




# HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IMPERIAL





 **Raising Body-Confident Kids in a World of Filters & Facades**


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# HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON?

## 7 Lesser Known Facts about Imperial

By  
Samreen Khan  
Senior Student Recruitment Manager (India)  
Imperial College London



**Samreen Khan**

Imperial College London is the UK's only university focused solely on science, technology, engineering, medicine and business. It's world-leading – ranked second in the world by QS World University Rankings 2025 – and based in the world's best student city (QS Best Student Cities 2025).

Imperial is famous for its research, its impact and its people. Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin while he was working at Imperial's St Mary's Hospital Medical School in 1928. Nobel Laureates like Professor Abdus Salam and Sir Andrew Fielding Huxley worked here. And rock legends Queen had their first gig at Imperial's students' union.

But what about the parts of Imperial life that are less well known? Here are seven facts about Imperial you probably didn't know.

### **1. Imperial is the University Challenge Champion of Champions**

Imperial has won the long-running BBC quiz show five times – more than any other university in the programme's 60-year history. The Imperial team's most recent win came in 2024 against UCL, with a top score of 285 points.

### **2. Imperial's Mascots Usually Need Their Own Parking Space**

When Imperial was formed in 1907, it brought together a number of existing scientific and engineering institutions. Today, these institutions form Imperial's five constituent students' unions and are integral parts of the university's students' union, Imperial College Union.

Although long a part of Imperial, the constituent unions' history and traditions live on through a wide and unusual collection of mascots, including some very old vehicles. There's Bo, an early motor car built in 1902 owned by the Royal College of Science; Clementine, the 1926 truck looked after by the Royal School of Mines; and City and Guild's Jezebel, a former London fire engine built in 1916. Students from the unions maintain and run the vehicles, often taking them for a spin around the university's South Kensington Campus.

### **3. Imperial Students Can Practise Lab Skills in the Kitchen**

The Chemical Kitchen is a pioneering project started by Imperial's Department of Chemistry to help new undergraduate students learn useful lab skills in a familiar environment. To create culinary masterpieces like deep-fried egg yolks, tea spheres and faux caviar, students not only get the chance to plan and execute a complex recipe where measurement, temperature and timings are key, but also try out lab

apparatus, like rotary evaporators and centrifuges. Since its launch in 2019, the Chemical Kitchen has expanded to help medical students in clinical training learn culinary knife skills and is supporting bioengineering students to work in a sterile way and handle delicate materials.

#### **4. Imperial Researchers Study Biodiversity and Ecology in its Outdoor Laboratory**

Imperial's Silwood Park Campus is a world-leading centre for research into ecology, evolution and conservation based just 25 miles from central London in the beautiful Berkshire countryside. With 77 hectares of green space, Silwood Park has been used for nearly a century to study the natural world. Today, the campus is home to researchers and postgraduate students studying all aspects of life on Earth, from soil microbes and tropical forest trees to freshwater ponds and coral reefs.

#### **5. Imperial Students Can Graduate at One of the World's Most Famous Venues**

For more than 70 years, Imperial's graduation ceremonies have taken place at the Royal Albert Hall. The Hall, which has hosted a whole galaxy of stars – from Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones to Frank Sinatra, Coldplay and Ed Sheeran – is just across the road from the university's South Kensington Campus.

#### **6. Imperial Students Can Make Their Ideas a Reality at the Advanced Hackspace**

The Advanced Hackspace is Imperial's prototyping hub. Based at Imperial's White City Campus, it's where students can learn cutting-edge design and making skills, and use its electronic and digital manufacturing facilities, wood and metal workshops and bio lab. The Hackspace's annual innovation programme, Hackstarter, also gives students the chance to develop their prototypes and get specialist support from expert makers.

#### **7. Imperial Has its Very Own London Landmark**

At the centre of Imperial's South Kensington Campus is the Queen's Tower. It's the last remaining part of the Imperial Institute, built to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. In 1953, plans to demolish the Institute buildings were announced, but the Queen's Tower was saved thanks to a campaign by the then Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman. At the top of the Tower are ten bells – each named after a member of Queen Victoria's family – that are normally rung to mark royal anniversaries. Today, restoration work is ongoing at the Tower to repair its stonework and copper roof and is expected to be complete in 2026.

# Neeraj Mandhana's **OFF THE GRID** ESSAY WRITING CAMP 2025



Every summer, rising seniors and NM Squad descend upon a luxurious holiday destination for two weeks. We go Off The Grid (OTG). There, we meditate, make new friends, sing songs, battle each other in push-up challenges, research colleges, and write essays. It's the perfect amalgamation of work and play aimed at college admissions. OTG is a safe space to go within, express your story, and put your best foot forward in the application process. Students return back home empowered, not only to take on their college applications, but also the final year of high school. Camp Motto: Work hard, Play harder. We have a strong culture of traditions - one of them is that you'll get thrown into the pool at the least expected of times - beware!

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**Limited Seating**



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# RAISING BODY-CONFIDENT KIDS IN A WORLD OF FILTERS & FACADES

## The Silent Damage of Casual Body Criticism

By  
Soumya Ramaswamy  
Founder & Parenting and Teen Coach  
Shaping Futures



**Soumya  
Ramaswamy**

In today's digital world, children and teenagers are constantly bombarded with curated images of perfection—flawless bodies, sculpted features, and unrealistic beauty standards. Social media, influencers, and even Bollywood celebrities set expectations that are often unattainable without digital filters or surgical enhancements. This culture of comparison leads to anxiety, low self-esteem, and, in extreme cases, life-threatening eating disorders.

A heart-breaking example is the recent incident in Kerala, where an 18-year-old girl lost her life to complications from anorexia nervosa. She had been following an extreme "water fasting" routine, influenced by online weight loss advice, which caused severe malnutrition. This tragedy highlights the urgent need to address body image issues and the dangers of unchecked digital influence.

### Understanding the Psychological Toll of Body Shaming

Body shaming isn't just about hurtful words; it's about the subtle messages children absorb daily—from advertisements, social media posts, and even casual remarks at home from parents not only for the children being self-critical about their bodies and looks. The impact can be devastating, leading to:

- **Low self-worth** and a distorted body image
- **Anxiety, depression, and eating disorders**
- **Social withdrawal** and fear of judgment
- **A dangerous cycle of comparison and self-criticism**
- Constant feelings of **unhappiness and Imposter Syndrome**

### The Role of Bollywood & Social Media

Bollywood and influencer culture often glamorize unattainable beauty ideals. Many young actors undergo cosmetic procedures, but without transparency, it creates an illusion of effortless perfection. When teenagers see their favourite celebrities drastically changing their looks, it reinforces the belief that natural beauty isn't enough.

Social media algorithms further push extreme dieting, fitness challenges, and beauty trends under the guise of "wellness." The result? Young minds, already vulnerable, feel pressured to conform at the cost of their mental and physical health.

### How Parents Can Support Their Children

#### 1. Build Trust & Open Communication

- Avoid dismissing their concerns with "You're fine the way you are." Instead, listen and validate their feelings.
- Ask, "What makes you feel this way?" to understand their insecurities and fears.

## **2. Teach Media Literacy**

- Help children recognize filters, photo editing, and unrealistic portrayals.
- Discuss how influencers often showcase only their best angles, hiding imperfections.

## **3. Shift Focus from Appearance to Strengths**

- Praise children for their kindness, intelligence, and talents rather than looks.
- Encourage activities that build confidence beyond aesthetics, like sports, music, or volunteering.

## **4. Promote Healthy Habits Without Diet Culture**

- Focus on nourishment, movement, and well-being instead of weight loss.
- Avoid commenting on weight—whether gaining or losing.

## **5. Be Mindful of Your Own Self-Talk**

- Children pick up on how parents talk about their bodies. Avoid self-deprecating remarks about weight or looks.

## **How Educators & Schools Can Create a Safe Space**

### **1. Normalize Body Diversity**

- Include stories, discussions, and role models that promote self-acceptance.
- Reinforce that beauty and worth are not tied to size, skin colour, or weight.

### **2. Address Body Shaming & Bullying**

- Establish strict policies against appearance-based teasing.
- Educate students on the harmful effects of body shaming.

### **3. Encourage Critical Thinking About Beauty Standards**

- Discuss how societal beauty norms change over time.
- Highlight athletes, artists, and leaders who prioritize health over aesthetics.

### **4. Collaborate with Parents**

- Keep communication open so children receive a consistent message of self-worth.

**Encourage Family Discussions:** Schools can host workshops or discussion circles where parents and children can openly talk about body image, self-esteem, and the influence of social media. This helps children feel supported in both their school and home environments.

**Provide Resources & Guidance:** Schools can share educational materials, recommended books, and expert advice on promoting body positivity at home. A monthly newsletter or an online forum can help parents stay informed and engaged in their child's emotional well-being.

### **A Call for Self-Acceptance**

We can't shield children from every harmful message, but we can equip them with the tools to navigate this world with confidence. Instead of shutting down their concerns, let's adopt honest conversations. When children feel seen, heard, and valued for who they are—not just how they look—they develop the resilience to rise above societal pressures.

**Let's work together to create a world where self-worth is not measured by appearance but by character, kindness, and individuality.**



# Join the Aiiyo Essay Competition 2025

Aiiyo is launching its first-ever annual essay competition, inviting high school students to showcase their creativity, originality, and bold ideas. Whether you're an experienced writer or have a powerful vision to share, this is your moment to make an impact.

## Who Can Participate?

Open to high school students (Grades 9–12) across India.

## Competition Structure

- **Level 1:** Submit an original 650-word essay on a topic of your choice.
- **Level 2:** Selected participants will submit a 60-second video, verifying their identity and reading a paragraph from their essay.

## Prizes

- **Grand Award:** A fully funded 2-week summer program at Oxford University, UK (includes accommodation, meals, tuition, and flights).
- **Certificates & Resources:** Level 2 participants receive a Certificate of Participation with ranking and an e-book on college essay writing.

**This is your chance to stand out—register now!**

**Deadline:** April 30, 2025

**Results:** May 15, 2025



*Scan me!*



# 7 THINGS YOU WON'T KNOW ABOUT BABSON UNTIL YOU ATTEND

## Why Babson Is Not Your Average Business School

By

Jia Mody

Bachelor of Science – Business Analytics and Marketing Student  
Babson College



Jia Mody

Babson is unlike your standard business school. Whether you're competing in fierce bingo games, creating a firm from your dorm, or experimenting with an idea in the Weissman Foundry, this place is all about activity.

### 1. Roger Babson

Have you heard of anyone anticipating a stock market crash? Well, our founder, Roger Babson, did exactly that in 1929. While most people were enjoying the Roaring Twenties, he predicted the crash and warned everyone, giving him national fame when it occurred.

But he did not stop there. In 1940, he campaigned for President of the Prohibition Party, advocating for financial education and economic reform. Although he did not win, his legacy of economic literacy continues to impact Babson students today.

### 2. SPEAR

If you're interested in investment banking, Babson has a game changer: the SPEAR IB Program. This 13-week intensive course teaches students financial modeling, networking skills, and industry insights to help them get top internships. It's essentially a rigorous bootcamp that prepares ambitious youngsters for careers on Wall Street.

### 3. The Undergraduate Consulting Program

At Babson, learning is more than just reading textbooks; it's about addressing real-world business challenges. Students in the Undergraduate Consulting Program (UCP) gain experience working with real-world organizations in marketing, finance, operations, and strategy. It's an excellent opportunity to get experience, improve your resume, and develop connections that may lead to job offers. There is a similar programme for marketing called BEAM.

### 4. Babson Bingo

Bingo may appear to be a fun game, but at Babson, it is serious business. Babson Bingo is one of the most competitive and anticipated activities on campus. Picture a crowded room full of kids clutching their bingo cards, expecting to win big prizes like Apple devices, gaming consoles, airline tickets, and even cash. The excitement is palpable, and the competition is real.

### 5. The Weissman Foundry

If you enjoy making things, you'll adore the Weissman Foundry. It's an entrepreneurial playground shared by Babson, Olin, and Wellesley students, complete with 3D printers, laser cutters, robotics equipment, and

even a kitchen for food entrepreneurs. Whether you're creating a product, starting a business, or simply experimenting, this venue provides the resources to make your ideas a reality.

## **6. E-Tower**

Consider living in a dorm with everyone working on their own startup. That is precisely what happens in E-Tower, Babson's most enterprising apartment. It's an exclusive living-learning community where students start businesses, organize pitch nights, and network with mentors all while living together. If you're serious about launching a business, this is the place to go.

## **7. Rocket Pitch**

Have a startup idea? At Babson, you can throw it at Rocket throw, one of the school's largest events. What's the challenge? You just have three minutes and three slides to convince investors, teachers, and business leaders that your proposal is worthwhile. It's a high-energy, nerve-racking, and fantastic experience—especially since some students turn their proposals into successful enterprises.



## Amardeep Bhatia

**Founder & Chief Academic Advisor  
College Guru**

In this section, Aiiyo brings you insights from counseling trailblazers who have made a significant impact with their work. Through candid interviews, we explore their journeys, passions, and personal philosophies. This month, we sit down with Amardeep Bhatia, the Founder & Chief Academic Advisor at College Guru, to uncover what drives her success, how she balances the demands of work and life, and the mantra that keeps her moving forward.

### **What was your college degree?**

Started in engineering — what all math kids did — then found my way to a Master's in Math Ed and counselor training. That's where everything aligned.

### **Your Favorite Book**

**Man's Search for Meaning** by Viktor Frankl. A reminder that we always have a choice in how we respond. It centers me in life and work.

### **Your Comfort Food**

Sushi : it's clean, calming, and no one cries over it. Edible therapy.

### **A School/College you really enjoyed visiting**

**Goucher College**—It is artsy, inclusive, and calm. No one's trying to outshine. Bonus: petting zoo during finals. Mental health is woven in.

### **What's on top of your bucket list?**

There's two: Stand up comedy and One day, create a workshop on humour and heart in counselling. Because the process can be deep and light.

### **Advice to your high school self**

You don't need it all figured out. Stay curious, show up fully, and laugh often. Serious goals don't need a serious tone.

### **One thing you'd most like to change about the world**

Less pressure, more permission to explore. Let kids wonder before they're measured.

### **What inspired you to do what you do?**

Students who didn't think they had a story and then lit up when they shared it. That moment of "Wait, this counts?" is everything. I help families exhale. The clarity and results come from there.

### **A secret to balancing work & life**

Balance is fluid. I follow energy, say no often, and let joy and boundaries coexist.

### **Your Life Mantra**

Take up space. Be joyful. Help people breathe. We get results, but without the panic.

# STILL TURNING HEADS AT 50: WASHU'S ENGINEERING DUAL DEGREE OPPORTUNITY

## Diverse College Choice, a Transparent Admission Process, and Universal Financial Support

By

Scott Crawford

Senior Assistant Dean

McKelvey School of Engineering, Washington University in St. Louis



Scott Crawford

*Trust me, I'm an engineer.* In my job, that's a common phrase to see on a laptop sticker or a t-shirt. But I'm not an engineer. I hope you'll trust me anyway.

The engineering students I recruit and advise seem to trust me. I think it's because I offered them admission to engineering school based on just one unambiguous criterion: academic preparation. And accompanying that invitation was the assurance that they would pay only half tuition or less.

Proposals like those capture students' imagination. If they've grabbed your attention, too, take note: WashU's Engineering Dual Degree Program delivers on its promises.

Washington University in St. Louis is a private research institution with a student body of approximately 16,000, including nearly 3,000 in the McKelvey School of Engineering. The past decade has been dynamic for McKelvey. Research funding grew by 128%, the ranks of faculty and advisors increased significantly, the percentage of female undergraduates rose to 41%, and facilities expanded to seven buildings encompassing over 700,000 square feet.

The Dual Degree scene has been equally positive. The class that matriculated in 2024 is the largest in program history. Our students can now come from 110 liberal arts colleges that partner with us. Total enrollment is above 300, with the proportion of foreign nationals remaining steady at about one-third. As a bonus to our school's research endeavors, more than 30 current McKelvey PhD students are Dual Degree alumni.

Some 50 years after its inception, the Engineering Dual Degree Program appears to be more popular than ever. Emerging from a best-kept-secret status, this opportunity is resonating with today's STEM-oriented students. Why?

### **From a wide array of liberal arts colleges, we welcome many kinds of future engineers.**

- Those who want to begin college in a liberal arts environment before transitioning to engineering school
- Those who begin college with a desire to study engineering but need extra time to build relevant skills
- Those who have talent in mathematics and science but begin college unsure about engineering
- Those who, early in their early liberal arts college years, decide they want to pursue engineering studies
- Those who had unsuccessful engineering school applications and are seeking another chance at admission

### **By combining flexibility with predictability, we make engineering education accessible.**

- Students' Dual Degree journey begins with attendance at any of the 110 institutions affiliated with our program.

- A designated pre-engineering advisor assists students in making progress on the liberal arts degree while taking courses required for Dual Degree admission.
- Students submit the Dual Degree admission application to WashU during the third year at their liberal arts college.
- Applicants who have all required courses, minimum 3.25 GPA, and the endorsement of their pre-engineering advisor are admitted.
- Yes, that's it. No essays, no interviews, no recommendations. No impacted majors. No enrollment caps.

**Through commitment to mutually beneficial policies, we help our school students thrive.**

- Admitted students most commonly follow our 3+3 track, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering in three years.
- The 3+3 track comes with automatic tuition discounts for six semesters: 50% in year one, 55% in year two, 60% in year three.
- Participants may opt out of the engineering master's degree by graduating with the engineering bachelor's degree in two years (i.e., a 3+2 track).
- Liberal arts college credits contribute to WashU's engineering degree(s), and WashU credits are used to complete the liberal arts degree.
- Dual Degree students reliably graduate from the McKelvey School of Engineering at a rate of 90% or higher.

Shaped by valuable growth at their best-fit liberal arts college, and motivated to succeed in technical training, Dual Degree students are well-rounded and well-respected assets to the McKelvey community. They are also well-supported. Resources enjoyed by all WashU students—affinity groups and professional organizations, co-ops and internships, entrepreneurial activity, faculty-led research, comprehensive advising, etc.—are coupled with services targeted to the Dual Degree community: a unique orientation program, focused career guidance, reserved university housing, and peer mentorship.

Whenever I reflect on any of our campus communities, I recall one of the myriad thoughtful remarks made by a wise former Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences: “We will be known for our students.”

Although you've just read a number of characteristics and statistics, I'm confident that you will remember the Engineering Dual Degree Program for the same reason that I'm so proud to be a part of it: students. Students you know. Students who are already on this pathway... students who seem like perfect candidates for this experience... students who will take this untraditional step because you were able to shed some light on it.

We love being known for these students. Trust me.



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# NAVIGATING COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ANXIETY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Start Where You Are, Not Where You Think You Should Be

By  
Revathi Shivakumar  
Founder  
Bodhi Tree Coaching & Revadmissions



**Revathi  
Shivakumar**

If you're a high school student or a parent of one, you're probably overwhelmed with questions: What subjects to choose? Which extracurriculars matter? When should we begin preparing for college? How does one even start?

Amidst this uncertainty, anxiety quietly creeps in.

As a guidance counsellor, one of the most critical parts of my role is helping students and families manage this very anxiety. When a student is supported, informed, and feels confident, great-fit college choices follow naturally. But before that confidence sets in, it's important to acknowledge the emotional toll of this journey.

Imagine this: A student spends years engaging in activities that showcase their interests in and outside the classroom — rigorous courses, top scores, meaningful extracurriculars, heartfelt essays. They apply to their top-choice college, only to face a deferral or rejection. Sometimes, you see students with lower grades get into these very same places. At that moment, everything feels like it's falling apart. Parents begin to question every decision made. Students blame themselves. But here's the truth: it's not you, it's them.

Admissions at top universities have become intensely competitive. Harvard's acceptance rate has hovered around 3-4%, Stanford's is similar, and even historically less selective schools now admit fewer than ever. Many factors — institutional priorities, demographics, legacy status — are out of a student's control.

Here are ten insights to help turn college anxiety into clarity, grouped into phases students and parents commonly experience:

## **Phase 1: The Build-Up**

### **1. It's Never Too Late to Start.**

Many families worry: "Are we too late?" The truth is, today is a great day to begin. Whether your child is in Grade 9 or midway through Grade 12, starting now with clarity and purpose is better than procrastinating out of fear.

### **2. Grades Matter a Lot, but They Don't Define You.**

"What if my grades aren't all A's?" I hear this often. While academic effort is essential, college admissions consider much more. There are excellent-fit colleges for every student, not just the straight-A ones. Focus on progress, not perfection.

### **3. Authenticity Over Perfection.**

Students often ask, "Am I doing what colleges want to see?" The real question is: Are you doing what *you* care about? Colleges want to see genuine engagement. Build your story around your interests, passions, and values.

### **4. Leadership Isn't about Titles.**

Not every student will be a school captain. Leadership is about initiative and impact. Whether it's mentoring juniors, starting a podcast, or running a beach clean-up, meaningful contributions matter.

### **5. Your Journey Is Your Own.**

"My friend is doing more than me. Am I behind?" Comparing yourself to others is a recipe for anxiety. No two students have the same goals, stories, or timelines. Embrace your unique path.

## **Phase 2: The Storm**

### **6. Don't Fear Application Decisions.**

Application season brings questions: Should I apply early? Should I send my scores? Are my essays strong enough? These are valid concerns. Work with a trusted mentor to navigate them wisely. Planning and honesty go a long way.

### **7. Focus on What You Can Control.**

Colleges have complex admission criteria. Demographics, institutional priorities, and funding often influence decisions. These are beyond your control. What *is* in your control? Your effort, your essays, your engagement, and your mindset.

### **8. Stay Sharp and Organized.**

I've seen students arrive at their SAT center without an ID or submit essays meant for another college. A focused student is a prepared student. Use checklists, set reminders, and ask for help when unsure.

## **Phase 3: The Aftermath & Healing**

### **9. Make Time for Self-Care.**

An anxious mind can't function at its best. Whether it's dance, painting, journaling, or football — make time for activities that energize you. Mental wellness directly impacts performance.

### **10. The Right College Is Where You'll Thrive, Not Just Survive.**

A student of mine, rejected from their top-choice Ivy, joined a lesser-known college and now thrives — with research offers, close faculty relationships, and a vibrant life. Another student told me a year into college, "I finally get what you meant when you said I'd be happy in more than one place."

To parents: Your role in this journey is pivotal. Children often absorb your anxiety. Model confidence, keep expectations realistic, and focus on growth, not just outcomes.

When results arrive, be the calm in the storm. Avoid rehashing every decision or pushing them toward Plan B immediately. Instead, listen, acknowledge their effort, and remind them: their worth is not tied to an admissions letter.

Encourage options like gap years or transfers if things don't go as planned. Explore colleges where they feel seen and supported. College is not the final destination—it's a stepping stone.

Every student I work with juggles academics, activities, and personal challenges. They show up every day and try their best. That's remarkable.

To every student reading this — you *will* shine, not just because of the college you attend, but because of who you are.

Take a deep breath. You've got this. And we've got your back.



# BEYOND THE RÉSUMÉ: WRITING THE ROOMMATE AND THANK-YOU ESSAYS

By  
Bhupender Bharadwaj  
NM Squad

In an admissions landscape crowded with metrics, accolades, and over-rehearsed narratives, there are a few essay prompts that quietly rise above the noise. These are not essays that ask you to recount your biggest achievement, dissect your academic interests, or pitch yourself as a future global leader. Instead, they invite something far rarer in college applications: honesty. Among these, two stand out for their emotional intelligence and disarming intimacy—the Roommate Letter and the Thank-You Note.

These essays don't test your intellectual range. They're not meant to showcase ambition or brilliance. Rather, they ask: Who are you, really? What do you carry with you when the spotlight dims and the posture relaxes? These prompts reward introspection over performance and insight over polish.

## **The Roommate Essay: Personality Over Performance**

Stanford initially popularized it, but versions of it appear across many selective colleges: *"Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you or will help us understand you better."* The tone is deliberately informal. The real challenge? Letting your guard down.

Notably, most students are used to writing for authority figures—teachers, admissions officers, and scholarship panels. But this prompt shifts the dynamic. You're writing to someone your age, someone who might borrow your phone charger, binge-watch your favorite show, or comfort you after your first failed midterm. Authenticity becomes the currency here.

Think of the peculiar ways you unwind, the small rituals that calm you, the moments when your mask slips. One student opened their essay with, "Dear Future Roomie, living together means you'll uncover my three best-kept secrets..." and went on to describe his unlikely softness beneath a "gym bro" exterior, his over-talking when nervous, and his introversion masquerading as extroverted charm. The voice was conversational, the content personal, and the effect—unforgettable.

If you're unsure what to write, start by asking people close to you: What's it like to live with me? What do I do that makes you laugh—or drives you a little crazy? Their answers may hold the tone, texture, and truth your essay needs.

## **The Thank-You Note: Gratitude as a Mirror**

The second prompt—*"Write a thank-you note to someone you haven't properly thanked"*—shifts the lens even further outward. It calls on your ability to notice and name the quiet acts of grace that shape a life. Here, the power lies in specificity. The best essays aren't about thanking someone famous or important in conventional terms—they're about recognizing someone whose impact was real but unnoticed.

To cite examples, one student wrote to the school guard who held the gate open for three extra minutes each morning, allowing her to avoid tardy slips. Another wrote to an elderly man outside a

Gurudwara (Sikh place of worship) whose candy-gifts and smile once defined her childhood mornings. What made these essays moving wasn't the size of the gesture—it was the precision of memory and the sincerity of emotion.

The thank-you note isn't just about the person being thanked; it's about you—how you pay attention, what you value, and how you process kindness. Try closing your eyes and replaying a moment you still carry with you. Whose small act changed the rhythm of your day? What never got said that still deserves to be spoken?

Let your language be warm but restrained. Sentiment, when understated, becomes all the more powerful. The best writing here feels like a whisper, not a performance.

### **Final Suggestions: How to Make These Essays Shine**

While the Roommate and Thank-You prompts differ in tone and structure, they share something crucial: they reward emotional intelligence and storytelling. These are your moments to connect—not to convince. Don't treat them as lesser essays or throwaway tasks. When done right, they can be the most memorable part of your application.

Here are a few parting suggestions to help you write with authenticity:

- Write as you speak at your most honest hour. Think 2 a.m. when you're texting a best friend, not noon in a debate round.
- Zoom in. The smaller and more specific your story, the more universal its impact becomes.
- Stay unpolished—but intentional. This isn't about messiness, but about resisting over-curation. Let your quirks peek through.
- Revisit and read aloud. If it doesn't sound like you, it probably isn't.

Remember, in a sea of perfect grades and practiced answers, these essays are your chance to be real—and real always stands out.

So go on, write the essay that only you could write. And maybe, just maybe, make an admissions officer smile at 2 a.m. too.

# BEYOND ADMISSIONS: OTHER STRATEGIC USES OF THE SAT IN 2025

## Why Counselors Should Rethink the SAT as a Long-Term Asset, Not a One-Time Hurdle

By  
Chirag Arya  
Co-founder  
AP Guru



Chirag Arya

The SAT's transition to a fully digital, adaptive format in 2024 reduced test time to two hours and delivered scores to students' phones within days. Yet the exam's role in college admissions remains fluid: roughly half of U.S. institutions are still test-optional, while a growing group—including Yale, Dartmouth, MIT and several flagship publics—has reinstated score requirements for the high-school class of 2025.

For counselors, this volatility underscores a larger truth: the SAT now functions as a multipurpose credential whose value extends well beyond a gatekeeping role in selective admissions.

### Merit-Based Scholarships

The clearest payoff for strong scores is financial aid. National Merit still awards \$2,500 each to PSAT/NMSQT Finalists for US citizens, but far larger sums flow through institutional grids keyed to SAT thresholds. The University of Missouri's Mizzou Scholars Award, for instance, grants Missouri residents \$11,000 per year for a 1450 SAT (or 33 ACT) plus an excellent record—\$44,000 over four years.

Families who assume "test-optional" means "aid-optional" often discover that private colleges still require an SAT or ACT for their premier merit packages; without a score, applicants remain admissible but ineligible for the campus's richest awards.

Counselors who build a scholarship calendar that cross-references test dates with aid deadlines can help students schedule at least one sitting by August of senior year, leaving time for a December retake if a few extra points would push them into a higher award band.

### Faster Pathways to College Credit and Placement

SAT scores now do more than open admission doors; they can shorten the road to graduation itself.

Many universities now use SAT subscores – especially the new "Math + Data" and "Command of Evidence" metrics – to place students into calculus, freshman writing, or honors seminars. Where tests remain optional, submitting a score can help students bypass remedial coursework and graduate sooner.

Baylor, for example, enrolls any student with a 650 SAT Math directly into Calculus I, while a 550 secures a seat in Pre-Calculus. On the writing side, the University of Virginia exempts students who score 750 in SAT English from its first-year composition sequence.

### **Endurance and Assessment Literacy: Training for Academic Rigor**

Although the digital SAT is shorter than its predecessor, it still demands two hours of sustained, high-level reasoning under time pressure – a rehearsal for the three- to four-hour GRE, LSAT, or MCAT that many students will eventually face.

Regular practice tests build metacognitive strategies – pacing, question triage, educated guessing – that transfer to assessments like the AP and IB. Framing SAT preparation as cognitive cross-training helps students view the exam not as a hurdle but as a developmental stage in lifelong learning.

### **Professional Signaling in Competitive Industries**

Consulting firms, investment banks, and quantitative-heavy start-ups continue to ask early-career applicants for SAT or ACT scores. Boston Consulting Group's "Bridge to Consulting" program, for example, requires score breakdowns in its application.

A 1500-plus score can differentiate candidates who share identical GPAs from elite institutions, while a sub-1300 may raise questions at certain firms. Counselors should advise students headed for score-sensitive industries to retain verified score reports and to add percentile context ("1530SAT—99th percentile") on résumés or LinkedIn profiles.

### **Conclusion: From Two Hours to Four Years of Opportunity**

For today's counselors, the guiding question is no longer **"Should my student test?"** but **"How can a score advance this student's academic, financial, and professional goals?"**

The SAT now functions as a multipurpose asset: it unlocks merit aid, accelerates degree progress, sharpens cognitive stamina, and opens professional doors.

Mastering the exam's post-digital nuances—and communicating them to families with clarity—positions counselors as strategic partners who can translate a two-hour assessment into four years of opportunity.



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# O-1 VISA VS H1B

## What Indian Students and Counselors Absolutely Must Know

By  
Ravisha Maheshwari  
Senior Editor  
Aiyyo



**Ravisha  
Maheshwari**

When most Indian students or working professionals dream of building a life in the U.S., the H1B visa is usually the only path they know. But there's another option — and it's arguably far superior. The O-1 visa, often referred to as the extraordinary ability visa, can be a game-changing route for those who qualify, and yet it's astonishing how little it's talked about.

### **The H1B Is a Lottery, The O-1 Is Not**

Let's start with the biggest frustration around the H1B: the lottery system. Every year, over 400,000 people apply for the limited 85,000 H1B slots, and whether you get selected has nothing to do with merit. You could be the top student at a Tier-1 institute or a high-performing employee at a multinational firm, and still not get picked.

In contrast, the O-1 visa has no cap. There is no lottery. As long as you meet the eligibility criteria and have the right documentation and sponsorship, you can apply anytime and get approved. This makes the O-1 a far more stable and strategic option, especially for Indian and South Asian applicants who often get squeezed out in the H1B randomness.

### **Dual Intent, Green Card Friendly, and Flexible Duration**

Both the O-1 and H1B visas are "dual-intent", meaning they allow you to apply for a Green Card while staying in the U.S. But the O-1 gives you more flexibility. Here's how:

- The initial O-1 visa is valid for 3 years.
- After that, you can renew it every year, indefinitely, as long as you're working in your field.
- Crucially, O-1 holders can transition to the EB-1 green card category, which is often faster and more straightforward than the EB-2/EB-3 route typical of H1B holders.

This means that if you're on an O-1, you're already on the fast track to permanent residency in the U.S.

### **Who Can Apply and When**

One of the most common questions is: "Can I apply while I'm already in the U.S.?" The answer is a resounding yes. Whether you're on an F-1 visa, finishing your OPT, or even on an H1B visa, you can transition to an O-1 without leaving the country. It's also possible to apply from outside the U.S., even if you've never studied or worked there before. This makes the O-1 a powerful tool for professionals who want to enter the U.S. directly, bypassing the traditional F-1 to H1B route altogether.

## Eligibility Criteria: What Counts as ‘Extraordinary Ability’?

To qualify for the O-1 visa, you need to meet any 3 out of 10 criteria outlined by USCIS. These aren't as unreachable as they sound — in fact, many professionals and even fresh graduates qualify without realizing it. Here's what you need:

1. **Awards or national/international recognition** in your field (e.g., scholarships, conference wins).
2. **Membership in professional associations** that require outstanding achievement.
3. **Media mentions or publications** — if you've been featured or interviewed in a known publication (even online).
4. **Judging others' work** in your field, such as reviewing papers or moderating panels.
5. **Original contributions** to your field, such as research papers, innovations, or creative works.
6. **Authorship of scholarly articles** in journals or major publications.
7. **Exhibitions or showcases** of your work in public or industry settings.
8. **Critical or leading roles** in distinguished organizations.
9. **High salary or compensation** compared to others in your field.
10. **Commercial success** in the performing arts (e.g., box office earnings, sales).

## How to Qualify Using Research Papers — The Cheapest, Most Effective Strategy

Here's the inside scoop: publishing 4–5 high-quality research papers can help you tick three of the eligibility boxes almost automatically. Here's how:

- Citation of your work by others counts as media or professional publication coverage (Criterion #3).
- A research paper itself qualifies as an original contribution (Criterion #5).
- Publishing articles in reputed journals meets the authorship requirement (Criterion #6).

Even if you don't currently qualify, getting a few papers published in reputable journals like Springer, IEEE, or Scopus can get you there.

## Who Can Sponsor You? (Spoiler: You Can!)

Unlike the H1B, which requires a U.S. employer, the O-1 allows much more flexibility:

- A U.S. employer can sponsor your visa.
- An agent or manager can also file your petition.
- You can start your own company in the U.S. (even remotely from India) and use it to sponsor your own O-1 visa.

## Application Process, Cost & Timeline

Here's a simplified breakdown of how the O-1 visa application works:

1. Form I-129 must be filed by your sponsor (your company, employer, or agent).
  2. Contract or job offer letter must be included.
  3. Recommendation letters from field experts should be submitted.
  4. Evidence of the three eligibility criteria must be compiled and attached.
- Filing fee: \$460 (can be covered by your sponsor).
  - Processing time: 4–6 months standard.
  - Premium processing: \$2,500 for a decision in 15 days.

## Final Thoughts: Why the O-1 May Be Your Best Bet

In an age where even the most qualified applicants are rejected from the H1B lottery, the O-1 visa is a lifesaver — especially for students, researchers, tech professionals, artists, and athletes from India and South Asia. With no cap, self-sponsorship options, and a fast track to permanent residency, it's arguably the most underrated pathway to the U.S. today. If you're serious about your U.S. dreams, start exploring research, building your profile, and planning your O-1 application.

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**27** average class size

**13:1** student-to-faculty ratio

**86%** faculty hold a PhD or terminal degree

**99%** faculty teach undergraduate classes

**9,445** undergraduate students

**10,918** student population



## LOCATION

Fort Worth, Texas (pop. 874,000), is part of the thriving Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area; the nation's fourth largest. The urban city is popular, due in part to its welcoming spirit and moderate climate. DFW International Airport is close by, and Dallas is less than an hour's drive away.

## INDEPENDENT

Founded in 1873, TCU is historically related to, but not governed by, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a Protestant denomination that values social justice and inclusiveness. All values and viewpoints are welcome with more than 60 faith traditions and denominations represented on campus.

## FACILITIES

At TCU, you'll discover sparkling new facilities for most academic areas, along with a spacious recreation center and completely renovated sports venues. Similarly, all residence halls are either new or recently renovated. Most upper-class dorms feature suite-style living with full-size beds in private bedrooms, bathrooms and living areas. Wifi covers the entire campus.

The University Union offers multiple food stations and an all-you-can-eat meal plan, so going hungry is not an option. Vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options are available.

When it's time to hit the books, you'll find millions of resources at the campus library (open 24 hours a day during the school week), along with a huge computer lab, coffee shop and comfy chairs.

## CAMPUS

Our 291 beautifully-landscaped, tree-lined acres are nestled in a residential neighborhood near parks, museums and shops, and just a few minutes from downtown Fort Worth.

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES & ATHLETICS

*The Wall Street Journal* ranks TCU #3 in the nation for student engagement. More than 200 student groups including community service, leadership development, religious clubs, ROTC, national sororities and fraternities, intramural sports, student media, Phi Beta Kappa and the Honors College keep students busy outside of classes. NCAA Division I athletics competing in the Big 12 Conference make for plenty of school spirit and a contagious sense of pride.

## APPLYING TO TCU

While the statistics show that TCU students are far from ordinary, admission to TCU is not a numbers game. We consider the whole picture - grades and scores, yes, but you too: your goals, your potential, your ability to communicate, your leadership and work experience. To apply to TCU, visit [admissions.tcu.edu/apply](https://admissions.tcu.edu/apply).

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

TCU offers merit scholarships to high academic achievers. For need-based financial aid consideration, submit the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE ([cssprofile.org](https://cssprofile.org)). U.S. citizens and permanent residents must also submit the FAFSA ([fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov)).

**MISSION:** To educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community

**TCU**

## DEADLINES

### Freshman Deadlines

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| November 1 | Early Action, non-binding decision by January 1   |
| November 1 | Early Decision, binding decision by January 1;<br>Enrollment deposit required by January 15 |
| October 1  | Application deadline for spring semester  |
| February 1 | Regular Decision, non-binding decision by April 1   |

### Transfer Deadlines

|            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| November 1 | Spring Final Deadline      |
| February 1 | Fall Early Action Deadline |
| June 1     | Fall Final Deadline        |



## AREAS OF STUDY

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Actuarial Science                            | Interior Design                             |
| African American And Africana Studies*       | International Economics                     |
| Anthropology                                 | Italian*                                    |
| Applied Geoscience                           | Jewish Studies*                             |
| Architectural Lighting Design*               | Journalism                                  |
| Art Education                                | Latin American Studies                      |
| Art History                                  | Mathematics                                 |
| Arts Administration*                         | Middle East Studies*                        |
| Arts Leadership & Entrepreneurship*          | Movement Science                            |
| Asian Studies*                               | Music                                       |
| Astronomy                                    | • Brass                                     |
| Biochemistry                                 | • Church Music                              |
| Biology                                      | • Music Education                           |
| Biophysics                                   | • Organ                                     |
| British & Colonial/Post-Colonial Studies*    | • Percussion                                |
| Business                                     | • Piano                                     |
| • Accounting#                                | • Strings                                   |
| • Business Information Systems#              | • Theory/Composition                        |
| • Entrepreneurship and Innovation#           | • Voice                                     |
| • Finance#                                   | • Woodwinds                                 |
| • Finance/Real Estate#                       | Neuroscience                                |
| • Management and Leadership#                 | News & Media Studies                        |
| • Marketing#                                 | Nursing                                     |
| • Supply and Value Chain Management#         | Nutrition                                   |
| Chemistry                                    | Philosophy                                  |
| Child Development                            | Physical Education                          |
| Chinese*                                     | Physics                                     |
| Cinema & Media Studies                       | Political Science                           |
| Classical Studies*                           | Political Science - International Relations |
| Combined Science                             | Pre-Health Professions Track                |
| Communication Studies                        | • Pre-Dentistry                             |
| Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies          | • Pre-Medicine                              |
| Computer Information Technology              | • Pre-Optometry                             |
| Computer Science                             | • Pre-Physician Assistant                   |
| Creative Writing*                            | • Pre-Pharmacy                              |
| Criminal Justice                             | • Pre-Podiatry                              |
| Cultural Awareness in Health and Healthcare* | • Pre-Veterinary                            |
| Dance  | Pre-Law Track                               |
| Data Science*                                | Pre-Major Track                             |
| Design of The Built Environment*             | Psychology                                  |
| Digital Culture and Data Analytics*          | Ranch Management                            |
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| Education                                    | Reserve Officers' Training Corps            |
| • Accelerated Masters Program                | (U.S. Citizens & Residents)                 |
| • All Level: Early Childhood-12              | • Aerospace Studies (Air Force)             |
| • Early Childhood Education                  | • Military Science (Army)                   |
| • Middle School Education                    | Social Work                                 |
| • Secondary Education                        | Sociology                                   |
| Educational Studies*                         | Spanish and Hispanic Studies                |
| Energy Management and Technology*            | Spanish for Business Professions*           |
| Engineering                                  | Spanish for the Health Professions*         |
| • Electrical                                 | Speech-Language Pathology                   |
| • Mechanical                                 | Sports Broadcasting                         |
| English                                      | Strategic Communication                     |
| Environmental Science                        | Strength & Conditioning                     |
| Fashion Merchandising                        | Studio Art                                  |
| Film/Television/Digital Media                | Sustainability*                             |
| Food Management                              | Theatre                                     |
| French                                       | • Acting                                    |
| General Business*                            | • Design                                    |
| Geography                                    | • Musical Theatre                           |
| Geology                                      | • Production                                |
| German                                       | • Theatre Studies                           |
| Graphic Design                               | Urban Studies*                              |
| Habilitation of the Deaf                     | Women and Gender Studies                    |
| And Hard of Hearing                          | Writing                                     |
| Health & Fitness                             | Youth Advocacy & Educational Studies        |
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| Healthy Aging*                               |   |
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# 10 WAYS TO MAKE COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE

## The Ultimate Guide to Financial Aid for an International Student

By  
Abhilasha Talwar  
Next Genius Full-tuition Scholar  
Muhlenberg College, PA



**Abhilasha  
Talwar**

When I first moved to the U.S. for college, I thought that receiving a full-tuition scholarship would cover most of my expenses. However, I quickly learned that while tuition is a major part of the cost, there are still housing, food, textbooks, and other daily expenses to account for. As an international student, managing these costs effectively became essential for me. Here are ten practical ways that can help make college more affordable:

### 1. Apply for Multiple Scholarships

It's easy to assume that one scholarship is enough, but there are often many other opportunities to explore. Whether it's merit-based, talent-based, or even specific to international students, many schools offer a variety of scholarships. Don't miss out on these opportunities- apply for as many as possible to ease financial burdens.

### 2. Work On Campus

Working on campus is a great way to earn some extra money while staying close to your classes. Colleges/Universities allow students to work up to 20 hours per week during the semester. Jobs like library assistants, research aides, or roles in different departments not only help with finances but also allow you to develop valuable skills and network with staff and fellow students.

### 3. Become a Resident Advisor (RA)

If housing costs are a major concern, becoming a Resident Advisor can be a game-changer. RAs typically get free room and board, which can significantly lower your expenses. Plus, you'll gain leadership experience and make meaningful connections with peers.

### 4. Apply for Research Grants

Many colleges offer research grants that can cover more than just materials- some even provide free housing or stipends during the course of your research. If you're working on a project that aligns with faculty interests or department goals, ask your professors or academic advisors about available grants. These grants can help alleviate financial stress by covering costs like textbooks, research materials, and housing, allowing you to focus more on your work and less on your budget. Plus, research experience is a great way to build your academic portfolio!

### 5. Shop for Second-Hand Textbooks

Textbooks can be an unexpected expense, sometimes costing hundreds of dollars per semester. To cut costs, consider buying used textbooks or renting them from online platforms. You can also check if your school's library has copies available for checkout. Another great option is to talk to your professors- they may have an extra copy of the book they can lend out, or they might be willing to provide an electronic version for free or at a reduced cost. Always ask early to make sure you have access to the materials you need without the extra expense.

## **6. Utilize Campus Resources**

Many campuses have resources that are available to students for free or at a reduced rate. Academic resource centers, libraries, and tutoring services are free to use and can save you money while improving your academic performance. Be sure to ask professors or staff if they have resources that could help with your studies.

## **7. Look for Student Discounts**

Student discounts are available everywhere– from local cafes and restaurants to software providers and retail stores. Always keep your student ID on hand, as it's often required to access these deals. And don't just assume discounts are automatically offered– ask if a place provides student discounts, even if it's not advertised. You might be surprised at how many places offer them. Even small savings here and there can add up over time and help you stretch your budget further.

## **8. Be Smart About Travel Costs**

Traveling, especially as an international student, can be one of the biggest expenses. Book flights in advance and compare prices across different sites. Try using incognito mode when searching for flights to avoid price hikes. Also, for local transportation, consider carpooling with friends or using public transit to save money.

## **9. Participate in Free or Low-Cost Activities**

Many colleges host events that are either free or low-cost, such as cultural nights, movie screenings, or recreational activities. These can be great ways to enjoy your time on campus without spending too much. Check out your school's event calendar regularly to make sure you don't miss out on these fun opportunities.

## **10. Stick to a Budget**

Creating a budget is one of the most effective ways to manage your finances in college. Track your income and expenses to ensure you're not overspending. This will help you make informed decisions about how to prioritize your money, avoid unnecessary purchases, and stay financially healthy.

By implementing some of these strategies, you can ease the financial pressure that comes with being a student in the U.S. and focus more on your studies and experiences rather than constantly worrying about money.

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