Aiyyo

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Editor's Note

For decades, the formula was simple: get into a good college, earn a bachelor's degree, and the world would open its doors. Universities like Harvard became symbols of that promise. But that promise is starting to crack. The numbers tell a brutal story. In 2010, young college graduates in the US had an unemployment rate six percentage points lower than their peers without degrees. Today that gap has shrunk to barely one point. In other words, the economic shield that a degree once offered is fading fast.

Meanwhile, many of the jobs graduates expected to step into are quietly disappearing. Entry-level roles in finance, law, and technology (the classic graduate pipelines) are being eaten by automation and AI. Algorithms now analyze data, review documents, and generate reports faster than junior employees ever could. Between 2010 and 2024, youth employment in finance and insurance dropped by about 14 percent.

But AI is only half the story. The bigger disruption is that universities no longer control access to knowledge. A motivated teenager with a laptop can learn coding, design, marketing, or data analytics through boot camps, online platforms, and short certifications, often in months instead of four expensive years.

Employers are noticing. Nearly 40 percent of companies now prioritize skills over degrees, and about 45 percent have already dropped degree requirements for certain roles. In hiring rooms across the world, the question is slowly changing from "Where did you study?" to "What can you actually do?"

Then there's the financial reality. In the United States alone, student debt has crossed $1.7 trillion. Families are starting to ask a question that used to sound almost rebellious: Is college actually worth it? None of this means universities are dying. But the automatic power of the bachelor's degree certainly is. In the age of artificial intelligence, a degree is no longer a guarantee. It's just a starting line, and what matters next is skill, experience, and the ability to keep learning faster than the machines (or doing something the machines cannot do!).

Neeraj Mandhana
Founder & Editor-in-Chief
Aiyyo

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Featured Content

STUDYING IN SPAIN AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

What Students Actually Need to Understand Before Applying

Ravisha Maheshwari
Senior Editor
Aiyyo

Spain has emerged as one of Europe's most compelling higher education destinations, but not for the reasons most students initially assume. While lifestyle and culture often dominate first impressions, the real value lies in how Spain combines accessibility, affordability, and structured admissions pathways within a decentralised university system.

Why Spain Continues to Attract International Students

Spain consistently ranks as the #1 destination for European study-abroad students and #3 globally for students from the United States, reflecting both its academic accessibility and lifestyle appeal. The country offers a mild Mediterranean climate, with cities like Madrid averaging close to 300 days of sunshine annually, which directly influences student life.

However, the deeper advantage is linguistic. Spanish is the second most spoken language globally, making Spain not just a study destination but a long-term skill investment. With 17 autonomous regions, each with distinct cultural and linguistic identities, Spain offers significant geographic and academic diversity. Large metropolitan hubs such as Madrid and Barcelona coexist with smaller, student-centric cities like Granada, Sevilla, and Pamplona, each offering different cost structures and campus environments.

Understanding the Dual Admissions System

Private universities follow a more flexible, institution-specific model. Admissions typically involve an entrance or access test, a personal interview, and evaluation of predicted and final grades, along with supporting documents such as a CV and recommendation letters. Some institutions may require UNEDasiss accreditation or homologation, depending on the student's academic background. The process is holistic and resembles systems seen in the UK or US, where narrative and profile play a role alongside academic performance. Private universities offer smaller class sizes, more individualised admissions processes, and greater availability of English-medium instruction.

Public universities, on the other hand, operate through a centralised, data-driven system. Admission is determined almost entirely by a final score calculated on a 14-point scale. This includes a base academic score out of 10, derived from converted high school grades, and up to 4 additional points through subject weighting and PCE exams, also known as Specific Competency Exams. The entire process is formalised through UNEDasiss accreditation, followed by a mandatory preinscripción on regional admission platforms. Public universities are more traditional, with larger first-year cohorts, structured assessment models, and increasing integration of mandatory internships.

The Role of the "Nota de Corte"

At the centre of public university admissions is the nota de corte, or cut-off score. This represents the score of the last admitted student in the previous cycle and serves as the primary benchmark for competitiveness. Unlike fixed entry requirements, the nota de corte is dynamic. It typically increases year on year and varies significantly by programme and university. Importantly, published cut-offs do not include waitlist movement. Students who fall slightly below the threshold may still gain admission as seats open during subsequent rounds. Understanding historical cut-offs allows students to calibrate realistic choices and optimise subject selection, particularly in areas where ponderación, or subject weighting, can add up to 0.2 per subject, significantly impacting the final score.

Qualification Recognition and UNEDasiss

Access to Spanish public universities requires formal recognition of international qualifications through one of two routes. Homologation applies to non-EU or non-EEA students and involves validating a high school diploma as equivalent to the Spanish Bachillerato through the Ministry of Education. This process requires sworn translations and can take several months. UNEDasiss is used for EU, IB, and similar qualifications. It converts academic grades into the Spanish system, generates an admission score, and allows students to take optional PCE exams to improve competitiveness. The process is significantly faster, typically completed within three weeks, making it the more efficient pathway where applicable.

Academic Structure and Language Flexibility

Spanish undergraduate degrees are structured around the European Higher Education framework. Most programmes last 4 years and require 240 ECTS credits, particularly in fields such as engineering and sciences. More specialised programmes extend further. Architecture and Pharmacy typically span 5 years or 300 ECTS, while Medicine extends to 6 years, incorporating professional training.

Language flexibility is improving, though it remains uneven. Private universities offer a wider range of 100 percent English-taught programmes, along with bilingual options. Public universities still lean heavily towards Spanish instruction, with B2-level Spanish often required, though bilingual pathways are gradually expanding. Many institutions also offer pre-degree Spanish immersion programmes, allowing students to transition into Spanish-taught degrees over time.

English-Taught Universities and Programmes in Spain

Fully English-taught options are still limited in public universities, where most programmes require B2-level Spanish. Students prioritising English instruction typically apply to private or internationally focused institutions. Key examples include:

- IE University: Fully English-taught degrees across business, economics, international relations, and computer science with a strong focus on entrepreneurship and global careers.
- ESADE (Barcelona): English-taught business and global management programmes with strong industry integration and international exchange opportunities.
- Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M): Leading public university offering bilingual and select fully English-taught degrees, particularly in economics, business, and engineering.
- EU Business School (Barcelona): Delivers English-taught business degrees with multiple specialisations such as digital business, sports management, and international marketing; flexible intakes and strong emphasis on applied coursework over theory.
- Universidad Europea: Wide range of English-taught programmes in business, health sciences, and technology; more accessible admissions compared to top-tier institutions.
- Schiller International University (Madrid): Fully English-medium, American-style curriculum with a global mobility model.
- La Salle Campus Barcelona (Ramon Llull University): English-taught programmes in engineering, business, and digital technology with applied, industry-linked learning.

Work Opportunities and Post-Study Pathways

International undergraduate students in Spain are permitted to work part-time for up to 30 hours per week, provided the job does not interfere with academic commitments. These roles are typically in hospitality, retail, or internships aligned with degree programmes. Upon graduation, students can apply for a 12-month post-study residence permit to seek employment or start a business. Spain has also expanded pathways into longer-term work visas, particularly for graduates entering high-demand sectors such as technology, business, and engineering.

AI LABOR TRANSITION: WHAT I SEE AS A FOUNDER

What Young Professionals Must Know About the Future of Work

Nagaraj Iyer
Founder & CEO
Senseware Infomedia Pvt. Ltd

In the last two years at Senseware Infomedia in Mumbai, I have seen a clear change in the way we work. Earlier, preparing a client proposal would take two or three days. Today, with AI tools, we can create a strong first draft in a few hours. A junior developer who once spent days writing basic code can now complete the same work much faster with AI support. This is what AI labor transition means to me. It is not about machines suddenly replacing people. It is about steady changes in daily work that improve speed and reduce manual effort. As a founder, I feel both positive and cautious. Productivity has improved, but I also have to rethink hiring, training, and team structure.

From my experience, roles that require human judgment and responsibility are more secure. Client relationship managers, for example, handle tough discussions, manage expectations, and calm situations when projects face delays. AI cannot replace that personal understanding. Senior system architects who design full solutions are also important because they take key decisions. AI can suggest code, but it cannot take accountability if something fails. For teenagers today, my advice is simple: do not focus only on routine tasks. Build strong problem-solving skills. Improve communication. Learn how to think clearly. Be open to new tools. Use AI as support, not as a replacement for your own thinking. In our company, we now look for people who can understand the bigger picture, not just follow instructions.

In the coming years, AI will become part of normal work. It will not feel separate. We already use AI for documentation, meeting summaries, code checks, and research. Soon, every employee may work with an AI assistant daily. A business analyst can test ideas before meeting a client. A support engineer can identify issues faster. Work will move faster, but expectations will also rise. When delivery becomes quicker, clients expect quicker results. So companies must balance speed with quality.

We are also seeing a shift in how work is delivered. Earlier, work was fully human-driven. In a website development company, designers created layouts manually, developers wrote every line of code, writers prepared content, and testers checked everything step by step. Today, we are in an AI-assisted stage. Designers use AI for layout ideas. Developers use AI to suggest code. Content is drafted faster and then edited by humans. Testing tools automatically find many errors. Humans still lead, but AI supports.

The next stage will be AI-delivered work. A client may give basic requirements, and AI could generate most of the website, including layout, content, and basic optimization. Humans will supervise, customize, and approve. The role will shift from doing every task to guiding and refining output.

AI is not removing people from work. It is changing their role. Those who adapt will grow faster. Those who ignore this shift may struggle in the years ahead.

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR OF THE MONTH

Tanushree Ghatak
Career Guidance Counselor
One World International School-Bangalore

Every strong student journey is shaped by someone who helps students see themselves more clearly and move forward with purpose. This month, we spotlight a School Guidance Counsellor who believes true guidance goes beyond career advice; it is about helping students identify their strengths, set clear goals, and take meaningful action. With an emphasis on real world exposure and employability skills, alongside expertise as a certified soft skills trainer, she prepares students not just for academic success, but for confident, capable futures beyond the classroom.

1. What's the weirdest/funniest thing you ever heard a student or parent say?
Well !! During one career session, I asked students to connect a hobby to potential careers. A student confidently declared, 'Ma'am, I specialize in sleeping. Is there a profession where I can pursue this full-time—with salary and benefits?

2. If you had to write a college essay about yourself, what would your topic be?
Mastering the art of knowing your own skills & talent is the first step toward building a meaningful and successful career.

3. What's the most oddly satisfying part of your job that no one ever thinks about?
The smile and sigh of relief I see on a parent's face is priceless - they often enter the counselling room carrying stress and anxiety — their cortisol and adrenaline running high — but by the end of the session, their relaxed smiles tells me serotonin and dopamine have taken over.

4. What would your "Guidance Counselor Superpower" be if you were in a comic book?
My superhero sunglasses — capable of scanning the 3D confusion inside a young mind and turning it into clarity.

5. Which fictional character do you think would make a surprisingly great guidance counselor?
Dumbledore from Harry Potter—wise, kind, and always knowing exactly what to say, even when no one else does. His calm demeanour and magical wisdom would make him an extraordinary mentor, guiding students through the sometimes confusing episodes of life and career choices.

6. What's your go-to motivational phrase that even you roll your eyes at sometimes—but it works?
" Clarity comes from action, not overthinking."

Clarity does not appear while sitting and analysing every possible outcome. It develops when you take small, practical steps forward. When you act — even imperfectly — you learn, adjust, and grow. Overthinking keeps you stuck in possibilities; action turns possibilities into understanding. Every single time a student takes even one small step, it proves true. If you keep thinking about what to do, you may feel more confused. But when you try something — join a club, take a course, attempt a project — you begin to understand what you like and what you don't. That's how clarity grows.

UCAT VS. NEET

Same Destination, Different Pathways

Neeraj Mandhana
Founder
Aiyyo

The pathway to medical school differs significantly between the UK and India, and this is most clearly reflected in their entrance exams: the UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test) and NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test). While both serve as gateways into medicine, they assess very different skill sets, require distinct preparation strategies, and are taken at different stages of a student's academic journey.

At a fundamental level, NEET is a content driven, knowledge based examination rooted in the Indian high school curriculum. It tests students on Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, closely aligned with NCERT textbooks for Classes 11 and 12. Success in NEET depends on conceptual clarity, strong recall, and the ability to solve numerical and theoretical problems accurately under time pressure.

In contrast, the UCAT is an aptitude based test used by UK medical schools to assess cognitive abilities and behavioural attributes rather than subject knowledge. It consists of five sections: Verbal Reasoning, Decision Making, Quantitative Reasoning, Abstract Reasoning, and Situational Judgement. These sections evaluate skills such as critical thinking, logical reasoning, pattern recognition, and ethical judgement. The exam is designed to measure how a student thinks, rather than what they have studied.

There is limited overlap in preparation between the two exams. Quantitative Reasoning in UCAT has some similarity to basic mathematics and data interpretation, which may align loosely with problem solving skills developed for NEET. However, the approach is very different, as UCAT prioritises speed and decision making over detailed calculation. Verbal Reasoning and Decision Making require comprehension and logic, but these are not directly tested in NEET. Abstract Reasoning and Situational Judgement are entirely unique to UCAT and require targeted practice.

The duration and format of the exams also differ. NEET is a pen and paper test lasting approximately 3 hours and 20 minutes, with 180 questions. UCAT is a computer based test of about 2 hours, divided into multiple timed sections with strict time limits. This makes pacing and quick thinking especially important for UCAT.

Preparation timelines further highlight the contrast. NEET preparation typically begins early, often from Class 9 or 10, and intensifies through Classes 11 and 12 with a strong focus on syllabus coverage and revision. UCAT preparation is shorter and more strategic. Most students begin around 2 to 4 months before the test, focusing on practice questions, timed drills, and mock exams to build speed and familiarity with the format.

An important point of difference lies in how these exams are used in university admissions. NEET functions as the primary and often sole criterion for entry into medical colleges in India. A student's rank in NEET largely determines their access to government and private medical seats, making it a high stakes, score driven system. In the UK, the UCAT is one component of a broader, more holistic admissions process. Universities consider UCAT scores alongside academic grades, personal statements, references, and performance in interviews. A strong UCAT score can strengthen an application, but it does not guarantee admission on its own. Instead, it helps universities assess whether a student possesses the aptitude and judgement required for a career in medicine. Thus, students considering both pathways must understand these differences clearly and prepare for each exam with a distinct strategy.

#Industry Leader SPOTLIGHT

Ishani Sasdev

Co-founder and Chief Product Officer
Application Ally

In this section, Aiyyo 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 Ishani Sasdev, the Co-founder and Chief Product Officer at Application Ally, 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?
Bachelors in Science in Astrobiology from Florida Tech
Bachelors of Science in Bioscience from IISER Pune

Your Favorite Book
One and a half wife by Meghna Pant

Your Comfort Food
Ramen

A School/College you really enjoyed visiting
UT Austin

What's on top of your bucket list?
Watch the northern lights!

One thing you would most like to change about the world
The lack of doing things for the fun of it

If you could give one piece of advice to your high school self, what would it be?
Listen to your gut and ask for help. Often.

What inspired you to do what you do?
Watching students find meaning in their passion

A secret to balancing work & life
Find work that feels fulfilling. So time off feels refreshing

Your Life Mantra
Pick your battles wisely

THE INTERNAL COMPASS: HELPING TEENS DISCOVER WHO THEY ARE

How Parents Can Help Teens Think Beyond Marks And Metrics

Soumya Ramaswamy
Parenting & Teen Coach & Founder
Shaping Futures

The teenage years are not just about marks, college plans, or career choices. They are a time when young people begin asking deeper questions:

Who am I? What matters to me? What kind of person do I want to become?
In today's fast-paced world, teens are constantly surrounded by expectations and comparisons. Social media often defines success through likes, popularity, and achievements. Over time, this can make teens depend more on external validation rather than their own inner voice.

As parents, the real role is not just to guide their career, but to help them build an internal compass.

Why Meaning, Purpose, and Values Matter
These may sound like big words, but they can be understood simply:

- Values are what truly matter to a teen, like honesty, kindness, or creativity. They guide everyday choices.
- Meaning is the feeling that what they do matters to someone or something.
- Purpose is the direction they choose in life, the "why" behind what they do.

When teens understand these, they feel more grounded, confident, and less confused by outside pressure.

The Challenge: Too Much Outside Noise
Today's teens are constantly being watched, judged, and compared, especially online. When success is defined only by others, their sense of self becomes fragile. That's why it's important to shift the focus from:
"What are you achieving?"
to
"Who are you becoming?"

Your Role as a Parent Matters Most
Teens don't learn only from what you say, they learn from what you live.

- If you value honesty, they watch how you handle difficult situations.
- If you value balance, they notice how you manage stress.
- If you prioritize relationships, they see how you show up for people.

Your life becomes their quiet blueprint.

Start Simple Conversations
Instead of only asking about studies or results, try questions that help them think:

"What excited you this week?"
"Is there something in the world that really bothers or inspires you?"
"Who do you admire and why?"

These small conversations help teens discover themselves, not just perform.

Let Them Explore
Teens don't need to have everything figured out. Encourage them to try different experiences; sports, music, volunteering, creative work. Purpose is not found in one moment. It grows through experience.

The Real Goal
Helping a teen is not about giving them all the answers. It is about helping them trust themselves enough to ask the right questions. When a young person is clear about their values and direction, they don't just handle pressure, they move through life with quiet confidence and strength.

A Thought for Parents
The most powerful thing you can do is reflect on your own life: What guides your choices? What matters to you? Because your clarity becomes the environment in which your child grows.

UNDERSTANDING INDUSTRIAL DESIGN: SKILLS, COLLEGES, AND CAREER PATHS

What Students Must Know Before Choosing Industrial Design

Neha Pandit
Founder
We-Learn

What is this design major?
Industrial Design (or Product Design) is the art of creating physical objects we use every day, from smartphones and medical devices to furniture and cars. It's about making products that are functional, ergonomic, and beautiful. You aren't just styling an object; you are solving problems. You'll study how people use things, how materials work, and how to manufacture items at scale. It's the perfect field for someone who loves to take things apart to see how they work.

Which are the top colleges offering this major (in India and abroad)?

- In India, the National Institute of Design (NID) and IDC at IIT Bombay are the gold standards. Other top options include IIT Delhi, Srishti Manipal, and MIT-ID Pune.
- Abroad, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and ArtCenter College of Design (USA) are world leaders. In Europe, Delft University (Netherlands) and the Royal College of Art (UK) are prestigious.

These schools look for "3D thinkers", students who can visualize objects in space and understand how materials like wood, plastic, or metal behave.

What skills do students develop while studying this major?
You'll become a blend of an artist and an engineer. Key skills include:

- **3D Sketching:** Visualizing products from every angle.
- **Model Making:** Building physical prototypes using foam, clay, or 3D printing.
- **User Research:** Observing how people interact with objects to improve comfort.
- **Material Science:** Understanding which materials are durable or sustainable. You'll also learn empathy, ensuring your designs are accessible to everyone, including the elderly or people with disabilities.

What academic and technical knowledge does this major build?
Academically, you'll study Ergonomics (human factors) to ensure products fit the human body perfectly. You'll also learn about "Design for Manufacturing", how to make sure your ideas can actually be built in a factory.

Technically, you'll master 3D CAD software like Rhino, SolidWorks, or Fusion 360. You'll learn to use workshop tools like lathes and laser cutters. The major builds a deep understanding of physics, mechanics, and sustainable production cycles to reduce environmental impact.

How should a student choose the ideal subject combination and build a compelling profile and portfolio for this major?
To succeed in Industrial Design, blend technical logic with 3D creativity.

- **Subjects:** Any stream works, but Physics and Math are vital for understanding mechanics and integrity. Fine Arts aids sketching, while Sociology helps you understand user needs.
- **Portfolio:** Show problem-solving. Include object redesigns, photos of things you've built or "hacked," and "exploded view" sketches. Use cardboard or clay models to prove you can think in 3D.
- **Profile:** Stay curious. In India, focus on UCEED and NID prep, where spatial logic and math are key.

What career paths and job roles are available after studying this major?
Industrial designers work in almost every manufacturing sector:

- **Consumer Electronics:** Designing phones, laptops, or wearables.
- **Automotive Design:** Designing cars, bikes, or public transport.
- **Furniture Designer:** Creating ergonomic and aesthetic home or office gear.
- **Medical Product Designer:** Developing life-saving equipment like inhalers or surgical tools. You can work for global giants like Apple or IKEA, join a design consultancy, or even work in toy design or sports equipment.

How do I know if this major is right for me, including traits, mindset and natural strengths?
Do you constantly fix things around the house? Do you notice the "feel" of a pen or the grip of a kitchen tool? If you enjoy tangible, hands-on work and have a strong sense of spatial logic, this is for you. Industrial design suits those who are practical but creative. People who want to see their ideas become physical realities that people can touch, hold, and use in their daily lives.

Bonus - Some interesting or fun facts about the major

1. **The Juice Squeezer:** One of the most famous industrial designs is Philippe Starck's "Juicy Salif", it looks like a space alien but is a lemon squeezer!
2. **Iteration is King:** The Dyson vacuum cleaner took 5,127 prototypes before it finally worked perfectly.
3. **Color Psychology:** Even the color of a drill or a medical device is chosen by industrial designers to signal "power" or "safety."
4. **Everyday Heroes:** Almost every physical object you touched today was shaped by an industrial designer.

GLOBAL ACCESS PATHWAYS
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The GAP Difference

Global Access Pathways (GAP) is led by a senior executive team of six globally recognized counselors with decades of experience guiding students through the world's university admissions landscapes.

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We understand the challenges that schools face in recruiting and retaining experienced university counselors. By partnering with GAP, schools eliminate the need for a full-time, on-campus university counselor while still providing high-quality university counseling services. This solution is particularly beneficial for schools with smaller graduating cohorts, limited resources, or recruitment challenges.

What Partner Schools Gain

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- Increased student and parent engagement through structured programming

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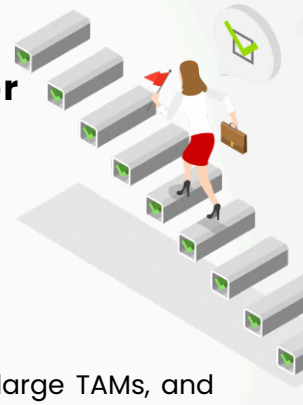
THE INCREASING VALUE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH TECH DEPTH, NOT JUST A STARTUP PITCH

Why Execution, Not Ideas, Is Becoming The Real Differentiator



Aashna Saraf
Founder
CreatED

For years, student entrepreneurship has been dominated by pitch decks, clean slides, large TAMs, and confident storytelling. While these skills still matter, the bar is shifting. Increasingly, what differentiates exceptional young founders is not how well they can describe a solution, but whether they can build one. Entrepreneurship is moving from narrative-first to product-first, and with that, technical depth is becoming non-negotiable.

This shift is especially visible in global education and experimentation communities. Across educator forums and applied AI learning spaces, a clear pattern is emerging: the most meaningful student projects are no longer hypothetical startups, but working systems. Students are building AI copilots, deploying microservices, prototyping hardware, and running real experiments with measurable outcomes. The emphasis is on proof, not promise.

One reason is simple: technology has become more accessible, but also more powerful. With tools like APIs, no-code platforms, and open-source models, students can now go far beyond ideation. They can test assumptions quickly, collect data, and iterate. But this accessibility has also raised expectations. If anyone can generate a pitch, then the real differentiator is execution.

Educators experimenting with AI-integrated curricula are increasingly designing programs where students must move from concept to deployment. Instead of asking, “What problem would you solve?”, they ask, “What did you build, and what did you learn from testing it?” This subtle shift forces students to engage with constraints—data quality, edge cases, user behavior, and technical trade-offs. It also leads to deeper learning, because students confront the gap between theory and reality.

This is where tech depth becomes critical. Tech depth does not mean every student must be an expert programmer. Rather, it means understanding the mechanism behind what they are building. If a student claims to use AI, they should be able to explain the inputs, outputs, and limitations of their model. If they are designing a hardware device, they should understand sensing, calibration, and failure modes. The goal is not complexity for its own sake, but intentionality, knowing why something works, not just that it does.

Programs like CaseQuest are responding directly to this shift. Instead of isolating business thinking from technical execution, CaseQuest integrates both. Students begin with a real-world problem, often sourced from industry, and are pushed to move beyond strategy into tangible builds. A retail analytics idea becomes a working dashboard used in stores. A sustainability concept turns into a prototype with measurable impact. The expectation is clear: if you propose a solution, you should be able to demonstrate it.

What makes this approach powerful is that it mirrors how innovation actually happens. In the real world, successful founders are not just storytellers; they are systems thinkers. They understand how to translate an idea into something usable, testable, and improvable. By exposing students to this process early, programs like CaseQuest are not just preparing them for competitions, they are preparing them for real problem-solving.

Another important trend from educator experiments is the move toward evidence-based entrepreneurship. Students are encouraged to validate their ideas with data—user interviews, A/B tests, prototype performance metrics—rather than relying on assumptions. This aligns closely with scientific thinking and creates a bridge between research and entrepreneurship. In fact, the most compelling student projects today often sit at this intersection: a clear problem, a novel approach, and a validated prototype.

There is also a deeper implication for how we define "innovation." In the past, innovation was often equated with novelty in idea. Today, it is increasingly defined by novelty in execution. A slightly familiar idea, executed with strong technical grounding and real-world validation, is often more valuable than a completely new idea that remains untested. This is a crucial mindset shift for students, who are often pressured to chase originality at the expense of feasibility.

Ultimately, the increasing value of entrepreneurship with tech depth reflects a broader change in education. We are moving away from passive learning and toward creation. Students are no longer just consumers of knowledge; they are builders, experimenters, and problem-solvers. And in this new landscape, the question is no longer, "Can you pitch an idea?" but "Can you make it work?"

Those who can will stand out, not just in competitions or college applications, but in their ability to create meaningful impact in the real world.

TRANSFERRING COLLEGES: 5 NON-NEGOTIABLES STUDENTS GET WRONG

Your Ultimate Guide to Transfer Admissions

Bharat Mundra
Director
IBOS

Transferring universities sounds straightforward on paper. In reality, it is one of the most misunderstood pathways in undergraduate education. Policies differ sharply across institutions, academic systems, and even individual majors. What looks like a simple move can quietly cost you time, credits, and in some cases, an entire academic year. If you are advising or planning a transfer, there are 5 areas that require far more precision than most students realise.

1. When You Transfer Matters More Than You Think

The most common mistake is assuming that transfers can happen seamlessly at any stage. While many universities technically allow transfers in second or even third year, there is a structural limitation most students overlook. A significant portion of your degree must be completed at the institution awarding it. Across US universities, this typically ranges from 25% to 50% of total credits, with many institutions requiring at least 30 credits completed in-house. This immediately limits how late a student can transfer without extending their degree.

In practice, the majority of successful transfers happen after 1 or 2 semesters, usually with 20 to 35 credits completed. Students transferring later often face credit loss or are required to spend additional semesters graduating. The earlier the move, the cleaner the transition. Beyond second year, trade-offs become unavoidable.

2. Not Every College, Intake, or Major Is Transfer-Friendly

Students often assume that if a university exists, it accepts transfers. That is not how the system works. Some institutions restrict transfers entirely or limit them to specific entry points. Others accept transfers only in fall intake, while some allow both fall and spring. Even within universities that broadly accept transfers, certain programmes remain closed or highly restricted.

Highly structured or capacity-constrained majors such as performing arts, aviation, or specialised health programmes frequently do not accept transfer students at all. In other cases, availability changes year to year depending on space. Even at institutions that are open to transfers, the numbers are small. Transfer students typically make up 8% to 15% of incoming classes, which means competition exists within a limited pool of seats. A realistic transfer strategy requires programme-level research, not just university-level assumptions.

3. Transfer Culture Is Real, and It Impacts Your Experience

There is a difference between a university that "accepts transfers" and one that is built to support them. At many institutions, transfer students form a relatively small portion of the undergraduate population. This can affect both academic integration and social experience. Students often enter classrooms where peer groups are already established, especially in structured or cohort-based programmes.

Some universities have built strong transfer ecosystems with:

- Dedicated orientation programmes
- Pre-registration academic advising
- Peer mentorship systems
- Housing aligned with transfer students

Others offer minimal structured support, expecting students to integrate independently.

4. Credit Transfer Is Not a Given; It Is a Negotiation
Credit transfer is where expectations and reality diverge the most. Within the US system, universities evaluate transcripts course by course, determining equivalencies based on syllabus overlap. Even in favourable cases, students typically see 50% to 60% direct equivalency, with the rest counting as electives.

For international students, the process becomes more technical. Many universities require credential evaluation through organisations like National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, which convert international transcripts into US GPA equivalents.

This evaluation can vary:

- Some universities require course-by-course analysis
- Others accept year-by-year summaries
- GPA conversion becomes a key metric in evaluation

Importantly, even if credits transfer, they may not apply toward your new major. Students switching disciplines often retain credits but lose progress toward degree requirements. The worst-case scenario is not credit rejection, it is credit irrelevance.

5. Integration Is Academic, Social, and Structural
Academically, students must adapt to new teaching models, assessment styles, and expectations. For example, some institutions operate on accelerated formats such as block scheduling, where students study fewer subjects at higher intensity. Others emphasise applied learning, expecting students to engage in real-world projects from the outset.

Socially, transfer students enter communities where friendships, study groups, and networks are already formed. This creates a different integration challenge compared to first-year students. Students who take initiative tend to stabilise quickly. Those who wait for structure to adapt around them often feel disconnected.

Final Insight
Transfer admissions are evaluated differently from first-year applications. The emphasis shifts toward:

- College GPA over school performance
- Clarity of academic direction
- Alignment between past coursework and future goals

In some cases, requirements are lighter, fewer essays, fewer recommendations. In others, expectations are sharper, especially around academic consistency and intent. The key shift is this. First-year admissions evaluate potential. Transfer admissions evaluate trajectory.

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93%
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2023 College Factual

#1 **Best Elementary Special Education**
2023 College Factual

#3 **Best Music Management**
2023 College Factual

#4 **Best Public Relations and Advertising**
2023 College Factual

#6 **Best Design and Applied Arts**
2023 College Factual

#8 **Best Information Science**
2023 College Factual

#10 **Best Food and Nutrition**
2023 College Factual

#11 **Best Entrepreneurial Studies**
2023 College Factual

#30 **Most Innovative Schools**
2023 *U.S. News & World Report*

Applying for Admission

Syracuse University uses the Common Application and Coalition Application, powered by Scoir. Youll apply directly to one of the Universitys schools and colleges or to a dual/combined program within two colleges.

Application Deadlines*
- **Early Decision:** November 15
- **Early Decision II:** January 5
- **Regular Decision:** January 5
- **Spring Admission (first-year or transfer):** November 15
- **Transfer Admission (fall):** July 1

**These are the priority deadlines; however, applications will continue to be accepted on a space-available basis.*

Your application is evaluated based on:
- Academic performance and standardized test scores (if applicable)*
- Personal essay
- Recommendations
- Audition or portfolio (for select programs)

**SAT/ACT scores are not required for students applying for Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 admission.*

For more information, visit ***syracuse.edu/admissions/apply.***

LEGENDS OF ADMISSIONS

Deepali Shah
Assistant Director, International Student Recruitment in South Asia
Foothill-De Anza Community College District

Behind every successful student journey is an admissions professional whose experiences, insights, and passion quietly shape countless futures. Legends of Admissions celebrates these remarkable individuals, the stories they carry, the wisdom they share, and the human moments that remind us why education truly matters. In this edition, we spotlight Deepali Shah, whose journey across cultures, conversations, and campuses offers a warm and inspiring look into the heart of admissions.

1. An Unforgettable Travel Memory.
Recruitment trip to Nagaland. Was an adventure with many unexpected turns but a good experience to spread information on U.S. higher education.

2. Most unexpected question a student has ever asked you.
Can you please help me with Math to crack my college placement test.

3. If you weren't in admissions, what job would you secretly love to have?
I would be a pre school teacher.

4. What's a totally random skill you've picked up because of your job?
Visiting local markets during free evenings. Indulging in understanding different cultural beliefs.

5. What's one thing you wish students knew about admissions, that they often don't?
Admission officers do not compare students, they always look for right-fit, mission alignment and students who would benefit from and contribute to the university / college. Don't compete to write those essays, be you, be true!

6. If your college were a person, how would you describe their personality in three words?
Friendly, Dynamic and Cheerful.

7. What's the most oddly specific club or organization on campus?
Innovation center for business start ups, makers space and STEM center.

THE BOARDING SCHOOL ADVANTAGE

How an International Boarding School Education Makes Your Child a Frontrunner for University and Career Success

Aanchal Kotibhaskar
Founder
XellED

Over years of advising families on educational pathways, one pattern becomes clear: the environment a young person inhabits during adolescence profoundly shapes the adult they become. Boarding school is often discussed in terms of heritage or prestige. The more compelling case, however, lies in development. In the right setting, boarding does not merely educate - it accelerates maturity.

Psychosocial Development: Growing Through Daily Experience

The most significant transformation boarding schools foster is not purely academic; it is psychological. Adolescence is a formative stage during which identity, resilience and emotional regulation take shape. In a boarding environment, these developmental processes unfold within a structured community that both challenges and supports students.

Living alongside peers means that young people learn to navigate everyday interpersonal dynamics - resolving disagreements, rebuilding friendships and maintaining perspective when emotions run high. Because students cannot simply disengage at the end of the school day, they gradually develop emotional resilience and greater self-awareness.

Boarding houses often function as micro-communities composed of students from different cultures, backgrounds and belief systems. Exposure to this diversity develops empathy and social intelligence almost unconsciously. Students begin to understand that leadership requires listening, that influence depends on consistency, and that respect is earned through how one treats others.

Over time, these experiences shape young people who are comfortable navigating complexity - socially, emotionally and intellectually.

Independence and Life Skills: Practising Responsibility Early

Boarding schools also introduce independence in a gradual and supported way. Students quickly learn that outcomes are closely linked to their own decisions. Time must be managed, commitments balanced and effort sustained even when motivation fluctuates. Importantly, this independence develops within structure rather than in isolation. Clear routines, pastoral care systems and adult mentorship provide steady guardrails.

Because students live where they learn, the boundary between “school life” and “home life” disappears. Responsibility becomes continuous. Managing academic work, extracurricular activities, friendships and personal routines becomes part of daily life. Within this environment, students begin to practise the kinds of organisational and decision-making skills that adulthood eventually requires. By the time university arrives, independence is not a sudden expectation - it is already familiar.

The Power of Environment: Ambition Becomes Visible

Another powerful influence of boarding education is proximity to ambition. Students are surrounded by peers who may be training seriously in sport, leading societies, performing in music and drama, or preparing applications for highly selective universities. When ambition is visible, it becomes attainable.

Families often describe a noticeable shift: not simply stronger academic performance, but a widening of what their child believes is possible. Boarding campuses reinforce this mindset through their integrated structure. Academic departments, sport, music, drama, research and leadership opportunities exist within a single ecosystem. Students can immerse themselves fully in areas that interest them, without the logistical barriers that often exist outside residential campuses. This depth of engagement allows interests to evolve into genuine expertise and confidence.

University Readiness and Application Success

Leading universities increasingly evaluate applicants holistically. While academic performance remains essential, admissions teams also look for evidence of self-direction, intellectual curiosity and sustained engagement beyond the classroom. Students emerging from strong boarding environments are often comfortable advocating for themselves, seeking mentorship and navigating institutional structures. These subtle but important qualities frequently strengthen university applications.

For families from highly competitive regions such as India, there is also a structural dimension to consider. India produces exceptional academic talent, and consequently very high volumes of applications to leading universities in the UK and the United States. When a student applies from an established UK boarding school, their application is typically reviewed within that school's applicant cohort. Even if the student is Indian by nationality, their academic profile, predicted grades and references are evaluated within the context of the UK education system. This does not remove competition, but it can shift the context in which that competition is assessed.

Final Thoughts

None of this suggests that boarding is universally appropriate. A student's temperament, emotional readiness and family alignment all matter deeply. Yet for students prepared to embrace challenge, boarding compresses many of adulthood's early lessons into formative years - accountability, negotiation, perseverance and leadership.

Educational choices shape trajectory. The environment shapes education.

At its best, a well-chosen boarding school builds readiness that extends far beyond the classroom.

AIYYO'S RANKING OF THE MONTH

Decoding Top 9 GenZ Lingo You Should Know As A Counselor

No Cap

One of the most widely used phrases in GenZ vocabulary, "No Cap" simply means "I'm not lying" or "for real." When a student tells you "No cap, this college application is stressing me out," they are being completely sincere with you. Recognizing this signals a moment of genuine vulnerability worth engaging with carefully and without dismissal.

Rizz

Short for charisma, "Rizz" refers to someone's natural ability to attract or charm others, especially in social settings. A student saying "he has rizz" is complimenting someone's social confidence. In a counseling context, understanding this helps you decode how students perceive social hierarchies, self-worth, and peer dynamics in school environments.

Slay

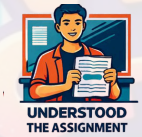
To "Slay" means to do something exceptionally well or to look and feel incredible while doing it. When a student says "she slayed that presentation," it is high praise. As a counselor, using this word back appropriately can build rapport, though it works best when it feels natural rather than forced or performative.

Vibe Check

A "Vibe Check" is an informal assessment of someone's mood, energy, or attitude in a given moment. Students may conduct vibe checks on teachers, peers, and yes, even on you. Being aware of this means understanding that your emotional presence in a session matters enormously and students are constantly, if informally, evaluating it.

It's Giving

This phrase is used to describe the energy or impression something gives off, as in "it's giving main character" or "it's giving anxiety." Students use it to articulate atmosphere and feeling when they lack more clinical vocabulary. Counselors who understand this can better decode how students are expressing their emotional environment without shutting them down.



Understood the Assignment

When someone "understood the assignment," they performed exactly as expected or even beyond it. It is a phrase of validation and recognition. In counseling, hearing a student say this about themselves signals growing confidence and self-awareness, two qualities worth reinforcing actively during sessions.

Main Character Energy

This phrase reflects a student's desire to see themselves as the protagonist of their own life story, worthy of attention, growth, and narrative. When students aspire to "main character energy," they are expressing a healthy impulse toward self-authorship. Counselors can harness this framing powerfully in goal-setting and motivational conversations.

Touch Grass

To "Touch Grass" means to step away from screens or online drama and reconnect with the real world. Students use it both humorously and critically. For counselors dealing with digital overload, social media anxiety, or screen dependency in students, this phrase is often already in their vocabulary and can open up conversations about balance.

NPC

Short for Non-Playable Character (from video games), calling someone an "NPC" means they lack original thought or just follow the crowd without agency. Students who fear being seen as an NPC are often grappling with identity formation and peer pressure. This is a surprisingly rich term to explore in sessions around individuality and self-expression.

BEYOND GRADES AND SCORES: STRUCTURED RESEARCH MATTERS IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

How Early Research Experience Signals Readiness For Rigorous Academic Environments

Dr. Pooja Sharma, MD (Obs and Gynae)
CEO
APAR Health

Gaining admission to top global STEM undergraduate programs has become intensely competitive, with acceptance rates often as low as 4–8%. Increasingly, universities are evaluating not only grades and standardized test scores, but also indicators of intellectual curiosity, research exposure, and real-world problem-solving—qualities that suggest a student's potential to contribute meaningfully to academic and scientific communities.

This shift is particularly relevant for students aspiring to careers in medicine and the biological sciences, where early exposure to research and interdisciplinary thinking can shape future academic trajectories. Today's undergraduate landscape spans a wide spectrum, from premedical pathways, biomedical sciences, molecular biology, genetics, microbiology, and neuroscience to emerging areas such as bioengineering, public health, epidemiology, and health data science.

Across many of these programs, admissions committees increasingly value applicants who demonstrate curiosity about real-world health challenges, familiarity with scientific inquiry, and the ability to translate knowledge into meaningful research questions.

Building the Foundations of Research
For students beginning their journey into scientific research, developing a foundational understanding of how research works is an important first step. Introductory exposure to research methodology, bioethics, and basic biostatistics helps students understand how studies are designed and how evidence is interpreted. Short simple language modules can introduce these difficult concepts.Such foundational learning equips students with the ability to frame relevant questions, understand scientific literature, and interpret data responsibly.

Learning Through Real-World Exposure
Beyond theoretical knowledge, observational experiences in real healthcare or research environments can provide valuable perspective. Short exposures in hospitals, laboratories, public health organizations, or health-focused startups allow students to observe how science and medicine operate in practice. These experiences help bridge classroom learning with real-world application while also helping students explore potential career pathways in fields such as medicine, biomedical sciences, biotechnology, and public health. For many students, seeing and interacting with professionals at work, whether clinicians treating patients, microbiologists analyzing samples, or public health teams studying disease patterns, can clarify interests and deepen motivation to pursue scientific careers.

The Importance of Mentorship
Undertaking a research project, from identifying a question to completing a study and communicating the findings, can be challenging for first-time researchers. Guidance from mentors such as clinicians, scientists, or academic supervisors can play a crucial role in this process. Mentorship helps students refine their research questions, design appropriate studies, analyze findings, and present their work effectively through reports or manuscripts. Equally importantly, it introduces them to the discipline and patience required in scientific investigation.

Broadening the Academic Perspective

Students can further expand their understanding of the scientific ecosystem by participating in workshops, academic seminars, conferences, and institutional visits. These opportunities expose them to ongoing research conversations and demonstrate how new knowledge is generated and applied to improve healthcare and public health. Early engagement with such academic environments often helps students develop analytical thinking, curiosity, and a deeper appreciation of how scientific knowledge evolves.

From Inspiration to Research Output

For senior school students exploring careers in the life sciences, structured research experiences can become a meaningful differentiator. Programs such as APAR-SPARK aim to support this journey through a guided "inspiration to publication" pathway that helps students develop and complete their first peer-reviewed research project.

One example is Saisha, who joined the program in Grade 11 and completed a three-month customized experience focused on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the One Health framework. Her learning included a structured observership at a tertiary care hospital, where she spent several weeks shadowing microbiologists, infection control nurses, and public health teams.

With mentorship support from concept development to manuscript preparation, she conducted a study in Delhi NCR examining antibiotic awareness, misuse, and its role in antimicrobial resistance, work that later formed the foundation of her premedical studies at the University of Washington. Her research was published in the International Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology and was also acknowledged by WHO SEARO (World Health Organization – South-East Asia Regional Office).

What Does This Experience Add?

Programs such as SPARK are typically led by multidisciplinary teams of clinicians, surgeons, statisticians, and public health researchers with extensive academic experience. In a highly selective admissions landscape, a research publication signals intellectual curiosity, analytical thinking, discipline, and persistence. For admissions committees, it provides insight into a student's readiness for rigorous academic environments. For students themselves, the process often builds confidence, clarity about academic interests, and a deeper understanding of potential career pathways in medicine, research, and global health.

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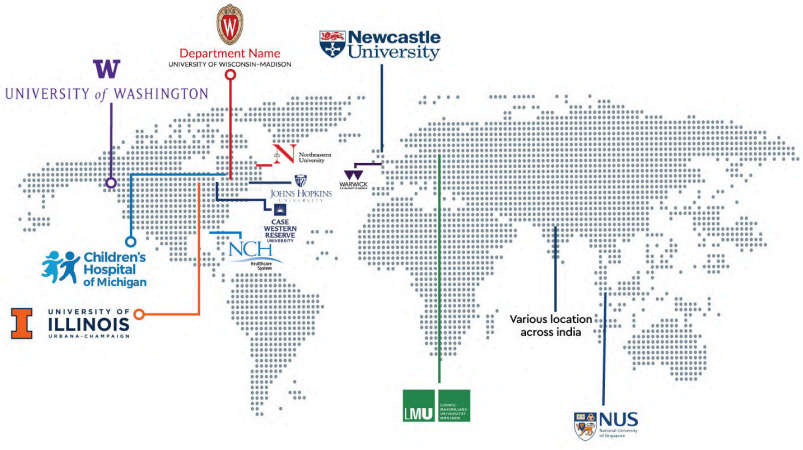

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Thank You, From Team Aiyyo

Thank you for taking the time to read Aiyyo. We're proud to bring you fresh, thoughtful perspectives—and it's your curiosity and engagement that fuel our work. At the heart of our mission is a desire to elevate the level of conversation around career choice and college admissions, helping readers navigate these decisions with greater clarity and confidence.

If you have any questions, feedback, or would like to contribute to a future issue, we'd love to hear from you—just drop us a line at contact@aiyyo.in. Until next time, stay sharp and stay inspired.

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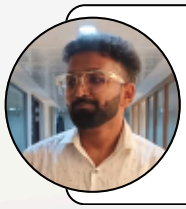

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