized by a discussion between the professor and the students; it is usually an active, rather than passive, approach. Some teachers will even have a portion of the grade be dependent upon the quality of participation in class discussions, and it is unusual in the American system to find a course in which the entire grade rests upon a single year-end examination. All students must be prepared to participate in discussions. Classmates and professors alike will expect this, and you should not feel intimidated. It generally does not take long to adjust to this method of instruction and interaction, and most faculty members on American campuses are sensitive to the fact that cultural and linguistic factors can slow an international student's adjustment to this distinctive educational style. However, in the end students most often find it stimulating and enjoyable.

Basically, three formats are used for instruction, depending upon the size of the group of students and the nature of the material to be covered. Very large introductory-level courses tend to be taught in lectures, in which several hundred students gather to hear a professor speak. One of the class sessions in each week is often devoted to a seminar, recitation, or tutorial, where students break up into smaller groups and discuss the material in a more personal and participatory way. The small class or seminar is one of the most popular methods of instruction, used when there is a smaller group of about 5 to 30 students.

Discussion—with general participation—is the hallmark of seminars. Laboratory sections are similar to seminars and are often used to complement lectures in the natural sciences. Here again, a relatively small group of students gets a more direct exposure to and involvement with the subject matter, in this case actually working with chemicals, computers, or whatever is appropriate to the subject matter. Students may sometimes audit a course, in which case they attend classes and lectures for their own benefit but do not receive a grade or any credit for the course.

Almost all colleges offer an opportunity to work one-on-one with professors. Tutorials or independent study courses, as they are known, are usually reserved for senior students with well-defined academic plans. This close student-teacher working relationship is probably the best example of the opportunity for individual attention in the American system.

Academic Support Systems

The accommodation to students discussed above is not meant to suggest that students in the United States are on their own. An attractive feature of American higher education is the support and counsel that students receive.

Faculty members often serve in the role of mentor or adviser, in addition to fulfilling their teaching duties. All students have a faculty adviser. Most colleges and universities also have international (or foreign) student advisers, generally professional staff members who are there specifically for international students. These advisers will be able to counsel and advise you about financial matters, immigration and visa problems, academic concerns, and personal issues, such as adjustment to American society and education. They often also conduct orientation programs for new international students, help students and scholars find opportunities to learn more about American culture outside the classroom, and serve as a representative and spokesperson for international students in dealing with U.S. and foreign governments and representatives of the community. Tutors are sometimes available to students who need extra help with their academic work.

Outside the Classroom

Any discussion of the American educational system would be much less than complete if it did not mention the emphasis that many colleges and universities place upon the nonacademic, social, “extracurricular” aspect of education. Perhaps a useful way of viewing the notion of academic and personal growth would be to picture the very large

and general term “education” as being all-embracing, including as subsets within it academic and nonacademic components.

This may be one of the most difficult concepts to convey to someone who is not intimately familiar with American higher education. Few other systems place the same emphasis on this blend of academic and personal education. It would be safe to say that the majority of colleges and universities in the United States make some attempt to integrate personal and intellectual growth in the undergraduate years. If the ultimate goal of undergraduate education in America were simply to convey a set body of knowledge, the term of studies could undoubtedly be reduced from the typical four years. Yet the term of studies extends over that period in order to give students a chance to grow and develop in other ways.

There are numerous opportunities made available to students to become involved in sports, student government, musical and dramatic organizations, and countless other organized and individual activities designed to enhance one’s personal growth and provide some satisfaction and enjoyment outside of the classroom. Nowhere is this integration more total or more obvious than at the residential college or university, where students live on campus. At times, this experience could be called a 24-hour-a-day education. Students can be said to have an educational impact on each other in the classroom, in the laboratory, on the playing fields, and in the residence hall. A broad range of students is typical on American campuses. At a large university, there are likely to be undergraduate students from all 50 of the United States and as many as 100 other countries. The nature of the impact that this group of students has on each other is not predictable, but it is never left to chance by admissions officers. This, to a large extent, is what the American college and university admissions process is all about.

The typical American college’s support for extracurricular activity is perhaps unique in the world. This special educational dimension, beyond the classroom and laboratory experience, does not mean that extracurricular participation is required to gain an American degree. It remains an entirely optional activity, but it is noted here because Americans have traditionally viewed success in one’s work and in one’s role as a citizen as closely linked to a “well-rounded” life that incorporates a variety of social, athletic, and cultural activities into a person’s experience.

A great many American campuses and communities have organized special extracurricular activities for students from other countries. On most campuses, one can find an international club, which

includes Americans, where students can get to know and learn socially from students from other countries, as well as Americans. International students are almost always invited, through organized hospitality activities, into the homes of Americans living in or outside the academic community. They may even be offered the opportunity to have a regular host family with whom they may have a continuing relationship. They may have opportunities to take trips to other parts of the state or region in which they are studying or to have tours of industry or cultural attractions. They may be asked to speak on their country in elementary or high school classes or to local clubs. They may also be interviewed by local newspapers on their country or culture or be asked about world issues that have currently placed their country in the news.

How to Determine Which Colleges Are Best for You

All students—U.S. citizens and noncitizens alike—have a basic dilemma in choosing which colleges and universities to apply to: where and how to start looking. The decision to come to the United States is a necessary point of departure, but, as can be easily imagined with about 3,300 prospective institutions to choose from, some selective criteria must be developed to help guide you through your search for the ideal one.

Listing Criteria

The most sensible and manageable way to proceed is to move from the general to the specific, describing to yourself the qualities that your ideal college will have and then matching specific institutions with your requirements. As you search for an appropriate environment to live and work in for several years, all of these factors and more will be important: academic programs offered, size, location and climate, reputation or prestige, level of academic quality or competitiveness, composition of the student body, day-to-day life on campus, graduation requirements, housing options, cost, and availability of certain nonacademic activities, such as sports, music, debate, and community services for international students.

Your immediate goal is to find colleges that meet the criteria that you decide are most important to you. Begin by actually making a list of characteristics that you feel are important—both tangible ones, such as academic program, location, and costs, and intangible ones, such as reputation and life-style concerns. As you proceed through this

exercise, the individual qualities should begin to form an identifiable whole. As an example, let us say that you are looking for an institution with these characteristics:

- engineering studies
- a very competitive program academically
- a city location
- a large international student population
- medium size
- a soccer program
- institutional fees within your budget

This list would narrow down the choice of possible colleges considerably. A list of only three or four characteristics would probably need to be further refined. It is customary for American students to apply to several schools, so keep in mind that if your requirements are quite specific, you might be limiting yourself unnecessarily. You should not be looking for a “perfect” school but rather for a number of schools that have most of the characteristics you desire.

An approach that can help you focus more clearly on what you are looking for is to make a list of characteristics that describe *yourself*. Do you think you would like to be in business, education, or a technical field as a career? Are you an excellent student or more average in your academic abilities? What financial resources are available for your studies in America? Questions such as these will help you understand your needs and capabilities. Begin to think of yourself in a new environment and try to anticipate your needs, your English language competence, and the social context in which you are most comfortable. It is appropriate and very helpful to ask family members, teachers, and friends—people who know you well and especially those who may have lived in the United States—for *their* opinions of you. You know yourself better than anyone else, but do add the perspectives of those whose opinions you respect to the profile you create that describes *you*. You might come up with a list of characteristics like these:

- I am gregarious and outgoing.
- I am academically strong.
- I am a student leader.
- I enjoy sciences.
- I want to be an engineer.
- I love sports in general and soccer in particular.
- I must be where I can regularly attend to religious observances.

Such a list can be much longer, but this one could describe someone well.

The next step—after you have created the two profiles of yourself and your ideal school—is to begin investigations that will lead to the “match” between you and a certain college or set of colleges.

Sources of Information

In addition to reading this book, there are many ways to get information about American colleges and universities. One of the best is to write—as early as possible—to individual schools in which you have an interest. They will provide you with information on academic programs, campus life, environment, application procedures, and financial assistance policies. Another approach is to visit local U.S. embassies, consulates, or education exchange commissions (groups that promote study abroad). These offices can provide good introductory information from catalogs, bulletins, and other reference sources and can also offer counseling. You may wish to buy reference books for your own use, or you can check to see if your secondary school's university counselor has copies.

Your aim, in all of this research, is to begin to compile a list of colleges that meet the criteria you have selected for your ideal one. With the appropriate materials, some good guidance, and your lists, you should find the process of searching for a college in the United States pleasant and stimulating, if perhaps at times overwhelming because of the many schools from which to choose.

While you may discover many colleges that seem to possess the qualities you are seeking—that seem to match your interests and requirements—be prepared to cut your initial list down to a manageable size of about ten institutions for which you will really want to do in-depth investigations. This process of narrowing down your list may have to be somewhat arbitrary, but it is important to limit your search for practical purposes. Once again, your educational goals and personal preferences should guide your final selections, assisted by the good counsel of your family and school officials.

Narrowing the List Further

Once you have arrived at a “short list” of about ten colleges, it becomes essential to study each school's information with the goal of determining what differentiates one from another. You have already identified the qualities they all have in common that are desirable to you, and now you want to find which stand out from the group as being most desirable or distinctive.

At this stage, the most detailed investigation possible should begin. You should contact all the schools on your list and request application materials, general descriptive information, and a course catalog. You may have to pay for a catalog. Check with your secondary school counselor to determine whether an admissions representative from any of these colleges will be visiting your school or attending an informational program (excellent evening programs exist in London and Paris, for example, and increasingly in cities in the

Middle and Far East). Perhaps a college has a graduate living in your area. If so, contact this individual to arrange for an informal meeting to discuss your questions about the college and present your qualifications for admission. Such alumni also often conduct more formal interviews, later in the process, with students who apply, and they send reports to the college's admissions committee to aid in the evaluation of each student's candidacy.

If you are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to travel to the United States, be certain to include visits to any colleges in which you are interested on your itinerary. Set up the visit well in advance to ensure that you can take a tour of the campus and its facilities, stay overnight in a student residence, get a feel for the environment, and perhaps meet with an admissions officer to discuss your candidacy. Such a visit, if feasible, will add immeasurably to your sense of the “match” between you and that college. As you look around the campus, chat with an alumnus in your home country, or read descriptive literature, your attention should always be focused on the question, “Does this seem like a place that I would enjoy living and working in for several years?” If the answer is still “yes,” then your search so far has been successful.

Since many colleges in the United States have more qualified candidates applying for admission than they have space for, it is wise to include a range of schools in your final list. You may wish to apply to one or two institutions with the highest degree of difficulty for entry (called “competitiveness”), which have 4, 5, or sometimes even 10 applicants for each student space available; three or four schools whose competitiveness is compatible with your qualifications and for which you feel reasonably comfortable with your chances of being offered a place; and one or two schools that seem like “sure bets,” where you feel you are virtually assured of admission. This scheme offers a system by which you will still be able to realize your goal of attending an American college or university even if you are not offered a place at one of your top-choice schools. You may be able to obtain an estimate of your chances of admission at a given college by reading admissions data provided by that school, by actually writing and asking for a preliminary evaluation, by discussing your choices with an educational counselor, or by referring to the information about that college in the later sections of this book.

Having identified a possibly shorter list of most appealing institutions and having acquired their admissions information and application materials, you are now ready to begin the actual process of presenting yourself as a candidate for admission.

Applying

There are certain factors you control, beyond selecting which colleges to apply to, that can enhance your chances of being offered admission to one of your first-choice schools. How you present your candidacy can be one of the most influential factors in determining the outcome of your efforts to gain admission. Understanding the admissions process at the outset will enable you to select more carefully the colleges to which you want to apply and to do a better job of presenting your candidacy. Ultimately, this will enhance your chances of being offered admission at the college or university of your choice and having a happy and rewarding undergraduate experience.

One of the best guides through the process of presenting yourself as a candidate for admission is to keep in mind the college's goals. Careful reading of the school's literature will give you a good sense of its self-perception, mission, philosophy, and educational goals. If you think you know what a particular college values and emphasizes, this will give you some clues about what aspects of your goals, background, and ambitions to emphasize as you present yourself. Admissions officers will be doing exactly what you did to prepare for application: attempting to assess the "match" between your candidacy and the academic and social opportunities of their college. Clearly, you can assist them in recognizing the match between you and their school. The better your understanding of that college's self-image, philosophy, mission, and policies, the more successful you will be in presenting yourself. However, while you may handle the way you present yourself to your best advantage, do not attempt to fabricate information about your achievements, interests, and goals. Admissions officers can usually tell when something has been made up, so present yourself honestly. In addition, because the legal implications of giving incorrect information to U.S. government officials can be very serious, and could ultimately lead to your deportation from the United States, it is very important that you not give false information to either immigration or university officers.

One final suggestion in presenting yourself to an American college: Most seek a diversified student population, one that comes from many backgrounds and represents many different academic interests and personal qualities. You will have some advantage, therefore, if you apply to an institution in the United States that does not enroll great numbers of students from your country. Your application to a college will be more attractive if you would be adding to the mix of the student body,

rather than contributing to an overconcentration of students from one country or in one field.

Preliminary Applications

Many colleges require that international candidates file a preliminary application. When you request admission information from each school, you will learn whether or not it utilizes this screening device. A benefit of the preliminary application is that it will allow admissions officers to gauge whether or not you will be a realistic candidate before you go through the sometimes lengthy process of completing the entire final application forms. A drawback is that—considering delays often experienced in the international mail—this extra step can add a few weeks to the admissions process. So be sure to request application materials as early as possible, perhaps sixteen months prior to the term you intend to enter college.

The preliminary application will request the most basic information about you: name, address, citizenship, academic record, and standardized test scores, if available at the time (see the later sections English Proficiency and Standardized Tests for more on this subject), and it may request a very brief statement of goals. With the exception of a personal statement, this information is very straightforward and factual. Be prepared to present it accurately. More room for personal expression or creativity—and an opportunity to make a real impression—exists in the narrative section, where you discuss your goals and background. This is a superb opportunity to make a personal impression on the reader—be sure to make the most of it. Many institutions have a stated international educational mission. They are interested in assisting with development in other countries and constantly searching for individuals who might be future leaders in their country. They are interested to know if international students are interested in the United States in a broad sense, rather than in a specific academic program only. Do not hesitate to suggest that you wish to contribute, to the extent that you are able, to the college's fulfillment of its international mission. Be genuine, forthright, and succinct, and return the preliminary application as early as possible.

If the admissions officer finds that your goals, abilities, and general background are in line with what that particular college seeks, then you will be sent the final application to complete. If, on the other hand, it is determined that you are not a competitive candidate, you will be notified of this decision right away, and you will be able to focus your attention and energies on the other schools you have selected. The institution may be mistaken

about your competitiveness. While it may be difficult, try not to take a negative decision on your application personally.

Early Application Plans

Many institutions offer early decision or early action plans. Early decision applicants generally apply in November or December and learn of the admission decision in December or January (depending on the mail). There are three possible outcomes to an early decision application: you may be (1) admitted right away, (2) deferred for consideration in the regular decision pool, or (3) denied admission. If admitted, you will be required to withdraw applications that you have pending at any other colleges and declare your commitment to attend that school. If your clearly first-choice college has an early decision plan and your and others' assessment of your competitiveness is good, you should probably apply under the plan. You would then receive a decision sooner than the "regular" applicants as well as be given a slight advantage in the admissions process. All colleges would like to enroll students who would rather be there than anywhere else, and they thus give an "edge," or advantage, to those students who declare their first preference by submitting an early decision application.

Early action plans allow students to learn of the decision on their application before the standard April notification date. Unlike early decision plans, applicants are not required to accept an offer of admission or withdraw applications from other colleges. The advantage of early action is simply, as was true of the preliminary application, that you can discover early what your chances are of being admitted.

Some colleges accept applications under a rolling admissions plan, which means that applications are processed as soon as they are received, and candidates are notified of the decision as soon as the process is complete. Unlike early decision and early action plans, there is generally no "regular" plan at the same college—all applications are dealt with in the same way.

Final Applications

Whether you begin with a final application form—in the case of colleges that do not require a preliminary application—or if you have been successful at the preliminary stage and been sent the final, formal application, it is crucial that you move as carefully and rapidly as possible toward supplying all the information that each college has requested. The sooner an application becomes complete (all the required information has been received), the sooner it will be read and evaluated. While this may vary

from school to school, an application submitted early can only serve to enhance a candidate's chance of being offered admission. At the very least, applying early gives you more time to supply additional information, should it be requested.

The Personal Application Form. The Personal Application Form is the main part of an application. While application formats vary widely, all ask questions about your personal background. These queries range from the factual—name, address, family background, citizenship, etc.—to the more interesting and personalized—what your goals are, what special talents you have, why you wish to attend that particular college, and so on. Do not hesitate to suggest that your internationality or foreignness can be a resource to the institution you want to attend.

Perhaps the best guide to keep in mind as you fill out the forms is the purpose of these questions—what admissions officers want: to get to know you, as well as possible, as an individual with distinctive strengths, interests, and goals. Applications are *not* psychological obstacle courses designed to trick or confuse you, but rather they are your forum for presenting yourself as well as possible. Approach the application as if it were written only for you, that the questions asked—about honors, awards, work, travel, hobbies, and so on—are there to help you provide the type of information an admissions officer would like to have. If any particular portion of the application is not relevant or applicable to your situation, note that on the form, along with some explanation. For example, many international schools have fewer school-sponsored activities available than do their American counterparts. Some schools do not present academic honors. These situations should be explained. Bear in mind that admissions officers want to know what you excel at, what you are interested in, what types of activities occupy your time outside of school. Overall, they want to know what you are like and how you are different from other applicants.

Many students tend to be too modest when asked to present their interests and accomplishments. Most candidates, in completing the application, will be describing themselves for the first time in their lives. All applicants should realize that their ability to present articulately and persuasively their background, their present goals and interests, and the fact that a future connection between them and that particular institution might be mutually beneficial will have a significant bearing on their success as candidates for admission. Of course this situation will vary from one college to the next, but imagine the position of an admissions committee that has to select, for

example, a class of 2,000 from an applicant pool of almost 12,000. Against such odds, it is important that applicants strive to differentiate themselves from the competition. There is no dispute on the question that each candidate is unique. What *is* an issue is that most successful candidates tend to be the ones who do the best job of presenting their backgrounds, their goals, and their sense of the match between themselves and the academic and social offerings of a given college.

Admissions officers look for quality of involvement *and* quality of presentation. Many international applicants have wonderfully rich backgrounds and experiences they can discuss. Unfortunately, some students do a poor job of describing their accomplishments, values, and goals, thus making an otherwise sparkling candidacy seem dull. Share your enthusiasm as articulately, thoroughly, and reflectively as you can. Admissions officers are likely to be more impressed with a well-presented essay on a candidate's job as a waiter than a lackluster description of an internship with the head of a large corporation.

You should be sure to avoid any confusions or ambiguities that might be created by cultural and language differences. While admissions officers are generally very sympathetic to students who come from different cultural backgrounds, it will often be assumed that the candidate can master relatively simple cultural and language nuances. An otherwise strong application can be weakened if a student does not do so. You should also be sure that your application is legible and easy to read.

Such supplementary materials as additional essays, tapes of musical performances, or samples of artwork may be included if you wish. When deciding what to say in or include with your Personal Application Form, keep the goal of admissions officers in mind, to get to know you as well as possible, and use a style with which you feel most comfortable. The best personal application is one that, when you read it over before mailing it in, sounds like it describes *you*. If you think that it does, then there is an excellent chance that admissions officers will feel that they know you when they have finished reading your folder.

In sum, you should now understand that academic performance and test scores generally count less in admission to American colleges than they do in many countries. This does not mean that your academic achievements and potential are unimportant or even less important. It does mean that the college is also looking for the person behind the academic record. As a student from another country, you automatically have some advantage. Make the most of it.

Completing your application in this manner is an important matter and should not be taken

lightly. This does *not* mean, however, that you must be deadly serious in your style or approach. Be yourself and enjoy the application process—and send your material in as early as possible.

Teacher Recommendations. Teacher recommendations are a vital component of a complete application. The commentary of someone who knows you well and who can describe your strengths and weaknesses in a balanced, fair manner helps round out the profile of what type of person you are, both in and out of the classroom setting. The candid observations of such a recommender will go a long way to corroborate some of the information you yourself supplied in the Personal Application Form. Teacher recommendations lend balance and credibility to your candidacy.

Policies regarding such recommendations vary from college to college, but you should be prepared to have at least one teacher provide a reference for you. Select someone you know well who has taught you in a subject that is related to the course of study you are thinking of following at college. Those who intend to pursue engineering would do well to approach a math or science teacher, for example, while a student interested in literature would be well advised to enlist the support of an arts or humanities instructor. If you are undecided about a specific academic area, as are many candidates, then it is wise to simply select a teacher who knows you well, has a high regard for your potential, and can persuasively present your background and capabilities.

As is true with all letters of reference, you have the option of making these evaluations confidential between the letter writer and the college. Many teachers, headmasters, principals, and tutors feel freer to write a more candid—and therefore more useful—letter if you assure them of this confidentiality. All applicants should address the matter when they obtain the aid of someone who will write an evaluation letter.

Letters of reference are most valuable when they are complete and balanced and contain evidence to support the descriptive phrases. Clearly, a letter that says a student is a leader, a top scholar, or a fine athlete becomes much more credible when *examples* concerning those accomplishments are included. "Best ever" or "excellent prospects for success" are really insufficient descriptions. You should feel free to explain this to anyone who has agreed to write such a letter.

Secondary School Reports and Transcripts. The school report and the transcript of your academic records are essential to the evaluation of your academic capabilities. The report form should be filled out by the official in your school who is responsible for college placement, usually a

counselor, principal, headmaster, or careers master. This form, while similar to the teacher recommendation, should serve to introduce your candidacy in a somewhat broader context: that of your whole school experience, relative to your peer group. Admissions committees will be interested primarily in learning how you have performed within the context of your own educational system. The school report should directly address your accomplishments in this manner and lead toward a prediction of your chances for success in university-level studies. In this way, your school can greatly assist the evaluation of the match between your background and the academic program to which you have applied. Official, certified copies of your actual academic records—your transcript—form the factual, nonsubjective core of your application.

Academic records vary quite a bit from one educational system to the next. The systems of evaluation or grading and the format used to present the material all differ. Be sure to ask your school to include a guide to the grading standards used in your system. For example, if your school grades on a 1–20 scale, have your headmaster indicate how difficult it is to earn the grade of, say, 18. If a ranking of students in your graduating class is available, have yours included. This will provide a very easily understood measure of how well you have done. If your school does not rank students, an estimate of your class standing—top 10 percent, middle third, etc.—is also quite helpful. Admissions officers will want to know how you have performed over time, so be sure to have records sent that describe your past three to four years. If a series of national examinations is the best indicator (British “A” levels, French baccalauréat, German Abitur, Greek Pan-Hellenic, etc.), have your results sent, including tutor comments and predictions of your performance on the final examinations, if your educational system requires such tests or offers a diploma or “leaving certificate.”

At all points where you have some control over what materials to send, it is always a good rule to provide as much descriptive information as possible. In this way, you have an opportunity to control the context in which your candidacy will be judged. Anticipate the questions and concerns of admissions officers and try to address them in advance. It is much better to include some extra background information early—whether it be on your personal background, interests, goals, or educational system—than to leave the selection committee guessing later on, often when it is too late to request the additional clarifying material.

If you study at a school in which English is not the language of instruction, be absolutely certain to have official translations of all documents sent along with the originals. While some international

admissions officers are multilingual, it would be a mistake to assume their proficiency in your language.

English Proficiency. A related matter is the question of the candidate's proficiency in English. To be considered for regular admission to most degree programs, a student's ability to speak, write, and understand spoken English is an absolute requirement. This can be demonstrated in several ways; the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the most widely accepted test of proficiency. If a language other than English is your native language but the bulk of your formal schooling has been in English-speaking schools, you may not be required to take an examination. This policy, as well as the level of proficiency required, varies from institution to institution, and you should be sure to investigate each college's policies. When in doubt, it is better to take an English proficiency test—following the general rule of providing the most information possible—than to assume your candidacy will stand on its own without one.

If you are afraid that your English ability is not up to acceptable standards, you may wish to consider intensive study of English in your country or in the United States. There are many English as a Second Language (ESL) programs available in the United States. Many of them are located on college campuses, although the students in the programs are not considered regular students at the host institution. Entrance requirements are minimal, since students are placed at the correct level of study through testing of their ability. These programs may last from five weeks to as long as a year. Sometimes a student is admitted to a college provisionally, pending study in an intensive English language program. Consult the Directory of Colleges with ESL Programs later in this volume for more information.

Standardized Tests. Some American colleges and universities require *all* applicants to take either the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and three subject-oriented Achievement Tests or the American College Testing Program's ACT Assessment (ACT). These examinations present something of a dilemma for international students because the context and format of the tests are often quite foreign to them, and sometimes it is even difficult to find an accessible location where one can take them. If information on where to take the required examinations is not available at your secondary school, it can be obtained by writing directly to the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey 08541 (SAT, Achievements, TOEFL), and the American College Testing Program, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, Iowa 52243.

Many education officials from many countries, as well as students themselves, express concern that these tests are not a valid measure of an international student's aptitude and accomplishment. Most admissions officers agree but still want to see how the candidate fares on these tests. Why are they required? Well, they *do* have some validity in helping to measure basic aptitude and subject-oriented skills. Beyond that, they can help in comparing the skills of students from all over the world in a way that comparing a French transcript with the records of a Brazilian student, for example, cannot. You should not allow these concerns to grow into any unwarranted anxiety over how well you will score; admissions officers do *not* expect international students to score as highly as their American counterparts. Also, American universities generally place greater weight on the quantitative (mathematics) sections of these tests, realizing that the verbal sections present greater difficulties for international students. The tests are only one facet of the academic evaluation, and selection committees will place the results of your examinations in the proper context, as *supplemental* information that is subordinate to your academic record.

If you are applying to a college that requires this standardized testing, you are well advised to request that school's requirements and expectations for level of performance, since they vary from one to another. Another important point is that candidates may take the tests several times. Often one's performance will improve as one becomes more familiar and more comfortable with these tests. Specific information on their availability and content can be obtained through the testing agencies, which are independent of the colleges, at the addresses given above. Do this investigation *early*, perhaps two years before you intend to enter an American college or university, since this is when most American students begin taking these tests.

The Financial Aid Application. You must submit a financial aid application if you intend to seek financial assistance for your undergraduate studies. Unfortunately, assistance for non-U.S. citizens is generally quite limited and often is awarded on the basis of a family's financial *need* rather than a particular applicant's scholarship achievement, or *merit*. As we have seen with so many admissions requirements, the policies regarding financial aid vary considerably; find out early what the policies are at the colleges that interest you. Several American states have begun to offer tuition waivers for enrollment in state institutions through which students from other countries make an educational

contribution to the citizens of that state. The state of Oregon has such a plan, whereby students receive a tuition waiver in exchange for service in schools and international organizations. You should also explore the possibilities for aid available through the government of your home country.

For colleges that *do* offer funding to international students, you will be required to submit documentation of your family's financial resources to help those institutions determine how much aid you will need if you are admitted. Typically, students will be asked to submit the Foreign Students' Financial Aid Form, which is provided by the college and administered by the College Board organization, as well as a specific institution's own financial aid form. Sometimes a bank statement will also be required. Again, prepare yourself to supply the information as early as possible—and in as complete a format as possible—to avoid disappointing delays later on.

Unless you are informed by the international student office or other campus official that you will be able to work part-time on campus during your initial year, you should not depend on income from that source. Generally, international students are permitted to work part-time on campus after an initial year. Permission to work off campus during the summer or other period must be approved both by your college international student office and by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Such approval is not automatic and depends on special need or a change in your financial position.

Practical training opportunities exist for F, J, and M nonimmigrant students, though under differing conditions. (See the Student Visas section further on for more information on types of visas.) F-1 nonimmigrant students may engage in practical training, when authorized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for up to twelve months. The training may occur during the academic program (when recommended by the international student adviser), during summer vacation periods, or after completion of course work for a degree. The training will only be authorized if it is related to the degree program and could not reasonably be done in the student's home country. J-1 nonimmigrants may pursue a wide variety of practical training opportunities for up to eighteen months, depending on the nature of studies they are pursuing and the program in which they are sponsored. It is best to check with the J sponsor for specific details. M-1 nonimmigrant students are limited to a total of six months of practical training, which may only be engaged in after the program of study is completed. The training must be approved by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, be related to the student's course of study, and not be available in the

student's home country. F-1 students may also be able to take part in cooperative education programs at certain American colleges without permission and with no time limit on months worked. You should consult with an institution's international student adviser for details.

The following publications may be helpful in your financial planning:

Financial Planning for Study in the United States: A Guide for Students from Other Countries. College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, New York 10101.

Foreign Student's Selected Guide to Financial Assistance for Study and Research in the United States, by Joe Lurie and Jonathan Miller. Adelphi University Press, Garden City, New York 11530.

Private Sector Funding to Foreign Scholars and Students in the United States. National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, 1860 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

The Institute of International Education (809 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017) also puts out a listing of institutions offering financial aid for study in the United States.

The Application Fee. An application fee, usually payable only in U.S. dollars, is required to cover the cost of processing your application. Fees vary from about \$15 to \$40, and some colleges will waive the fee for very needy students.

So a complete application—one that is ready to be evaluated and then ruled upon by the selection committee—contains the following:

- Personal Application Form
- Teacher evaluations
- Secondary school report
- Transcripts of academic records
- TOEFL or other English language proficiency test scores, as required
- Standardized test scores, as required (SAT and Achievements or ACT)
- Financial aid application, if relevant
- Application fee

Check each college's requirements for a complete application and do your best to comply with these requests as early as possible.

Timing

Perhaps one of the most common and vexing problems that international applicants face is timing. Once you have ascertained the deadlines for submission of all required materials—which, again, will vary—you must then grapple with the delays that often characterize international mail. It is a real pity when a candidate works so hard to have all required materials submitted on time only to have

his or her efforts undone by mail delays. You can minimize the chance that this disruption will affect your candidacy by sending all materials air mail and by mailing them early. While it is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that all materials are received by the college, most schools will send a card acknowledging receipt of your application.

If you live in a country where your address is written in an unusual form, enclose several mailing labels filled out with your address the first time you contact the college. The admissions office will greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Interviews

A final element of the application process is the interview with a college representative, whether it be an admissions officer or a graduate who is an admissions volunteer. More and more American colleges are sending representatives abroad to meet with students, and, at the same time, an increasing number of graduates are available to meet with prospective students in their home countries. Such meetings provide an excellent opportunity for the candidate to learn more about the institutions that interest them, as well as to give the interviewer a chance to get an impression of the match between that candidate and the college. Such sessions are generally rather informal and should be approached as an opportunity to exchange information. While a written summary of the meeting is quite often included in a candidate's final application, this information tends to be supplementary background material and not of primary importance in making the actual decision to admit or reject an applicant. Of course, the fact that a candidate has expressed a strong enough interest in a particular college to complete an interview is a positive factor. Likewise, an interview that goes well—where the candidate has come prepared to discuss his or her specific interest in that college and to outline his or her own background and accomplishments—can also be correctly viewed as an additional positive, but not decisive, factor.

As is true with all aspects of presenting your application, be sure to check with each institution to determine its policy regarding interviews and to ascertain the availability of an interviewer in your area.

Academic and Nonacademic Information

Students often wonder what the relative importance is of their academic record and their extracurricular pursuits in the evaluation process. Since a college education has such a significant academic aspect, it