

搞定美国名牌大学系列丛书

# Fiske Guide to Getting into

## the Right College

### 费思克 美国大学入学指南 如何进入心仪的名校

爱德华·费思克  
布鲁斯·哈蒙德  
著  
诸芸

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注译

The #1  
College  
Admissions  
Guide

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**Part One**

**Finding the  
Right College**

**第一部分**

**选择合适的学校**



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# I. The Search Begins

## (or, What to Do When You Don't Have a Clue)

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### 1. 开始搜索

(或：当你毫无头绪时该做什么)

The college advising office in your high school can be a pretty intimidating place, especially on your first visit. An eerie silence pervades the room. As you cross the threshold and survey the scene, your eye catches the twelfth-grade boy who used to flick spitballs into your hair from the back of the bus when you were in middle school. He's still wearing the same flea-bitten Nirvana T-shirt, but now his nose is buried in a college guide as he scribbles feverishly in a spiral notebook. On the other side of the room, the girl from down the street with the doting mother and the 4.0 grade point average is staring purposefully into a computer screen, clacking the keyboard every few seconds as she calls up a new file. Suddenly, you get a sinking feeling that she and all the other kids in the room know exactly what they're doing. You're the only one who doesn't have a clue. Of course, you could always ask Mrs. Stonebreaker for help. That is, if you don't mind the familiar glasses-on-the-end-of-the-nose routine and the icy stare that says you've just asked the stupidest question of her thirty-four-year career. You want to beat a hasty retreat and come back later—much later.

It's no wonder that beginning college applicants often get the strong urge to run away and hide. Talk about an intimidating situation! Many students have barely gotten comfortable in high school before the college search looms ominously on the horizon. Rumblings about "selective colleges" and "the job market" begin to pop up in dinner conversations and on guidance office bulletin boards. Friends who used to be social butterflies suddenly begin to hit the books and talk about "getting the grades for college." Relatives you haven't seen in years marvel about how much you've grown—and then want to know all about your career plans.

As if those storm clouds weren't threatening enough, there is the little matter of finding one college out of about twenty-two hundred four-year schools in the nation. They come in more flavors than Baskin-Robbins or Ben & Jerry's ever dreamed of making—large, small, middle-sized, rural, urban, and a thousand permutations. If colleges were ice cream, a student could sample four or five flavors and make a choice. Unfortunately, college applicants must get it right the first time or go through the same agony again when they transfer. How can you figure out what sort of college is right for you?

One place you won't find the answer is your mailbox, which, if you have blackened a certain oval on your PSAT exam, has become a direct pipeline to the propaganda factories of colleges coast to coast. Though the deluge of college mail can be highly entertaining, every school from Harvard to Ho Hum U. advertises a similar bill of goods. If you were confused before, try figuring out the difference between two colleges by surfing their websites or reading the glossy brochures. The scenes portrayed there are always the same: eager hordes of racially diverse undergraduates thinking deep thoughts or frolicking in a perpetual spring against a backdrop of white columns and grassy lawns. Let's see now... College X offers "academic excellence" and "rich diversity." On the other hand, College Y offers "rich diversity" and "academic excellence." Still can't tell the difference?

Meanwhile, all the adults in your life (and a few you've never seen before) offer their two cents about where you should go to school. From your grandfather, you get the latest updates on colleges and the job market from the *Wall Street Journal*. Mom says that you can choose any school you want—as long as you stay within fifty miles of home. Even your great uncle Pete, whom you barely know, takes you under his wing and says he has the perfect college for you based on his wonderful experience in the early 1960s.

If you're confused by conflicting advice, if you're put off by college propaganda, if you're eager to get started but don't know where to begin, this book is your ticket to a successful college search. We'll take you on a guided tour of the entire process: how to find the right college for you, how to get in, and how to pay for it. Along the way, we'll help you focus your thoughts and figure out what you're really looking for. We'll tell you how to cut through the college search nonsense and then give you insider sketches of hundreds of colleges in dozens of categories. We'll reveal the secrets of the highly selective admissions game and how you can play it to win. And finally, we'll delve into the shadowy world of college financial aid—how to get your hands on it and how your need for it may affect your chances for admission.

Before we begin plotting strategy, let's step back for a minute and remind ourselves of what the college search is all about. Amid all the anxiety about getting in, it helps to keep the big picture in mind.

## **Why College?** .....

为什么要上大学

That may seem like a stupid question, but there is more to the answer than meets the eye. Practicality says that people go to college to get a good job after graduation, and there is plenty of research to show that college is a sound economic investment. On average, college graduates can expect to earn more than twice as much as those with a high school diploma over a working lifetime, and the gap is persisting.

There are two schools of thought about how to get the most out of your college experience. Many educators stress the value of exposure to a broad spectrum of human knowledge. The phrase "liberal arts education" connotes learning that "liberates" the mind to think new thoughts. A liberal arts education is an introduction to the great events and ideas of the past, as well as the most recent discoveries of today. It

can include history, art, astronomy, zoology, and everything in between. It doesn't prepare you for any particular job, but instead equips you with the basic skills—reading, writing, thinking—to meet any challenge that comes down the pike. In other words, it means “learning to learn.”

The alternative to a liberal arts education is to use college to prepare for a particular career. This approach places less emphasis on a well-rounded general education than the

acquisition of knowledge related to a particular job or subset of jobs. Some careers, such as engineering and architecture, require concentrated training

beginning in the freshman year that leaves little time for smelling the roses. Facing the uncertainties of the job market, nervous undergraduates often feel strong pressure to “major in something practical.”

Nearly as important as what you study in the classroom will be the things you do outside of class. In recent years, the possibilities have multiplied dramatically. Study abroad once meant a handful of students doing a semester in Europe. Today, opportunities are available to the distant corners of the globe, during the academic year and over vacation breaks. Internships, which will allow you to sample the world of work while in college, are also more plentiful than ever before. Traditional extracurriculars such as writing for the newspaper or participating in community service projects also provide outlets for hands-on learning.

In addition to the many opportunities it provides, college attendance also provides a high school graduate with the first public measure of his or her academic and personal success. Admission to a “name” college is like getting an A in growing up and comes with the presumption of future success to follow. The ego of anyone—especially an eighteen-year-old—is fragile. Who wouldn't want a stamp of approval from one of the world's most respected institutions?

**Nervous undergraduates often feel strong pressure to “major in something practical.”**

焦虑的在校大学生常常感受到“主修实用专业”的巨大压力。

With all the practical reasons to attend, let us not forget that college is also a once-in-a-lifetime experience. You can test your limits, try new things, and make some incredibly stupid mistakes—all without the responsibility of having to make a living. The friendships you form will last a lifetime and so, too, will the memories. Decades from now, when you're rocking away the retirement years on the front porch, college will probably rank high on the list of things that made life worth living.

### **Taking a Year Off**

More and more of today's brightest students are deciding that they want to go to college—but not right away. Distinguished higher-level education officials, including Harvard admission dean William R. Fitzsimmons, are advocates for taking a break from studies between high school and college. From hiking in the Alps to working at the local Apple store, gap year experiences give students a chance to see the world, make some money, and recharge their batteries before plunging ahead with four more years of school. The possibilities are endless; if you're contemplating a year off, we recommend that you go through the college admissions process as a high school senior and then ask to defer enrollment at the college of your choice. Most will be happy to oblige.

There is no perfect way to categorize everything a college experience can give you, but these are the basics: (1) a liberal arts education, (2) career training, (3) a prestigious affiliation, and (4) enduring friendships and a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Which of them seems most important to you? Are there other benefits that you think are just as crucial? Don't feel pressure to answer right away because your

### **休假一年**

如今越来越多天资聪颖的学生决定去读大学，但并不是在高中毕业后立即去读。包括哈佛大学的招生主任威廉·R·菲茨西蒙斯在内的知名高层教育官员都提倡学生在高中毕业后就读大学前休息一下。从徒步攀登阿尔卑斯山脉到在当地的苹果商店里工作，间休年的经历让学生有机会见见世面，赚点小钱，并在投身四年大学生活前养精蓄锐。间休年充满了无限可能。如果你正考虑休一年假，我们建议你先作为高三学生正常申请，然后请求最后要去的心仪学校推迟你的入学时间。大多学校都会乐意效劳。

choice will probably dictate the shape of your college search. Most applicants will be looking for a combination of some or all, but the process of examining priorities is still useful. If a liberal arts education ranks high, you'll definitely want to look at institutions where teaching is a priority. Those interested in career training should focus less on institution-wide characteristics than on the programs in their field of interest. Interest in a prestigious affiliation means playing the highly selective admissions game. If friendships and experiences are a high priority, you may be the kind of person who marches to his or her own drummer or at least the type who is less interested in high-powered academics than a healthy balance between work and play.

Only you can decide what is important in a college, but we would like to help you avoid two major pitfalls.

First, many applicants mistakenly think that prestige automatically equals academic quality. Call it the brand-name syndrome: the idea that if you haven't heard of a college, it can't be any good. Many big-name schools do deliver educational excellence, but others are overcrowded, overrated, and coasting on reputation. There are scores of comparatively little-known colleges, most of them small, that offer an education every bit as good.

But you're probably thinking, Don't all the best jobs go to Ivy League graduates? Not by a long shot. They get their share, but so do graduates of countless other schools that aren't household names. In a landmark study of colleges with the highest percentage of graduates earning a PhD degree, the top finisher wasn't Harvard, but Harvey Mudd College. Harvard placed thirty-seventh, behind liberal arts colleges such as Eckerd, Wabash, and Kalamazoo, which continue to produce excellent graduates with much less fanfare.

## Famous Liberal Arts Graduates

毕业自人文科学专业的名人

Mitch Albom 米奇·阿尔博姆

Katie Couric 凯蒂·柯丽克

Hillary Clinton 希拉里·克林顿

Carly Fiorina 卡莉·菲奥莉娜

Matt Groening 马特·格罗宁

Carl Icahn 卡尔·伊坎

Barack Obama 巴拉克·奥巴马

Conan O'Brien 柯南·奥布莱恩

George Soros 乔治·索罗斯

Jon Stewart 乔恩·斯图尔特

Clarence Thomas 克拉伦斯·托马斯

## Major

主修专业

Sociology 社会学

American Studies 美国研究

Political Science 政治学

Medieval History and

Philosophy 中世纪历史和哲学

Philosophy 哲学

Philosophy 哲学

Political Science 政治学

Literature and U.S.

History 文学和美国历史

Philosophy 哲学

Psychology 心理学

English 英语

米奇·阿尔博姆 (美国著名专栏作家、电台主持、电视评论员、慈善活动家)

凯蒂·柯丽克 (CBS著名主持人、全美娱乐产业基金结肠癌研究联盟的创建者之一)

希拉里·克林顿 (政治家、第67任美国国务卿)

卡莉·菲奥莉娜 (惠普公司首席执行官)

马特·格罗宁 (演员、编剧兼制作人,《辛普森一家》的主创)

卡尔·伊坎 (投资大亨、对冲基金巨头)

巴拉克·奥巴马 (美国前总统)

柯南·奥布莱恩 (TBS脱口秀“柯南秀”主持人、喜剧演员、作家、制作人)

乔治·索罗斯 (金融投资家、慈善家、社会活动家)

乔恩·斯图尔特 (新闻讽刺节目“囧司徒每日秀”主持人)

克拉伦斯·托马斯 (美国最高法院大法官)

### Getting a Clue about Your Major

For a sneak peek at the choices you'll face in college, browse the academic catalog of a college or university. Which departments offer the most courses that seem interesting?

### 了解你的专业

如想提前一窥你将在大学里遇到的可选专业,请浏览一所学院或大学的学术目录。哪个院系提供了最多看似有趣的课程?

Our second pitfall is also caused by career jitters. In the name of practicality, too many students get stampeded into career preparation and lose the once-in-a-lifetime chance to get an education. If you've wanted to be an accountant since age six, don't hesitate. But if you plan to major in accounting just because you think that's where the jobs are, think again. What's the point of using your college years to prepare for a career you might not enjoy? And how are you going to know unless you sample different things? In the working world, nothing is less practical than devoting fifty or sixty hours a week to a job you don't like. That is why so many high-priced lawyers and investment bankers are quitting their jobs today. They have a few extra dollars in their pockets, but they are also miserable.

College career preparation may help you land that first job, but it may also leave you stranded there when other people have moved on to bigger and better things. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says that current college graduates will go through half a dozen careers on average. Even for those who stay in the same industry, a liberal arts education offers the flexibility to make lateral moves on the way to the top. As any corporate president will tell you, the people who get to the executive suite are the ones who see the big picture and, more often than not, got a liberal arts education. You can always go back later for that business or law degree when the time is right.

Despite all we have said, anyone contemplating the liberal arts should keep at least one eye on the job market. Technology can create new opportunities almost overnight, as it did with the Internet in the 1990s. Entire industries are now thriving in cyberspace that were not even imagined twenty years ago. But in other sectors, corporate downsizing and mergers have taken a heavy toll on entry-level positions. The ups and downs of the national economy can drastically change the hiring picture from year to year and competition for the most desirable positions is always tough.

So what should you do? Grab your bean counter and head for an accounting class? We think not, unless accounting happens to be your passion. Our blanket recommendation is simple: follow your interests. And follow them. And follow them. The person who succeeds in tomorrow's job market isn't going to be the one who majors in something "practical"—or, for that matter, the one with the highest grade point average. Rather, it will be the person who pursues an interest—any interest—wherever it may lead.

When you find an academic subject that appeals to you, talk to the professor after class. Join an extracurricular group that may have related concerns or find out from the professor about private companies that might be doing related work.

Call those companies. Intern for those companies. Take summer jobs at those companies. The students who habitually take that kind of initiative, no matter what their major, are going to be the ones who get the jobs. As one high-ranking executive at B.F. Goodrich told us, "I run a three-hundred-million-dollar-a-year operation and, frankly, I don't care what they study. We hired someone recently because he had been head of Habitat for Humanity at the University of Florida. If a person can talk intelligently about experiences they've had, I listen."

Among other things, your college experience will give you four years to search out at least one thing that you love to do. Once you've found your passion, go after it with everything you've got. You may find that what is the most interesting is also the most practical.

In the final analysis, your college experience is about something even more important than your career: the kind of person you will one day become. In one of his final reports as president of Yale University, the late Kingman Brewster Jr. described the value of a liberal arts education, and we can think of no better way to make the case than to remember his words:

The most fundamental value of a liberal education is that it makes life more interesting. This is true whether you are fetched up on a desert island or adrift in the impersonal loneliness of the urban hurly-burly. It allows you to see things which the undereducated do not see. It allows you to understand things that the untutored find incomprehensible. It allows you to think things which do not occur to the less learned. In short, it makes it less likely that you will be bored with life. It also makes it less likely that you will be a crashing bore to those whose company you keep.

