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他们如何进入哈佛

HOW

THEY GOT INTO

HARVARD

50 SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS
SHARE **8** KEY STRATEGIES
FOR GETTING INTO THE
COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE
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the Staff of The Harvard Crimson □ 编著
张鑫 张颖颖 □ 译



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In addition, we wish to thank the fifty students who were willing to share their stories with us and the world in this book. We loved working with all of you and were truly inspired by each and every one of you.

We also want to extend our gratitude to all of the members of the *Crimson* staff, without whom this book would not have been possible. From interviewing to editing, we appreciate your hard work on this book despite still having to meet your daily deadlines. Keep the old sheet flying!

Finally, we wish to dedicate this book to all the *Crimson* editors who benefit from *The Harvard Crimson*'s financial aid program, now and in the future.

Best of luck in all you do,

Lauren A. E. Schuker ('06), President, *The Harvard Crimson*, 2005–2006
Erica K. Jalli ('05), President, *The Harvard Crimson*, 2004–2005

Introduction

The Harvard College class of 2009 saw a record 22,796 applicants this year, but only 2,074 acceptances were offered, for an admission rate of 9.1 percent. Fifty-six percent of the candidates scored a 1400 or higher on the SATs, while 3,200 were valedictorians of their high school classes. These ultra-talented and highly motivated applicants expressed a wide range of extracurricular interests as well. These days, the college admissions game is a very expensive, high-pressure process. More and more students are working with private SAT tutors and college admissions advisors in high school, and the process can start as early as parents competing to get their children admitted to the “right” preschools.

With such tough competition, we know how hard it is to stand out. We have been through the rigorous selection process ourselves, and have often wished that we knew then what we know now. While *The Harvard Crimson's* initial book, *50 Successful Harvard Application Essays*, was a successful guide on how to craft an interesting, articulate, and successful college essay, we wanted to take an even more comprehensive look at the application process. Thus, *How They Got into Harvard* was born. By examining the entire application process from start to finish, we wish to give college applicants an edge by distilling the most successful proven admissions tactics in the game. We hope to give students the self-presentation tools to achieve success not only in the admissions process, but throughout their college and post-college careers.

Our Mission

Each day, the editors of *The Harvard Crimson* have the privilege of meeting, interviewing, and working with talented, fascinating, and diverse students in the Harvard community. Through these daily interactions, we have witnessed how each Harvard undergraduate has a unique story behind his or her admission to the college.

How They Got into Harvard is a comprehensive look into the admissions process of an elite college. We have profiled fifty successful applicants who used one of eight key strategies that we have identified to help any student get into the college of his or her choice. In a day and age where it appears that there are standard formulas for admissions success, we aim to show students that applicants who tailored their applications, essays, and college careers to highlight their strengths performed best and turned out the happiest. Our goal is to show how students used tried and true strategies to get themselves noticed and show off their individual talents, thus getting that competitive edge in the application process.

How They Got into Harvard is not meant to serve as a template to be strictly followed, but rather as a resource to guide and inspire originality in your own application. One important thing to note is that the information for each student varies, as the students profiled in this book are from all over the world. For example, secondary school statistics and experiences will vary widely, though we have made our best attempt to standardize this information as much as possible. By reading through each of the different profiles, it becomes clear that while these applicants are all very different in their backgrounds and achievements, they share the fact that they are all aware of what their strengths are. They use this self-knowledge to their advantage not only in the admissions process, but well into their college careers and beyond.

These students packaged themselves in a variety of innovative ways, but they were not afraid to stand out or to simply be themselves. Whether they combined a love for film and field hockey to gain early

admission, or leveraged their experiences in the military to transfer into the college of their choice, they all share one thing: a passion that resonates in everything they do and the drive to make things happen. We hope that as you read, you are as inspired by these students as we were when we interviewed them.

How to Use This Book

We have distilled the secrets to gaining admission to elite colleges like Harvard into eight key strategies and provided in-depth profiles of students who used at least one these approaches to successfully gain admission. You can use one of these strategies, or even a few that suit you, depending on your background and circumstances. As you will see from the profiles, the students themselves often used a combination of tactics to achieve victory in the process.

FLAUNT YOUR TALENT AND GET RECRUITED

Are you a champion or protégé who is constantly in the headlines? Then be proud of your skills and display them prominently throughout the admissions process. Everyone you meet and everything you do during the process should emphasize your talent.

BE PASSIONATE

Passion pulls at the heartstrings of admissions officers, so flaunt it! Put your heart and soul into your application and show how your sincerity and passion resonate in everything you do and with everyone you meet!

FIND THE PERFECT BALANCE

These classic, well-rounded students did it all—and they did it well. You may have to wear many hats to pull this off, but it's no “hat trick” if you have what it takes!

LEAD THE PACK

Show the admissions office that you are a visionary, a motivator, a team player, and a trailblazer. Check out how these head honchos got everyone around them to sing their praises!

BEAT THE ODDS

Everyone's situation is different and it's impossible for admissions officers to know what you had to overcome or how hard you had to work to become the person you are unless you tell them! Show the admissions office how you went above and beyond what was asked or expected to thrive in a difficult environment.

WRITE THE STANDOUT ESSAY

If you can make words jump off the page, evoke tears or laughter, or think you are the next Shakespeare, use the essay to your advantage! This is your chance to be as expressive and original as possible—just check out the great examples we have here!

MAKE AND USE CONNECTIONS

Find *your* six degrees of separation. Tapping into the network is initially difficult, but if you keep your eyes and ears open at the start, once you get in you'll find an abundance of admissions resources at your fingertips!

MAKE YOURSELF HEARD AND CAMPAIGN TO WIN

The squeaky wheel gets the grease! It's true even in admissions. There are thousands of other kids applying—read all about how these applicants were rewarded for their persistence.

In order to produce this book, *The Harvard Crimson* editorial staff came together and brainstormed how to structure the information so as to best convey the application process. Once we settled on how we would present the information, we sought to interview the most interesting Harvard students with varied backgrounds, interests, and tal-

ents. Each student has a very different recollection of his or her application process, so the profiles vary a bit in voice and amount of information provided. Some students vividly recall desiring to attend Harvard since kindergarten, while others decided to apply completely on a whim. Some students remember exactly what they were thinking while they painstakingly crafted their application, while others were thrust into the process simply because Harvard accepts the common application. Regardless of how well these students remember certain parts of the process relative to others, they shared how they felt about the process overall and what steps they took to ensure their success. For some, the interview was their moment to shine, while others made their passion come through on paper. Each profile reflects an individual personality, voice, and experience, and while you may not be able to personally relate to all fifty featured students, we hope that you are able to find them motivational and helpful in your own college application process.

And good luck.

—*Lauren A. E. Schuker and Erica K. Jalli*

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Strategy 1: Flaunt Your Talent and Get Recruited

This chapter is all about playing to your strengths. From athletics to the arts, it is crucial that those who excel in one particular field show how that success has carried over to various other aspects of their lives. The key here is balance. In this chapter, we see students who have developed drive and discipline through their various activities and have channeled that energy from the field and the stage into the classroom as well as into the community. These students got Harvard's attention by making headlines and making solid connections with their future coaches and teammates.

There are various approaches for using your skill or athletic ability to your advantage. A lot of these students showed that they could balance various activities and excel at all of them. For instance, Mary Serdakowski and Gareth James Doran both discussed their abilities to balance sports and academics in their application, and how the discipline they developed through their sport transferred into everything else they did. Another strategy is to include supplementary materials in your application. For instance, Julia Scott Carey included recordings in her application, while Bong Ihn Koh attached a résumé that solely featured his musical achievements to his regular résumé and application. Finally, get recruited! Zak Farkes and Aliaa Remtilla got themselves on the Harvard coaches' radar screens early so that they could meet future teammates and prepare their applications appropriately.

This strategy is not for everyone. It is important that you have a realistic notion of how talented you are in a given field before you choose to make that the focus of your application process. As you'll see here,

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even national champions made sure they were well balanced in all areas. If you are a state or national champion in your chosen activity, you are a very good candidate for this strategy.

Make sure you speak to your college counselor and other mentors to get an accurate assessment, however, of how much you should focus on your talent. If you choose to pursue this route, you should do the following:

- Include supplementary materials (practice or performance videos, CDs, portfolios, newspaper clippings).
- Contact the coach/team/activity advisor early on and in person, if possible.
- Network with others in your field to get contacts at the college and elsewhere who can help you out.
- Find a mentor to help you through the application process.
- BALANCE! Choose one medium (essay, interview, etc.), to showcase another side of yourself.

Harvard loves students who are extremely talented and will achieve further greatness on campus, so flaunt your talent, but make sure that you show that you can contribute to the college in a variety of other ways as well.

Racquel Bracken

Hometown: Irving, TX (suburban)

High School: Private school, 100 students in graduating class

GPA: 3.8

SAT: 760 Math, 740 Verbal

Extracurriculars: Captain of the debate team, president of the National Honor Society, varsity swimming record holder, community service volunteer at a children's hospital, staff writer of student-run newspaper, volunteer Spanish-language translator.

Summer Activities: Three years of summer debate institute, including one year as Kentucky Fellow at the University of Kentucky debate tournament (taught a group of thirty high school students, participated in mock-debates for exhibition, taught and led research teams). Summer before freshman year, member of Dallas Mustangs national-level swim team. Volunteered at a children's hospital in the children's intensive care unit.

Awards: National Debate Champion and various speech awards (won the Glenbrooks National Tournament in 2000, won the Barkley Forum National Debate Tournament at Emory University in 2001, second at the NFL National Tournament in 2001). School swimming record holder in the 100 butterfly.

Family Background and Education: Her father graduated from the University of Oklahoma–Norman, and was a pilot, small-business owner, and farmer. Her mother graduated from Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea, where she received her M.D.

Nationality/Ethnicity: Asian-American

College Acceptances: Harvard (early admission)

College Rejections: None

When Racquel Bracken won her first national debate championship in 2000, she could not help but think that the title would be a nice addition to her college application. But the then-teenager from Irving, Texas, knew that getting into Harvard required more than fame. Recognizing that other prospective applicants would have distinguished themselves in a variety of pursuits, Racquel was worried that she had had to give up too much for debate. Her challenge, she thought, was to convince the admissions office that her excellence in debate, however limited, was evidence of her ability to commit wholeheartedly to a single pursuit.

High School

From first grade onward, Racquel attended the Greenhill School in Dallas, a private school with 105 students in the senior class. A serious scholar, Racquel finished high school fifth among her classmates with

a 3.8 grade-point average. The president of the National Honor Society, she was also a varsity swimmer and runner, and wrote for her school newspaper. These activities, however, were secondary to the one extracurricular that earned her headlines of her own: debate.

Racquel and her partner were two-time national champions in the cross-examination division. A four-year member of the team, Racquel also served as its captain. Among the topics she debated were U.S. foreign policy toward Russia, particularly the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the borders of non-NATO states. In her senior year, she argued in favor of ways to prevent identity theft on the Internet. A more than twenty-hour-a-week commitment, debate required Racquel to do extensive research on a variety of topics and to work closely with her partner to practice speedspeaking and argumentation skills. She says the experience of intense competition and the opportunity to travel widely were invaluable. "Within my main activity, debate," she recalls, "I learned about leadership, communication, and teamwork while having an amazing time."

The Application and Essay

While debate provided her with a wealth of experience to draw upon in writing her essay, Racquel also sought to convey to the admissions office her commitment to her family. She wrote her supplementary essay about the goals she had achieved through debate; however, she chose to write her primary essay about her father. She first wrote the piece in rhetoric class her senior year and edited it with the help of her English teacher and debate coach. In only a few pages, she described how, once embarrassed by her dad, she soon began to imitate and emulate him. A recurring theme throughout the essay was the silly jokes he told the employees of a local drive-through restaurant. "By the end of the piece," Racquel recalls, "I was the one sitting in the driver's seat imitating him."

Contacts and Connections

Racquel did not know any faculty or administrators when applying to Harvard, but she was placed on a debate watch list by a friend's father.