



 International Students' Perspectives on Studying in the United States

 Bridging the Gap: What We Learned About International Student Transitions

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 University of Pécs: An Undergraduate-Focused Review

 How Careers Actually Grow in a Competitive Economy



Editor's Note

The Expanding Geography of Indian Higher Education Aspirations

It is increasingly evident that Indian high school students will continue to pursue undergraduate education across the globe, even as international universities establish branch campuses in India and private Indian universities rapidly expand in number and scale (Why? Better awareness, Economic Growth, Rise of IBDP & A-Level Schooling). This outward orientation is not a rejection of domestic growth, but rather a reflection of how families now conceptualize higher education, as a global, diversified investment in a student's future, rather than a country-specific decision (So: not just looking to study CS in the US!).

The current admissions cycle has unfolded against a complex backdrop. Global geopolitical uncertainty, economic headwinds (1 USD to 90 INR!), visa volatility, and the accelerating influence of artificial intelligence on careers have collectively reshaped parental thinking. At the same time, the long-standing dominance of the United States as the primary study-abroad destination for Indian students is being reassessed. While the US remains aspirational, families are increasingly wary of the over-concentration of academic, financial, and geopolitical, within a single system.

As a result, parents and students are looking far more broadly. Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland continue to attract strong interest, but there is now serious consideration of destinations across mainland Europe, including France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Simultaneously, families are exploring opportunities in Russia and China, as well as high-performing Asian education hubs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. Traditional destinations in the Asia-Pacific, Australia and New Zealand, remain firmly in the mix, alongside emerging education and employment gateways such as Dubai. (PS: My heart goes out to all the counselors who have been bombarded with questions about higher education in 5 different countries all of a sudden!)

What has been particularly notable this year is not just where students applied, but how. Families submitted applications to a larger number of universities, across more countries, and with greater strategic intent. This trend toward diversification has significant implications for schools and educators. Institutional limits on the number of applications may warrant re-evaluation, as students seek resilience through breadth. Equally, counselors must now cultivate a deeper, more nuanced understanding of global higher education ecosystems. For Indian schools, this moment represents both a challenge and an opportunity: to evolve guidance frameworks, expand institutional knowledge, and prepare students not just for admissions abroad, but for participation in an increasingly interconnected academic world.

Neeraj Mandhana
Founder & Editor-in-Chief
Aiyyo

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LASALLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS: WHERE CREATIVITY CROSSES BOUNDARIES

Discover 7 Things that Make LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore Unique



LASALLE College of the Arts

LASALLE College of the Arts is Asia's leading contemporary arts and design institution and the highest ranked specialist arts institution in Southeast Asia for Performing Arts, and joint top for Art & Design (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025).

The College offers 36 Diploma, BA (Hons) and postgraduate programmes across the full spectrum of arts and design disciplines. A nurturing, interdisciplinary learning environment inspires the next generation of forward-looking and globally engaged creative leaders, who are mentored by a faculty of award-winning artists, designers, educators and researchers. LASALLE's tradition of practice-led research sets the College apart as an international centre of excellence.

Founded in 1984 by the late De La Salle Brother Joseph McNally, a visionary artist and educator, LASALLE has written, developed and delivered all its own academic programmes since 2004, and continues to do so as a founding member of the University of the Arts Singapore alliance. LASALLE is a non-profit private educational institution. The College receives tuition grant support from Singapore's Ministry of Education.

Here are 7 lesser-known facts about the college:

1. A Place Where All Arts Meet

LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore, is more than a school. It is an ecosystem where every art form, from performance to design, coexists under one roof. This proximity creates something rare: dancers working with animators, set designers exchanging ideas with theatre students, and filmmakers collaborating with fine artists. Students do not just learn their own discipline; they are constantly exposed to others, building an instinct for collaboration that LASALLE strives to impart.

2. Global Recognition and Regional Leadership

In 2025, LASALLE College of the Arts became the only specialist arts institution in Singapore ranked in the QS World University Rankings by Subject. Within Southeast Asia, it stands at the top tier. It is the highest ranked specialist arts institution for Performing Arts and joint leader for Art & Design. These accolades matter not only as prestige markers but also as signals to parents, counsellors and students that LASALLE holds its own among global peers while serving as a regional hub for creativity.

3. Learning from Practising Artists

One of LASALLE's defining features is its faculty. Students are taught and mentored by artists who are shaping their fields today: former Disney and Lucasfilm animators, a Cannes-nominated cinematographer, Royal Shakespeare Company theatre-makers and Red Dot Design Concept winners. Learning from experienced practitioners who are actively engaging in the industry gives students valuable insights into the inner workings of the industries and helps them understand the standards and expectations of the creative world.

4. Industry Partnerships and Real-World Experience

A LASALLE student's education experience is very hands-on. Internships are mandatory across both Diploma and BA (Hons) programmes, ensuring every student graduates with practical experience and professional connections. Industry collaborations deepen this further. Nike, Chanel, Hyundai, Samsung and Singapore Airlines are just a few of the brands that have invited LASALLE students to co-create projects. The result is a graduate body that does not just dream creatively but delivers in professional contexts from the start.

5. Award-Winning City Campus

LASALLE's award-winning city campus is itself a work of art. It was so striking that it represented Singapore at the Venice Biennale for Architecture in 2004. More than an iconic building, it is a creative hub where ideas flow across studios, theatres and performance spaces, making the physical environment part of the learning journey.

6. Community and Well-Being

Students at LASALLE are part of a diverse multicultural community with numerous activities throughout the term, including sports, nature walks and excursions around Singapore. These create an active and vibrant student life that extends beyond academic study. The College has also been twice awarded the Silver Ribbon Mental Health Award in recognition of its commitment to raising awareness about mental health. Students are empowered with resources, information and a supportive environment that prioritises their wellbeing alongside their artistic growth.

7. Rooted in Singapore's cultural heart

Situated in the vibrant arts and heritage district, the campus sits steps away from Little India's colour and cuisine, with the wider city's cultural offerings at its doorstep. For students arriving from abroad, LASALLE offers not only a rigorous arts education but also immersion in one of Asia's most cosmopolitan, creative capitals.

What This Means for Students, Parents and Counsellors

For students, LASALLE offers an education that is collaborative, global and industry-integrated. It is an environment where creativity is not divided into disciplines but flourishes through collaboration across them. For parents, the institution's rankings and industry ties signal credibility and employability, while its focus on community, wellbeing and student support provides reassurance that their children will thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. For counsellors and education consultants, LASALLE represents a strong option for students seeking world-class training in the arts within a supportive, multicultural context.





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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES

New Data Reveals How Intent, Enthusiasm, and Alternatives Are Shifting



Matthew Jaskol
Co-founder
Pioneer Academics

Recent conversations around international education often swing between extremes. On one side is the idea that the United States remains the uncontested global destination for higher education. On the other is the claim that political, social, and financial pressures are driving international students away. New data from Pioneer Academics suggests that neither narrative is fully accurate. Instead, international students are recalibrating how they think about the United States, not rejecting it outright.

Between May and July 2025, Pioneer Academics surveyed 303 international high school students in Grades 9–12, all of whom were academically engaged enough to participate in selective research programmes. This group offers a useful lens into early-stage undergraduate decision making, well before application deadlines force binary choices. The results point to a shift in mindset rather than a collapse in interest.

Intent Remains High, But It Is No Longer Unquestioned

The headline finding is clear. 91 percent of respondents still intend to study in the United States at the undergraduate level. This alone contradicts claims that international demand for U.S. education is in freefall. However, intent no longer carries the same confidence it once did. Within that 91 percent, roughly 60 percent report feeling apprehensive, even as they continue to plan for U.S. study. Another 8 percent describe the U.S. as their only viable option, rather than a preferred one. Only 5 percent have actively dropped U.S. plans, while 3 percent remain undecided.

What this shows is a change in posture. The U.S. is still on the table for most students, but it is no longer assumed to be the default or safest choice. Students are holding their options open longer, reassessing trade-offs, and delaying emotional commitment even when practical plans remain intact.

Enthusiasm Has Softened More Than Intent

The sharper shift appears when students are asked not about plans, but about enthusiasm. Only 39 percent say they are as excited about studying in the United States as they were previously. The remaining 61 percent report lower enthusiasm, with 45 percent feeling somewhat less excited and around 17 percent expressing strong negativity or significant decline in interest.

This distinction matters. Applications may still be submitted, but enthusiasm influences behaviour: how many universities students apply to, how much effort they invest in essays, and how they weigh competing offers later. A student who applies out of caution behaves differently from one who applies out of conviction.

The reasons behind this cooling are consistent across regions. Political climate, social tensions, and personal safety perceptions feature prominently. These concerns are not abstract; they shape how families assess risk when sending a student overseas for four years. Financial pressure compounds this. Roughly one third of students who reported reduced enthusiasm cited cost as a major factor, particularly in STEM pathways where programme length, limited aid, and post-study uncertainty raise questions about return on investment.

Students Are Expanding, Not Abandoning, Their Options

One of the most important findings is what students are doing instead of abandoning U.S. plans. The data shows a pattern of diversification rather than substitution. Just over half of respondents say their commitment to the U.S. has not changed, yet many of these same students report actively exploring alternative destinations alongside it.

The UK, Canada, Ireland, and parts of continental Europe are increasingly viewed as parallel options rather than fallback choices. In some regions, students are also giving renewed consideration to strong domestic universities. This does not indicate declining ambition. It reflects a more strategic approach to global education, one where students compare cost, safety, visa policy, and employment outcomes across systems rather than privileging brand alone. This behaviour is especially visible among students with strong academic profiles. Those who once viewed U.S. admission as the singular goal now treat it as one of several competitive pathways.

Academic Reputation Still Anchors the U.S. Value Proposition

Despite shifting sentiment, the academic appeal of U.S. universities remains intact. Students consistently cite research infrastructure, programme breadth, interdisciplinary flexibility, and global career outcomes as reasons the U.S. continues to matter. For many, no other system offers the same combination of academic range and post-graduate opportunity. What has changed is the expectation of clarity. Students want more transparent communication around financial aid, total cost, campus support, and post-study work options. Uncertainty, rather than quality, is what weakens enthusiasm.

What This Means for Counselors and Institutions

For counselors, the takeaway is not that the U.S. is becoming irrelevant, but that student decision making has matured. International applicants are no longer operating on inherited assumptions. Guidance needs to reflect this reality. Students benefit from structured comparison, financial modelling, and early exploration of multiple destinations. Counselors who frame the U.S. as the only credible option risk misaligning with how students now think. For universities, the message is equally clear. Recruitment cannot rely on reputation alone. Institutions that communicate clearly about cost, safety, and outcomes are better positioned to convert intent into enrolment in a more cautious global climate.





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SCHOOL COUNSELLOR OF THE MONTH



Archana Mehta

Head University & College Counselor
Garodia International Centre for
Learning, Mumbai

Every strong student journey has a steady guide behind it, someone who listens, reassures, and helps turn uncertainty into direction. This month, we spotlight Archana Mehta. She believes guidance goes beyond university choices; it is about trust, empathy, and understanding each student's hopes and worries. Known for her warmth, humor, and clarity, Archana creates a safe space where students can break big decisions into manageable steps, build confidence, and move forward with purpose. For her, counseling is about standing beside students as they discover their potential and shape futures they truly own.

1. What's the weirdest/funniest thing you ever heard a student or parent say?

A student once confessed that she kept having nightmares about being "university-less" despite holding multiple offers from top universities and already being placed at her first choice. In her dreams, all the offers mysteriously vanished overnight. It's funny how even when everything is perfectly lined up, the imagination loves to stir up chaos!

2. If you had to write a college essay about yourself, what would your topic be?

"The Art of Being There" I would write about the joy and responsibility of truly being present for students. For me, guidance is not just about forms, deadlines, or scores it's about listening to their stories, understanding their fears, celebrating their small victories, and being someone they feel comfortable turning to at any hour. Some of the most meaningful moments in my work are the late-night messages, the candid conversations about dreams or doubts, and the trust students place in me when they share what they can't share with anyone else. My essay would be a reflection on empathy, connection, and the quiet power of showing up, day after day, for the people you care about.

3. What's the most oddly satisfying part of your job that no one ever thinks about?

The part that truly makes my heart full isn't the college acceptances or the carefully planned timelines, it's the quiet, unspoken moments. It's when a student, after a long day, feels comfortable enough to share their story with me: their worries about fitting in, the pressure of keeping up, or even just a small personal victory they're proud of. I love that students see me not just as a guidance counselor, but as someone they can lean on anytime someone who listens without judgment, who celebrates their wins, and who quietly reassures them when the road feels uncertain. That trust, that connection, is what makes this job endlessly rewarding. It's the small moments of human connection when a student smiles, breathes a little easier, or finally says, "Thank you, I feel understood," that no one ever really thinks about, but they are what make all the work worthwhile.

4. What would your "Guidance Counselor Superpower" be if you were in a comic book?

The Empathy Bubble: I create a literal invisible bubble around students where they can speak freely no judgement, no panic, no parental eavesdropping. Within this bubble, I absorb every worry, dream, and random story... and somehow turn it into clarity, confidence, and sometimes laughter.

5. Which fictional character do you think would make a surprisingly great guidance counselor?

Dobby the House-Elf as a Guidance Counselor: Dobby was loyal, caring, and always appeared when he was needed most, often going to great lengths to protect Harry. In my role, I focus on being that kind of support for students—listening to their stories, guiding them through decisions, and helping them feel understood and confident. Creating a safe, encouraging space for every student is at the heart of what I do.

6. What's your go-to motivational phrase that even you roll your eyes at sometimes—but it works?

"Goals are dreams with deadlines." I know, it sounds like a cliché from a motivational poster and yes, even I roll my eyes at it sometimes. But it actually works. Students often get stuck worrying about the big picture, panicking over applications or essays, and this little phrase reminds them (and me!) that breaking things down into manageable steps makes everything doable. Dreams are great... but a deadline turns them into something real and somehow, a little less scary.

MOST SOUGHT-AFTER SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

What These Programs Actually Offer and Why Students Consistently Compete for Them



Bharat Mundra
Director
Indo Bharat Online School

Students attend summer schools for very different, clearly identifiable reasons. Some are looking to add academic weight to their profile through selective programs. Others want structured exposure to subjects they cannot access meaningfully within their school curriculum. Many use summer schools to experience a university ecosystem they are considering for undergraduate study. For younger students, summer school is often the first controlled experience of living independently, managing schedules, academic workload, and peer interaction without family support.

Regardless of motivation, summer schools that remain consistently sought after tend to share specific characteristics: defined academic intent, selective admissions aligned with curriculum rigor, and a learning model that goes beyond surface-level exposure. Below is a refined overview of some of the most sought-after summer programs for students from India, discussed in no particular order.

Stanford SuMaC

The Stanford University Mathematics Camp, run at Stanford University, is designed for students with advanced mathematical ability rather than general STEM interest. The program is typically open to Grade 12 students, with occasional exceptional Grade 11 applicants, and requires clearance of a mathematics entrance examination focused on proof-based reasoning. The curriculum emphasizes abstract topics such as number theory and algebraic structures, prioritizing logical argumentation over syllabus acceleration. Duration is typically 3 to 4 weeks, delivered in an intensive residential format.

RSI (MIT and India)

The Research Science Institute, operated by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is among the most selective research programs available to high school students. RSI is open to high-performing students in Grades 11 and 12. It combines advanced STEM coursework with original research under professional mentorship, often reaching undergraduate-level depth. The program typically runs for 6 weeks. Its Indian counterpart, RSI-India, is a prestigious 6-week summer program for top Indian high school students at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore.

Penn Wharton M&TSI

The Management and Technology Summer Institute at the University of Pennsylvania is open to students in Grades 11 and 12. It reflects Penn's dual-degree M&T philosophy, integrating quantitative reasoning, engineering principles, and business frameworks. The curriculum assumes strong mathematical and analytical preparation and is not introductory in nature. Program duration is approximately 3 weeks, delivered through lectures, case work, and team-based projects.

VIPER @ Penn

VIPER, the Vagelos Integrated Program in Energy Research, is typically open to students in Grades 11 and 12 with strong STEM backgrounds. The program approaches energy as a multidisciplinary problem spanning science, engineering, economics, and policy. Instruction is applied and systems-oriented rather than purely technical. Duration varies by year, but programs usually run 2 to 3 weeks.

PROMYS (BU and Ashoka)

PROMYS, originally based at Boston University and now also offered through partners such as Ashoka University, is open to high school students, typically Grades 9 to 12, with strong mathematical reasoning ability. The curriculum centers on proof-writing, logical structure, and independent problem formulation. Competition math is not a prerequisite. The program typically runs for 6 weeks, making it one of the longest and most academically demanding summer offerings.

Summer Boarding Courses (SBC)

Summer Boarding Courses operate across Eton College, Oxford, and Cambridge, serving students typically aged 13 to 18. Programs usually run for 2 to 4 weeks and offer structured academic instruction alongside supervised residential life. Courses commonly include Law, Medicine, Engineering, Economics, Business, International Relations, Psychology, Creative Writing, Film Studies, and Experimental Sciences. SBC is particularly sought after by students seeking early exposure to UK-style academics within a highly supported environment.

Great Books Summer Program (GBSP)

The Great Books Summer Program is open to students aged approximately 12 to 17, spanning middle school through early high school. Programs typically run for 2 to 6 weeks, depending on location. The curriculum is discussion-driven and focuses on close reading of canonical texts in philosophy, literature, and political thought. Emphasis is placed on argument construction, verbal reasoning, and analytical depth rather than content coverage.

Yale Young Global Scholars (YYGS)

Yale Young Global Scholars, hosted by Yale University, is open to students aged 14 to 18, generally corresponding to Grades 9 to 12. The program runs for 2 weeks and offers thematic tracks across Global Affairs, Politics, Economics, STEM, and Applied Sciences. Instruction emphasizes discussion, peer collaboration, and conceptual understanding rather than graded assessments.

Johns Hopkins CTY

The Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University serves academically advanced students typically aged 12 to 17. Admission is often test-based. Programs vary in subject and intensity, with durations ranging from 1 to 3 weeks. Instruction is fast-paced and assessment-driven, making CTY suitable for students comfortable with academic acceleration.

Cambridge Pre-College

Cambridge Pre-College programs, run by the University of Cambridge, are open to students aged approximately 15 to 18. Programs usually run for 2 weeks. Courses commonly include Engineering, Economics, Law, Medicine, Psychology, Natural Sciences, History, and Philosophy, with a strong emphasis on academic writing, discussion, and independent thinking aligned with UK undergraduate expectations.

NUS Summer School

The National University of Singapore Summer School, run by National University of Singapore, typically serves students aged 15 to 18. Programs usually run for 2 to 4 weeks and offer academically rigorous courses in Computer Science, Data Science, Engineering, Economics, Entrepreneurship, and Global Studies. Many courses are credit-bearing and taught by NUS faculty, with a strong applied and research-oriented focus.

SMU Summer Programs

Singapore Management University summer programs are generally open to students aged 15 to 18 and run for 1 to 3 weeks, depending on the course. Programs focus on Business, Economics, Data Analytics, Technology, and University Readiness. Several offerings are delivered in collaboration with UniPrep101, which works with SMU faculty to design academically structured courses emphasizing case-based learning, applied frameworks, and professional skill development.



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BRIDGING THE GAP: WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRANSITIONS

A New CIS Framework to Develop and Implement Student Support



Frederico Silva

**Director of Higher Education & International Student Transitions Services
Council of International Schools**

For many years, the Council of International Schools (CIS) has brought member schools and higher education institutions together with the purpose of facilitating international student mobility. Recognizing that the transition from secondary to higher education can be uniquely challenging for international students, we embarked in a multi-year research project to develop resources and tools that our members can utilize when enhancing or implementing programmes to support students in their educational journey.

Here's what we learned—and how the new CIS Educational Transitions Framework aims to help.

1. Gaps in understanding the unique needs of international students

Our research, conducted across a sample of CIS member schools and universities worldwide, found that the unique needs of international students are not universally understood by higher education institutions, especially when compared to domestic students on their campuses (CIS 2023 Survey Analysis).

International students face a range of stressors, from socio-cultural and educational differences, developing independent life skills, to the practical challenges of relocation. If left unaddressed, these challenges can harm students' physical, social, and mental health, directly impacting their academic performance and overall well-being.

Our conversations with international students revealed the following areas where they felt they could benefit from more support:

- Experiencing feelings of rootlessness and loneliness from being displaced from friendships, family and social support;
- Understanding their new cultural environment at university and their own diverse background within this new context;
- Understanding new learning environments and expectations for learning
- Developing independent life skills to support their well-being
- Help with practical challenges related to relocation such as obtaining a visa and accessing relevant support services.

2. Inconsistent understanding of the diversity of international students

There are diverse identities within the "international student" category, especially those from the international school community who live highly mobile lifestyles that result in Third Culture Kid (TCK) or Cross Culture Kid (CCK) identities. Many counsellors and parents who we surveyed expressed concern about universities not recognizing the transition needs of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) or Cross Culture Kids (CCKs), and in particular, providing support for repatriating students who are often grouped together with domestic students. As a result, they are often excluded from international student support services.

3. Missed Opportunities for Dialogue and Connection between Schools and Universities

Our research also revealed a missed opportunity for dialogue between schools and universities. There is a significant difference of opinion between schools, parents, and universities regarding international students' transition needs. Schools may not take into account universities' perspectives when preparing students, and universities may not take into account the school perspectives when deciding how to support international students on campus. This gap in expectations means that support is often fragmented when students move from secondary to higher education, leading to a 'disconnect' that students experience during their enrolment journey and initial stages of university life.

In addition, student support staff from universities find that even where institutions have sufficient support services, many students don't engage, often due to lack of awareness. This further highlights the importance of connecting schools and higher education representatives to better help students understand the type of support available to them once they arrive at university.

4. The Student Voice Is Often Missing

Another key finding is that the student voice is frequently missing from conversations about transition support. For example, while schools, universities, and parents may not prioritize connections between prospective and current university students, this was one of the highest ranked supportive measures among students who responded to our survey.⁵ The Need for Comprehensive, Proactive Support

Most transition models tend to focus on isolated challenges or institutional responsibility for welcoming, rather than offering integrated support networks that address the diverse needs of international students in a more holistic manner that is integrated throughout the institution. Current models also often overlook the diverse demographics and needs of international students which require thoughtful, proactive support.

When transitions are not managed well, students' mental health, well-being, and academic success can suffer. Conversely, with effective planning, these moments of challenge can become opportunities for growth, resilience, and lifelong skills.

Bridging the Gaps in International Student Transition

In response to these challenges, CIS developed the Educational Transitions Framework, which is the foundation used to develop evaluation tools, practice guides and other resources in a new Secondary to Higher Education Transitions Support Pack. In addition, members can participate in a yearly workshop designed to create tangible opportunities of cross-sector collaboration for positive educational transitions programming.

We invite you in joining us in the movement to continuing to promote proactive, intentional, and supportive conversations centered around cross-sector collaboration to positively impact students in their transition from secondary to higher education.

The CIS logo graphic is a stylized, abstract representation of the letters 'C', 'I', and 'S'. The 'C' is green with a red diagonal striped pattern on its left side. The 'I' is blue with a green circle on its vertical stem. The 'S' is blue with a green circle on its bottom curve. The background is a light blue with various abstract shapes like circles, lines, and dots in shades of blue, green, and orange, suggesting a network or globe.



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WHY GOOD MARKS DON'T ALWAYS MAKE GOOD ENGINEERS—AND HOW TO SPOT THE REAL ONES EARLY

The Early Behaviours that Predict Long-Term Technical Thinking



Neeraj Mandhana
Founder
Aiyyo

In India, engineering aptitude is often reduced to performance in Mathematics and Physics. Students who score well in equations, derivations, and numerical problem-solving are routinely funnelled toward engineering pathways, while others are quietly ruled out. Yet in practice, many of these high-performing students struggle in engineering environments, while others, who may not top exams, thrive once faced with real-world systems, constraints, and design problems. The missing lens is structural thinking: the ability to understand how parts interact within a system, anticipate failure points, and iteratively improve solutions. Engineering is not just applied science; it is applied thinking.

True engineering ability often reveals itself years before formal coursework begins. It shows up in how children engage with the physical and logical world around them.

One of the earliest indicators is a child's instinct to take things apart and put them back together. When a child dismantles a toy car to see how the wheels turn or attempts to fix a broken switch, they are engaging in reverse engineering. They are forming hypotheses ("If I remove this, what stops working?"), testing causal relationships, and building mental models of systems, exactly what engineers do when analysing machines, circuits, or software architectures.

A strong interest in strategic games such as chess offers another signal. Chess trains children in decision trees, constraint-based optimisation, and long-horizon thinking. For example, a child who sacrifices a piece to gain positional advantage is intuitively weighing trade-offs, an essential engineering skill when balancing cost, performance, safety, and efficiency in real-world designs.

Physical children who love sports are often overlooked, yet sport is rich with applied mechanics. A child adjusting their bowling angle in cricket or recalibrating foot placement in football is unconsciously experimenting with force vectors, momentum, and timing. Engineers working in robotics, biomechanics, or automotive design rely on the same physical intuition, on how systems behave under stress and motion.

Gaming, particularly console-based or simulation-heavy games, also reflects engineering cognition. Children who master controllers, understand feedback loops, or optimise in-game resources are learning systems control. A child who fine-tunes sensitivity settings or studies game mechanics to improve performance is doing what engineers do with user interfaces, control systems, and performance optimisation.

LEGO play is perhaps the clearest indicator of structural thinking. Children who enjoy LEGO rarely stop at building instructions. They modify designs, test stability, rebuild after collapse, and optimise structures. This mirrors the engineering design cycle: prototype, test, fail, redesign. The learning is not linear; it is iterative.

Origami, though quieter, signals strong spatial reasoning and sequencing ability. Folding paper into complex forms requires understanding geometric transformations, symmetry, and stepwise execution. Engineers in fields such as aerospace, materials science, and mechanical design rely heavily on this kind of spatial intelligence.

Children who tinker with household gadgets, such as remotes, fans, and old phones, are engaging in informal systems analysis. They learn which components control behaviour, how inputs lead to outputs, and why some failures cascade. Even unsuccessful attempts build intuition about constraints and dependencies.

Rubik's cubes and speed cubing reflect algorithmic thinking. These children memorise sequences, recognise patterns, and optimise solution paths. The mindset of reducing complexity through structure is foundational to fields like computer engineering, operations research, and systems design.

Some children go a step further: they imagine machines that do not yet exist. They talk about robots that clean oceans, drones that deliver medicine, or devices that solve everyday inefficiencies. This blend of imagination and feasibility is not fantasy; it is early engineering innovation, creative thinking bounded by logic.

Finally, children fascinated by cars, trains, or planes often focus less on appearance and more on features: engine types, fuel efficiency, safety systems, or speed. They are analysing trade-offs and performance metrics, thinking like mechanical or automotive engineers long before formal exposure.

For parents and counselors, the responsibility is not to push children prematurely, but to observe accurately. Engineering potential is not defined by marks alone. It lies in how children think about systems, solve problems, and interact with structure. When recognised early, these tendencies can be nurtured through hands-on learning, design challenges, and exploratory environments, allowing future engineers to emerge naturally, rather than by force.





Jesus Lall

**Chairman
Universal Education**

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 Jesus Lall, the Chairman of Universal Education, to uncover what drives his success, how he balances the demands of work and life, and the mantra that keeps him moving forward.

What was your college degree?

Master's Degree in Commerce from University of Mumbai

Your Favorite Book

I don't confine myself to traditional reading; instead, I absorb insights from diverse sources daily. This habit keeps me updated and fuels my pursuit of original thinking – a blend of contextual awareness, adaptability, and a vision for societal progress.

In education, balancing tradition with innovation is key. While foundational knowledge anchors us, fostering original thought is what drives transformation. How can we nurture students to inherit wisdom and challenge boundaries? For me, it's about cultivating curiosity, embracing diverse perspectives, and aligning learning with real-world impact.

Your Comfort Food

I am a food adventurer! No comfort food really! Given my largely gluten and lactose-free diet, I would say I am probably the one introducing comfort food to others.

A School/College you really enjoyed visiting

I visited ESSA Academy in Bolton, UK, way back in 2017 and was impressed by the exceptional work happening there! It inspired me to drive better accountability for learning outcomes – a game-changer for our students. I take inspiration from many institutes and leaders. Many have something awesome to offer. We must have the humility to appreciate and acknowledge the good work being done by so many. It helps us grow too!

What's on top of your bucket list?

My aspiration is to contribute to a society that embodies meritocracy – where every individual has equal opportunities to pursue their passion and make an impact. I believe education is the key to unlocking this potential, bridging gaps, and creating pathways for diverse talents to flourish. By fostering curiosity, empathy, and real-world problem-solving, we can build a future where everyone's unique strengths drive progress.

One thing you would most like to change about the world

One thing I'd change? I'd establish a global framework – a 'Compact of Respect' – defining dignity, empathy, and mutual growth as non-negotiables. Anchored in humanity's shared values, it'd guide societies toward constructive contribution, ensuring every individual has opportunities to uplift and not harm. Think: a moral compass shaping progress, above laws, for a harmonious planet.

If you could give one piece of advice to your high school self, what would it be?

To my high school self, I'd say: craft a vision, then work backwards. The power of intent and self-belief is the greatest gift you can nurture. It's not about having all the answers – it's about trusting the process, embracing uncertainty, and staying committed to growth.

What inspired you to do what you do?

I'm driven to create social impact through education. Shaping young minds in K-12 and beyond allows us to influence future leaders, innovators, and changemakers meaningfully. It's about nurturing curiosity, empathy, and progress – one generation at a time. I want to be in service of the society in general.

A secret to balancing work & life

For me, it's about prioritization and boundaries – focus on what drives 80% of the impact, and don't sweat the rest. Time-block for work, and when I am off, I try to make the most out of it.

Fitness-wise, I squeeze in workouts when I can – walk, steam & moving my body as much as I can. And food? I try to keep it real – mostly whole foods, GF/LF when possible, and loads of hydration.

Your Life Mantra

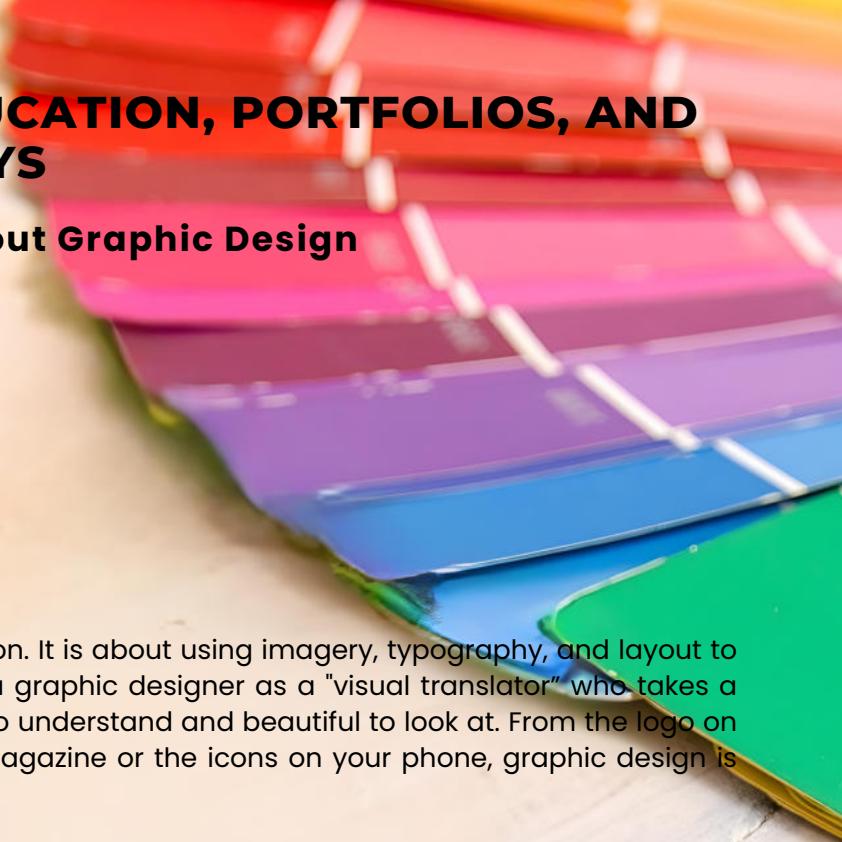
It's about zooming out to see the larger picture, with a long-term horizon. I'm driven by 'Intent & Integrity' – they guide my decisions. I believe fluid intelligence trigs progress more than crystallized info. Am always inclined about creating something huge, making opportunities count, and embracing the journey. Make it happen – literally!

GRAPHIC DESIGN 101: EDUCATION, PORTFOLIOS, AND PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

Everything You Need to Know About Graphic Design



Neha Pandit
Founder
We-Learn



What is this design major?

Graphic Design is the art of visual communication. It is about using imagery, typography, and layout to share a message or solve a problem. Think of a graphic designer as a "visual translator" who takes a complex idea and turns it into something easy to understand and beautiful to look at. From the logo on your coffee cup to the layout of your favorite magazine or the icons on your phone, graphic design is what gives information its "look" and personality.

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 most prestigious. Srishti Manipal and MIT-ID Pune also offer fantastic, industry-ready programs.

Around the world, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and Parsons School of Design in the US are world leaders. In the UK, Central Saint Martins and the Royal College of Art are top-tier. These schools focus heavily on your portfolio, they want to see how you think and how you use visuals to tell a unique story.

What skills do students develop?

You'll learn to master the "visual toolkit." The core skills include:

- **Typography:** The art of choosing and arranging fonts to set a "mood."
- **Color Theory:** Understanding how different colors affect human emotions.
- **Layout & Composition:** Organizing text and images so the eye knows where to look first.
- **Visual Hierarchy:** Learning how to make the most important information stand out.

You also learn to take feedback gracefully and explain the "why" behind your creative choices.

What academic and technical knowledge does it build?

Academically, you'll study design history to see how styles have evolved and semiotics (the study of signs and symbols). You'll learn how people perceive visuals and how to use that knowledge to influence behavior.

Technically, you'll become an expert in the Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign). You'll also learn about "print production", the science of ink, paper, and physical materials as well as digital design for social media and websites. It's a mix of old-school art theory and modern digital tools.

How should a student build their profile and portfolio and what subject combinations would be required for this major?

Graphic design is very flexible! You can come from Science, Commerce, or Arts. However, these subjects are very helpful:

- **Fine Arts/Commercial Art:** For a strong foundation in drawing and color.
- **Psychology:** To understand how people react to different visual cues.
- **Media Studies/English:** For storytelling and communication skills.
- **History:** To understand the cultural context behind different design styles.

The most important thing is a strong creative drive and a willingness to learn digital tools.

Admissions officers look for originality and process. Instead of just showing finished logos, show your "sketchbook thinking."

- **Personal Projects:** Design a new cover for your favorite book or a logo for a fictional brand.
- **Typography Experiments:** Play with letters and words to show their meaning visually.
- **Case Studies:** Explain the problem you were trying to solve and show the rough sketches that led to your final design.

They want to see that you have a "designer's eye" for the world around you.

What career paths and job roles are available?

The options are endless because every business needs design!

- **Brand Designer:** Creating the entire visual identity (logos, colors) for a company.
- **Art Director:** Leading the creative vision for ad campaigns or magazines.
- **Packaging Designer:** Designing the boxes and labels for products.
- **Editorial Designer:** Working on layouts for books and newspapers. You can work in a high-energy advertising agency, join an in-house team at a big tech company like Apple, or even work as a successful freelancer.

How do I know if this major is right for me?

Do you find yourself critiquing the font on a restaurant menu? Do you love arranging things so they look "just right"? If you are someone who notices the small visual details that others miss, you have a graphic design mindset. This major is perfect for people who are visual storytellers and enjoy the challenge of making information both functional and beautiful. You don't need to be a master painter, but you do need to love communicating through pictures and text.

Bonus – Fun facts about the major!

- **The FedEx Secret:** Look closely at the "E" and "x" in the FedEx logo—there's a hidden arrow between them! That's great graphic design.
- **Font Power:** Using a certain font can actually change how much people trust the information they are reading.
- **Negative Space:** Sometimes the most important part of a design is the "empty" space you don't fill.
- **Psychology of Color:** Fast food logos are often red and yellow because those colors are proven to make people feel hungry!



AIYYO JOB SEARCH

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UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS: AN UNDERGRADUATE-FOCUSED REVIEW

Why International Students Choose to Study at This Hungarian Public University



Ravisha Maheshwari
Senior Editor
Aiyyo

Founded in 1367, the University of Pécs is Hungary's oldest university and one of the earliest in Central Europe. Today, it functions as a large public research university enrolling over 25,000 students, of whom approximately 5,500 are international, representing 22% of the total population. Students come from 146 countries, making Pécs one of the most internationally diverse non-capital city universities in Europe. The university has been delivering full degree programmes in English for over 40 years, beginning with medicine in 1984.

Undergraduate Degrees and Integrated Study Pathways

At the undergraduate level, the University of Pécs operates within the Bologna framework, offering 3-year bachelor's degrees, 2-year master's degrees, and integrated one-tier master programmes lasting 5 to 6 years. These undivided programmes are particularly relevant for students seeking a direct professional qualification after secondary school. Disciplines such as General Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Architecture, and selected Fine Arts allow students to enter directly from school and graduate with a master's level degree without a separate postgraduate application process.

Curriculum Design, Teaching Model, and Academic Flexibility

Undergraduate study at Pécs is characterised by a high degree of curricular flexibility. Students are not required to commit to rigid academic tracks from the outset. Options include pursuing a single major, combining a major with a minor, completing multiple majors across different fields, or formally changing or declaring a major later in the degree. The university also permits custom-designed majors and offers interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary programmes, allowing students to adapt their academic pathway as interests develop.

Teaching is delivered through a combination of lectures and seminars, balancing theoretical foundations with discussion and applied learning. Assessment methods vary by discipline and include written and oral examinations, essays, and project work. The university follows a 5-point grading system, where 5 is the highest grade and 1 is a fail. The academic year runs for 10 months, divided into autumn and spring semesters, with September as the primary intake.

Programme Breadth and Early Research Exposure

The University of Pécs comprises 10 faculties operating across a city-integrated multi-campus model. At the undergraduate level, the university offers over 100 English-taught programmes spanning health sciences, engineering, natural sciences, humanities, business, and creative disciplines. Key areas include Medicine and Dentistry, Computer Science, Mechanical, Civil, and Architectural Engineering, Business Administration and Management, Psychology, International Relations, and core sciences such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Geography.

While research intensity increases at the postgraduate level, undergraduates benefit from early exposure to applied research environments. Institutional strengths lie in biotechnology, healthcare innovation, smart technologies, and engineering sciences. Facilities such as the 3D Print Centre, jointly used by engineering and medical faculties, and the Szentágothai Research Centre, with research clusters in Data Science, Molecular Biology, Neuroscience, and Immunology, allow academically motivated undergraduates to engage with research-informed teaching from an early stage.

Undergraduate Admissions and Entry Requirements

Admissions at the University of Pécs are selective and faculty-specific. The university operates a decentralised admissions system, meaning each faculty independently evaluates applicants. Meeting published minimum requirements does not guarantee admission. Undergraduate applicants are assessed holistically, with emphasis placed not only on school grades but also on interview performance, subject readiness, and motivation.

The standard process includes online application submission, document evaluation, an online academic or motivational interview, and in some cases additional assessments. Medical programmes require a written entrance examination, business and engineering programmes may include mathematics tests, and creative programmes require portfolio submissions.

The university accepts a wide range of international secondary school qualifications, including IB Diploma, A Levels, US High School Diploma, BTEC Level 3, and national certificates. The general requirement is completion of 12 years of schooling and eligibility for higher education in the home country. English proficiency requirements typically align with CEFR B2, with accepted scores including IELTS 6.0, TOEFL iBT 90, and Duolingo 115. Several faculties, including medicine, engineering, pharmacy, and health sciences, assess English proficiency internally through interviews and entrance exams rather than requiring standardised test scores.

Cost of Study and Scholarships

Undergraduate tuition fees range from 3400 to 8000 EUR per year for BA and BSc programmes. Integrated medical programmes fall in the 14300 to 15000 EUR per year range. Preparatory language programmes cost between 4200 and 9300 EUR, depending on duration. Pécs was ranked Europe's most affordable student city in 2024, with average monthly living costs of around 600 EUR, including accommodation, food, transport, and utilities.

Undergraduates are eligible for the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship, a fully funded programme covering tuition fees, monthly stipend, accommodation support, and medical insurance. The scholarship is awarded through sending country nominations, not by the university itself, making it competitive but financially transformative for selected students.

Student Support and Campus Life

Undergraduate students receive structured integration support through International Student Ambassadors, personal mentors, counselling services, and legal aid clinics. The university supports a wide range of student organisations, cultural activities, language learning opportunities, and sports facilities. Dormitory accommodation is generally available for international freshmen, with costs typically between 200 and 240 EUR per month, including utilities.

Graduate Outcomes and Progression

According to recent data, 80 to 90% of graduates secure employment immediately or within weeks of graduation. Undergraduate degrees from Pécs are recognised across the European Union, facilitating postgraduate study or employment mobility. Graduates may apply for a study to work residence permit in Hungary, though many pursue careers or further education in other EU countries.





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NAVIGATING GENZ PARENTING

Rethinking How We Connect With a Changing Generation



Ashima Verma
Wellness Counselor
Bangalore International School

"Parenting is the only job where you get a PhD in multitasking with zero experience." This resonates with every parent, no matter the age. When we look at the world today, we may suddenly feel unprepared. Maybe it is age, maybe it is the post-COVID era, and thus educating or guiding Gen Z feels like a puzzle we cannot solve.

From being a millennial myself, and then looking at the Gen Z generation, to now lately Gen Alpha, as alphabets have run out, I see a world that no longer holds the pillars of old parenting styles. From long-format podcasts to random chants like 6–7, from preaching a stable 9–5 job to embracing startups, we realise that everything has become obsolete for today's generation, and sustaining their engagement is a herculean task.

With attention spans decreasing and demands increasing, we all need to reinvent the wheel of parenting so that young adults can find a way to solve their own dilemmas with emotional balance. So how do we parent a generation that we do not fully understand? Here is a hint. It is not a keyword, but a C word: Collaborate. This is the biggest missing piece of the puzzle that most people overlook.

Let us break it down.

1. The Boundary Borders

This is a feeling that encapsulates not just a person's bubble that they wish to keep around them, but also a child's safe space. Boundaries form the basis for almost all Gen Z interactions, from privacy to relationships.

Children today understand respect and expect clear respect for the limits they set. This may seem unconventional to us, as we had parents barging into our rooms asking about our day, but today's youth is different. Boundaries are created not to keep parents out, but to better define points where children recognise their own triggers and wish to avoid them.

2. Risk Over a 9–5 Career

I have students wanting to pursue animal pharmacology after an MBBS, and others becoming digital creators after completing a CA degree. This made me realise that children today get excited by uncharted territory and often prefer calculated risks over the monotonous desk jobs we once found secure.

The idea, then, is to create a plan of action with them, along with a plan B. It acts like a safety parachute they can fall back on, without taking an all-or-nothing risk. I usually recommend that students create three plans of action for their scores or careers so they do not fall into an uncertain abyss.

3. T for Triggers Needs E for Empathy

Post-COVID, Gen Z is a mentally aware and emotionally vulnerable population, and proudly so. It was about time we had a generation that spoke its mind, but this also brings triggers and soft points that can deeply disturb someone. From gender to work-life balance, friends to careers, it can feel like a ticking time bomb when you do not know what triggers your child.

This is where communication and quality time help. Even spending 30 minutes without screens and with uninterrupted conversation allows genuine dialogue and authentic connection. Do not worry if you do not know their triggers. Simply acknowledging that they may need a listening ear is always welcome.

4. Digital Detox, Not Blanket Bans

With AI becoming our children's love language, tutor, and therapist, we all agree that digital tools are here to stay. Discussing their online activity, sharing facts and numbers about digital safety, the key is to permit yet restrict.

Even though it sounds like an oxymoron, it simply means allowing access, as curiosity or bans only build resentment, while restricting duration with clearly defined terms. Children today are practical and negotiate terms to find solutions. Use this as a parenting loophole. A ban may create more issues than it resolves, whereas mutually agreed access creates balance.

5. Flip Answers for Genuine Questions

Children enjoy answering questions about themselves, like a mini interview, but not the hard, stinging questions focused only on academics or work. They respond better to questions about their lives, their interests, their friends, and what inspires them. We all light up when someone genuinely asks about our day and wants to know how we feel, rather than judging our choices.

Why not ask your children about their choices? Validate the good ones and encourage areas where they show enthusiasm and interest. We often slip into monologues with students, and that is where their attention switches off.

Therefore, Gen Z does not want to be spectators, but spec-tators, viewing and building their own roles, while we remain the audience offering constructive feedback through collaboration.

A NEWSLETTER FOR INDIA'S COUNSELING COMMUNITY

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LEGENDS OF ADMISSIONS

1. An Unforgettable Travel Memory.

Joining a night patrol trek through the Periyar Tiger Reserve; experiencing the forest on foot in total darkness was a humbling and electrifying perspective-shifter.

2. Most unexpected question a student has ever asked you.

'Can I bring my dog to live with me on campus?' It's a reminder that for students, choosing a college is about finding a home, not just a classroom

3. If you weren't in admissions, what job would you secretly love to have?

An international tour guide. I love the logistics of travel & introducing a new place to people.

4. What's a totally random skill you've picked up because of your job?

Airport Navigation 101. I can track down a hidden charging port and the best cup of coffee in almost any terminal.

5. What's one thing you wish students knew about admissions, that they often don't?

We aren't grade-processing machines. Your GPA gets you in the door, but we are looking for the human being behind the transcript.

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

Grit, Guts, and Heart - The "Orange" Way!

7. What's the most oddly specific club or organization on campus?

The Syracuse University Outing Club (SUOC)—their 'winter camping' trips are the ultimate way to conquer a Central New York winter.

Denver D'Souza

Regional Manager,
International Admissions
Syracuse University

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 Denver D'Souza, whose journey across cultures, conversations, and campuses offers a warm and inspiring look into the heart of admissions.

AIYYO'S RANKING OF THE MONTH

Hidden Jewel Colleges in Singapore



Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

SUSS is an autonomous public university in Singapore with a broad suite of English-taught full-time undergraduate degrees including Business Analytics, Finance, Psychology, Human Resource Management, Supply Chain Management, ICT, Social Work, and Public Safety & Security. It currently enrolls about 10,000–15,000 students total, with undergraduates forming the large majority of that population. SUSS has an estimated acceptance rate around 40–50% for undergraduates and draws international students (on Student's Pass) alongside a strong local cohort in applied disciplines.



SIM Global Education (Singapore Institute of Management – SIM GE)

SIM GE does not award its own Singapore undergraduate degrees but partners with foreign universities (e.g., University of London, University at Buffalo) to deliver fully English-taught international bachelor's programmes in Business, Psychology, Computer Science, International Trade, and similar fields. Annual enrolment across SIM GE undergraduate and postgraduate students is over 16,000 from more than 50 countries, creating a multicultural campus. Indian students are a significant part of SIM's international cohort due to its wide access and global degree credentials.



ESSEC Asia-Pacific (Singapore)

ESSEC's Singapore campus is part of the ESSEC Global BBA, a 4-year, English-taught undergraduate Bachelor of Business Administration recognised internationally and highly ranked in Europe. The Asia-Pacific campus hosts around 950 students annually from 46+ countries, fostering significant cultural diversity and global business exposure. The Global BBA itself offers integrated professional experience, semester abroad options, and a vast network of partner universities and employers, making it a strong choice for international business careers.



Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)

SUTD offers five full-time English-taught undergraduate programmes: Computer Science & Design, Engineering Product Development, Engineering Systems & Design, Architecture & Sustainable Design, and Design & Artificial Intelligence, all designed to integrate technology with design thinking. As an autonomous university with a focus on multidisciplinary innovation, SUTD has built a globally recognised, research-oriented undergraduate community (most graduates secure employment within six months). The student body is internationally diverse, attracting students from Asia and beyond due to its distinctive Design-AI and engineering curriculum.



Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)

Founded in 1938 and now part of the University of the Arts Singapore, NAFA offers English-taught Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degrees in fields such as Biophilic Design, Design Practice, Fine Art, Performance Making, and Music (including the RCM-UAS|NAFA Bachelor of Music with an international placement in London). NAFA's full-time student body is around 2,300–3,300, with many degree students enrolling after diploma or international pathways. Its strong creative arts focus, historical legacy, and industry partnerships draw local and international students into specialised arts, design, and performance careers.

HOW CAREERS ACTUALLY GROW IN A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

Lessons for Students from Real Workforce Data, Employer Behaviour, and Early Choices



Shrinidhi Rao
Chief of Staff
The Burning Glass Institute

Singapore's progress has always hinged on the progress of its people. That idea is not abstract. It mirrors how individual lives and careers unfold. The nation's strength has come from its people's determination to learn, train, and continually improve, and that same principle applies to students standing at the start of their working lives. Invest in people, expand opportunity, prepare for the future is as relevant to career guidance as it is to national success.

For students, the promise is straightforward. A society where every worker can advance on the strength of their talent and the dedication of their effort is what makes education feel meaningful. Yet the world students are entering is different from the one their parents knew. Rapid technological change, shifting demographics, and intense global competition mean that credentials alone no longer guarantee progress. For counsellors, this shifts the focus. Education matters, but so does what happens after graduation. Competitiveness now hinges on how effectively employers unlock and grow the talent in their workforce.

What makes this perspective especially useful for students is that it reflects real career journeys, not ideals. For the first time, researchers analysed a comprehensive, validated dataset of detailed occupation, wage, and hiring records to trace how workers actually move through the economy. This matters because young people are often told what should work, not what actually does.

Two insights stand out and are especially important for early career decisions. First, employers shape outcomes. People in similar roles can experience very different futures depending on where they work. Some see steady growth in pay, progression, and retention, while others stall despite effort. This means a first job is more than a starting point. It can set the direction for years. There is no single best type of employer. Exemplary performers achieve results through different strategies tailored to their operating reality. What matters is whether growth is intentional.

Second, neither industry nor size is destiny. Students are often advised to chase certain sectors or large, well known companies. Yet strong outcomes appear across industries and across employers of all sizes. Context matters, but employer choices still drive wide differences in workforce value and employee outcomes. For counsellors, this reinforces the need to help students look beyond brand names and ask better questions about development, support, and progression.

Another important shift is how opportunity is measured. Most measures of job quality depend on what firms say about themselves. Here, the focus is lived experience. Who is hired, how long they stay, whether and when they advance, and how their pay evolves. These are the questions students worry about, even if they struggle to articulate them. Adjusting comparisons by occupation helps ensure that differences reflect employer behaviour rather than job titles.

Opportunity shows up in five practical ways that counsellors can translate directly into advice.

- 1. Pay** matters because pay is the most direct expression of opportunity. Starting salary matters less than whether wages grow, signalling learning and trust.
- 2. Progression** is about movement. Metrics capture promotion chances, leadership development, lateral moves, and even what happens after someone leaves. Progression metrics capture not just whether

workers stay in jobs, but whether careers are actually moving forward either within the firm or beyond it. For students, this reframes job changes. Leaving can be a positive outcome if the foundation is strong.

3. Fairness shapes long term confidence. Gender parity compares advancement probabilities and wage levels for men and women in the same occupations. Persistent gaps signal barriers that can limit potential, regardless of talent. Counsellors can encourage students to pay attention to how opportunity is shared, not just promised.

4. Retention tells another story. Entry retention reflects how supported people feel early on. Continuous retention reflects whether workplaces are built for long term growth. Stability is not a passive outcome but an earned advantage, shaped by onboarding, mentoring, and clear expectations.

5. Hiring practices define access. Hiring practices shape who gets in the door, especially for students without traditional backgrounds. Employers that value skills and potential widen pathways into meaningful work.

Finally, it helps students to know there are different ways to win. Some workplaces act as Career Launchers, others as Career Builders, and others as Career Anchors. None is universally right. The key lesson is empowering. Opportunity is not a matter of chance but of design. Students who understand this make better choices. Counsellors who frame careers this way help young people see not just where they can start, but how far they can realistically go.





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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