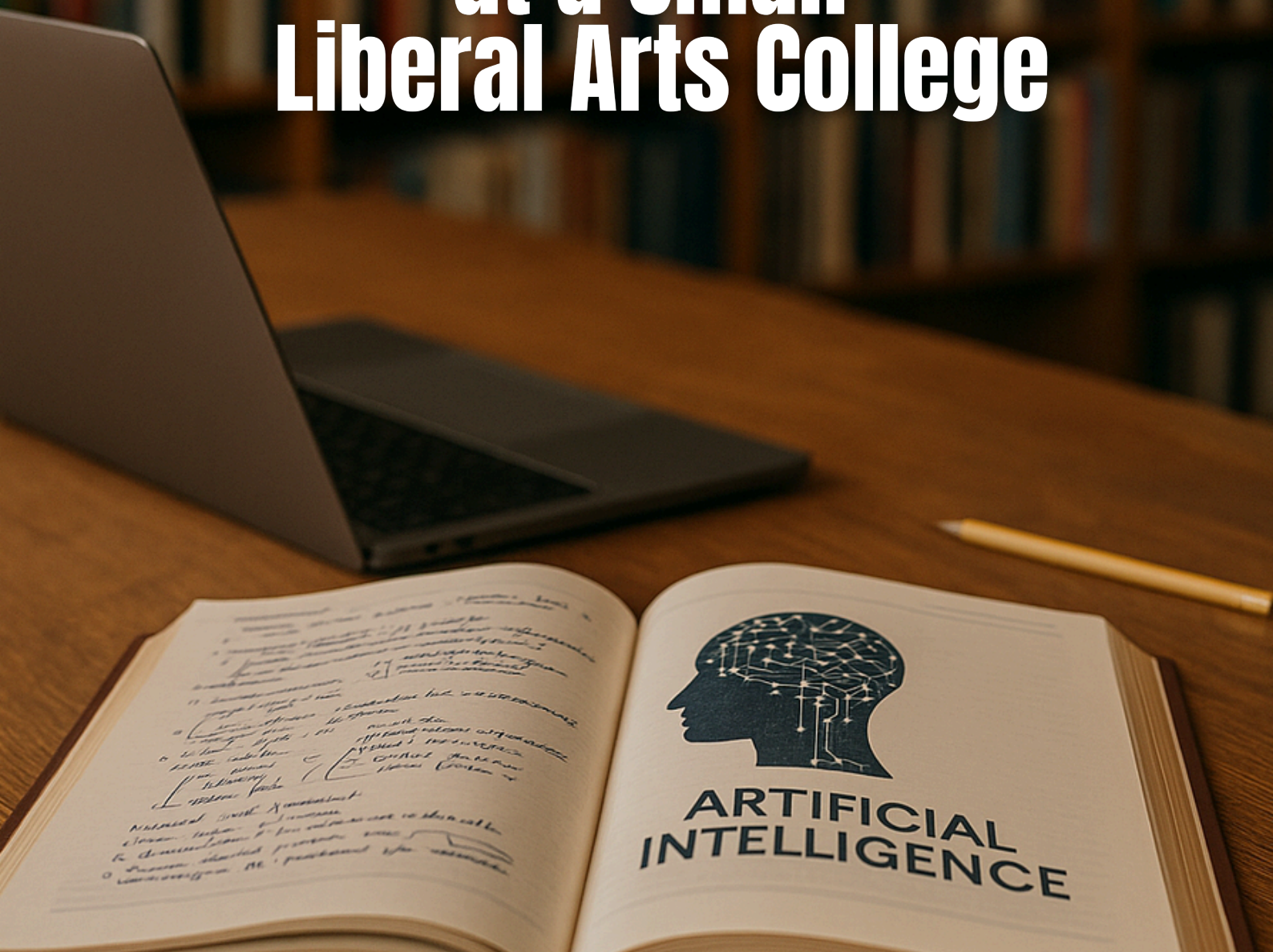


# Why You Should Study AI at a Small Liberal Arts College



 Working With Indian Students - An American Counselor's Classic Faux Pas

 Welcome to Dartmouth!

 Why I Love The College Finder: A Tried and Trusted Resource

 The Rise of Entitlement in Gen Z & Teens

 The Earth without Art Is Just 'Eh'

 From Mumbai to Massachusetts

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# Editor's Note

## Counseling: A Profession Whose Time Has Come

Parents who once found success in predictable industries like manufacturing, IT services, or finance are now unsure on how to guide their children. Rapid technological change, economic slowdowns, and global uncertainty are altering the landscape of work—and, by extension, education. Take Computer Science, for example. Once a golden ticket to global opportunities, it now faces disruption from AI technology. While coding won't vanish, its nature will change. Students will need to move beyond syntax to focus on systems thinking, human-AI interaction, and creative problem-solving. Similarly, industries such as climate tech, mental health, digital content, and space exploration are opening up new, less obvious career paths.

In this scenario, the role of mentors and professionally trained counselors has never been more vital. A mentor—say, a startup founder or sustainability researcher—can offer real-world insights that no textbook can. A well-read, well-travelled counselor can explain the nuances between studying data science in India, liberal arts in the U.S., or design thinking in Europe.

The future will not resemble the past. Parents and students must move away from outdated definitions of success—like fixed job titles and high salaries—and instead embrace adaptability, creativity, and purpose. Mentors and counselors help build not a rigid career map, but a flexible compass. In this age of VUCA, the best investment you can make is not just in degrees, but in people who can guide, inspire, and illuminate the path ahead. Education, after all, is not about fitting into the world—but preparing to shape it.

**Neeraj Mandhana**  
Founder & Editor-in-Chief  
Aiiyo



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# WHY YOU SHOULD STUDY AI AT A SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

Where Algorithms Meet Ethics and Students Don't Get Lost in the Crowd

By  
Devesh Lathi  
Founder,  
DL Consultants



**Devesh Lathi**

When students think about Artificial Intelligence (AI), their minds often turn to large research universities with expansive computer science labs and specialized faculty. While these institutions offer certain advantages, there's an equally compelling—and often overlooked—case for studying AI at a small liberal arts college (sLAC).

Small liberal arts colleges are traditionally known for their strength in humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences, and for cultivating broad-based thinkers. But in today's AI-driven world, that very strength has become a strategic advantage. As AI continues to impact every facet of our lives—from the way we work to how we interact, govern, and even create—the need for professionals who understand not only the technical dimensions of AI, but also its ethical, human, and societal implications, is more urgent than ever.

## **Why Choose a sLAC for AI?**

The AI field is no longer just about coding algorithms or building neural networks. It requires critical thinking about how these technologies are designed, whom they serve, and the long-term consequences they may bring. A sLAC fosters exactly that type of inquiry.

Here's why a small liberal arts environment is uniquely positioned to prepare students for this evolving landscape:

**Interdisciplinary Learning:** sLACs allow students to combine technical study with courses in philosophy, political science, sociology, and ethics—fields essential for understanding the broader impact of AI.

**Close Faculty Mentorship:** With smaller class sizes, students receive more individual guidance and opportunities to collaborate on research or independent projects.

**Early Hands-On Experience:** Unlike large universities where access to research or advanced courses may be reserved for upperclassmen or grad students, sLACs often provide these opportunities earlier in a student's academic journey.

**Ethical and Human-Centered Thinking:** At sLACs, questions of equity, bias, and responsibility are not footnotes—they're central to the curriculum.

Let's explore some course examples from leading sLACs that are part of the Next Genius Scholarship Program, which offers full or partial scholarships to outstanding high school students from South Asia.

### **Oberlin College**

Oberlin offers a course titled CSCI 364: Artificial Intelligence, which introduces students to essential AI concepts including search algorithms, planning techniques, uncertainty management, intelligent agents, and multi-agent systems. The curriculum combines theoretical foundations with real-world applications such as game playing and autonomous decision-making. As a Next Genius partner college, Oberlin supports students in gaining both the intellectual depth and ethical awareness needed to innovate responsibly.

### **Trinity College**

At Trinity, the CPSC 415: Special Topics – AI Integration course focuses on embedding AI into real-world software systems. Students explore RESTful API interactions with platforms like OpenAI, experiment with local open-source models, and develop tools such as chatbots, image generators, and audio/video creators. This hands-on course is ideal for students interested in software development and AI deployment in creative and practical domains. Trinity is also a Next Genius partner institution, making these opportunities accessible through scholarship support.

### **Centre College**

Centre's CSC 125: AI in Everyday Language is a unique offering designed to introduce students from all academic backgrounds to AI. The course focuses on large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, covering their evolution, design, and use. It emphasizes hands-on prompt creation, discussions around ethical dilemmas, and exploration of AI's societal impact. No prior coding or mathematical knowledge is needed, making it highly inclusive and ideal for students in the humanities, arts, or business.

### **Muhlenberg College**

Muhlenberg's CSI 326: Artificial Intelligence provides a strong technical foundation in AI, covering topics such as intelligent agents, search algorithms, natural language processing, robotics, and machine vision. Students begin with core prerequisites like data structures and calculus, then advance to understanding how machines emulate human intelligence. The course bridges algorithmic theory with real-world problem-solving, encouraging students to think critically about automation and machine behavior.

### **The Next Genius Advantage**

All of the colleges mentioned are members of the Next Genius Scholarship Program (NGSP), which awards scholarships to high-achieving South Asian students. NGSP does more than reduce the financial burden—it connects students to vibrant academic communities where they can thrive intellectually and socially. Studying AI at a sLAC through the Next Genius program offers:

- A rigorous and interdisciplinary curriculum
- Mentorship and research opportunities
- A nurturing academic environment
- Financial support through merit-based scholarships

If you're interested in AI—not just how it works, but how it shapes our world—then a small liberal arts college might be the ideal place to start your journey. These institutions prepare students to think critically, act ethically, and lead responsibly. Whether you're developing algorithms, questioning bias in datasets, or imagining the role of AI in future democracies, sLACs offer the tools, mentorship, and flexibility to explore AI through a truly interdisciplinary lens.

In an era where technology and humanity are increasingly intertwined, we don't just need more coders—we need thoughtful, ethical leaders. And small liberal arts colleges are uniquely equipped to nurture them.





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# WORKING WITH INDIAN STUDENTS - AN AMERICAN COUNSELOR'S CLASSIC FAUX PAS

## Between Mispronunciations and Mango Seasons: Finding Connection Across Cultures

By  
Amanda Miller  
Co-Founder  
The Collegiate Path



Amanda Miller

I am not sure why Neeraj thought this would be a good topic for me to write about (ahem!), but as a caucasian, American woman in India, there have admittedly been occasional goofs on my part.

The primary, ongoing source of my faux pas, is my butchering of names. I am unable to hear aspirations. This makes my co-counselor Meghna crack up at me upon occasion:

Amanda: "His last name is Ja."

Meghna: "What? Where is that from? Oh, you mean Jha!"

To my ear, Meghna just repeated the name I gave her.

It took me years to get my own husband's name right—he is "Narendra," which is a tongue twister for someone who is only now getting used to rolling her "r"s. Names can be confusing, as pronunciations are not always consistent. Two years ago, I worked simultaneously with three applicants named "Anika," each of whom pronounced her name differently: "AH-ni-ka;" "a-NEE-ka;" and "ahn-EE-ka. Let's just say, mistakes were made!

I spent almost a year calling my student, Nikita, "Ni-KEE-ta"—like the identically spelled Greek or Russian name common in the United States. Only in interview prep did the faux pas come through as my student practiced introducing herself, "Hi, my name is 'Nikita'" (rhyming with "cricket-a"). I was horrified that she had never corrected me.

Beyond my tragic butchering of names, I think my other mistakes have been less related to my being an American working in India, and more related to the general challenges of navigating the vagaries of human temperament and the complexity of Indian taxation (CAs will never be replaced by AI in India!). That said, I have learned an incredible amount about India by working with different families from across the country. As a result, I understand with some nuance the differences between Agarwals and Iyers, dhanyavad and shukriya, and phulka and paratha.

How lucky am I to have been welcomed and accepted in a country of such rich and dynamic communities and cultures! Clients are generally happy to explain their traditions, and I love that I am always learning something new from my students. They are often navigating and balancing aspects valued by their parents or grandparents with the global, urban perspectives of their international schools



in India's tier-one cities—from the girl who surreptitiously touched the sacred tulsi plant while she was menstruating to see if it would really wither (it didn't), to the boy who appeased his grandmother by wearing the traditional gold earrings she had presented him on his 16th birthday as he left for school each morning, only to remove them on the bus because they were forbidden at school. I am honored that I am trusted with these secrets, and sometimes think my "outsider" status makes students and their parents feel safe in confiding in me.

I will keep working on my horrendous pronunciation and try to avoid embarrassing myself too much. Meanwhile, I continue to converse enthusiastically about mangoes, jump up to dance to Bollywood songs (as some of my fellow counselors can attest), and am happy to wait for an auspicious hour to help a student submit their first application.



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**Gareth Fowles**  
Vice President for  
Enrollment and University  
Advancement  
Lynn University

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes of college admissions? Meet the individuals who bring passion, personality, and purpose to helping students find their path.

In this edition of "Legends of Admissions," we spotlight Gareth Fowles from Lynn University.

From emotional homecomings in Zimbabwe to unexpected questions in the office, Gareth shares stories from his global recruitment journey and reflects on how empathy, curiosity, and a love for soccer have shaped his impactful career in admissions.

# LEGENDS OF ADMISSIONS

## 1. An Unforgettable Travel Memory

Fortunately, I have many unforgettable memories of my travels for Lynn University around the world. However, one trip that particularly stands out was my first recruitment trip to Africa. I visited high schools and met with U.S. Department of State officials in Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. As I was born in Zimbabwe and raised in South Africa for most of my childhood, it was inspiring to connect with so many students seeking to attend a university in the United States. One of the highlights of this trip was when I took the opportunity during my high school visits in Harare, Zimbabwe to visit the home in which I was raised. This experience brought back many fond memories and emotions.

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

I was meeting with a student and his family in my office and the student very pointedly asked: Why should I not attend Lynn University? I thought it was an excellent question; very thought-provoking and yet, I have never been asked that question again.

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

As a former student athlete on Lynn University's men's soccer team, I would welcome the opportunity to become a member of the coaching staff for the Fighting Knights.

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

In my role as vice president for enrollment and university advancement, I interact with a broad array of people, including students, families, counselors, alumni, and donors. Through these varied encounters, I have learned that empathy is a powerful skill to hone. I have become more attuned to active listening, emotional awareness and responding with compassion.

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

Admission decisions are typically not made just about who is the most qualified candidate, but they are often based on the admission office's need to build a balanced and diverse incoming class.

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

Innovative, ambitious, and intentional.

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

The ALPA Ace Club, which is a chapter of the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) Aviation Collegiate Education (ACE) program. The club aims to promote a culture of safety and professionalism among future airline pilots, while providing opportunities for students to connect with industry professionals, gain further insights into airline operations, and become better prepared for careers in aviation.



# WELCOME TO DARTMOUTH!

## Dartmouth College: The Remote Yet Remarkable Ivy

By  
Ravisha Maheshwari  
Senior Editor  
Aiiyo



**Ravisha  
Maheshwari**

Founded in 1769, Dartmouth College is a private Ivy League institution uniquely positioned in Hanover, New Hampshire. Though technically a university by modern classification, Dartmouth retains the term “College” to underscore its enduring focus on undergraduate liberal arts education. Its 269-acre main campus, set against the backdrop of northern New England, is augmented by 4,500 acres at Mount Moosilauke, allowing for an unparalleled blend of academic inquiry and outdoor engagement.

### The Campus

Dartmouth’s campus, centered on the iconic 5-acre Dartmouth Green, blends Georgian colonial architecture, open green spaces, and natural beauty. Dartmouth also leads in campus sustainability, with goals for carbon neutrality, LEED-certified buildings, and strong waste diversion. Bike-share, clean-energy shuttles, and the Environmental Studies Program promote climate solutions and interdisciplinary research. Though the most rural Ivy, Dartmouth is far from disconnected. Students enjoy a walkable town, with Hanover’s Main Street offering cafés, bookstores, and restaurants. Dartmouth Coach and Greyhound connect students to Boston, New York City, and Montreal, and the college runs its own shuttle to Boston Logan Airport for easy domestic and international travel.

### Admissions at a Glance

Dartmouth’s admissions are highly selective. In 2023, the college received 28,841 applications, admitted 6.2%, and achieved a yield rate of 67.28%, with an incoming class size of 1,209, including 174 international students. Key deadlines include Early Decision (Nov 1) and Regular Decision (Jan 2), and Dartmouth’s appeal to high-achieving students globally is evident in these competitive metrics.

### Academic Distinction

Dartmouth’s liberal arts curriculum encourages both breadth and depth across 60+ majors and 40+ minors, offering vast academic flexibility, from modifying majors to double majoring and designing independent study programs. A hallmark is the first-year writing seminar, taught in intimate classes of 16 students, emphasizing independent research and critical discussion. Students must complete 10 distribution requirements, a foreign language, and 3 world culture courses.

Standout academic programs include the Presidential Scholars Program, Senior Fellowship Program, and Women in Science Project (WISP), which integrates first-year women into paid STEM research. Facilities like Kemeny Hall (Mathematics), MacLean Engineering Sciences Center, and the Haldeman Center support innovation, while the Hopkins Center for the Arts brings world-renowned artists to campus. Programs like the Montgomery Fellows and Visionary in Residence further enhance academic discourse.

### Signature Academic Initiatives

Dartmouth’s D-Plan, its unique academic calendar, divides the year into four 10-week terms. Students must complete 12 terms in residence, including first year, sophomore summer, and senior year, with the freedom to plan their remaining terms for study abroad, internships, or entrepreneurship. Over 50%

participate in off-campus programs, providing unmatched educational flexibility. The Maymester is another program, a three-week spring intensive, that enables students to take high-impact seminars, study abroad, or engage in internships, earning 3–4 academic credits in the process. Pre-college opportunities like SEAD (Summer Enrichment at Dartmouth) provide high school juniors with immersive college-level experiences and college credit, preparing them for academic success.

### **Focus Areas: Engineering, Humanities, and Quantitative Fields**

Dartmouth's Engineering program, culminating in a Bachelor of Arts, is renowned for its hands-on labs and project-based curriculum. The 3+2 Dual Degree Program lets students earn a B.S. in Engineering after studying at partner institutions like Columbia or Caltech, combining liberal arts with technical training.

In the Humanities, disciplines like History, Philosophy, and Languages are delivered through small seminars and faculty mentorship, fostering critical thinking and analytical rigor. The Economics and Political Science programs are particularly strong, offering pathways into finance, policy, and international relations.

In Computer Science and Mathematics, Dartmouth offers exceptional options like data science, machine learning, topology, and cryptography. The curriculum is deeply customizable, and students benefit from research assistantships, DALL Lab projects, and Women in Science mentorships.

### **Student Life & Community**

With a student body of 4,500 undergraduates, Dartmouth is celebrated for its close-knit community, bolstered by the House Communities system. Each student is placed in one of six residential houses, providing continuous support and social programming. Over 350 student organizations, including 200+ clubs, 33 varsity sports, and 80% athletic participation, make the campus vibrant. The Dartmouth Outing Club (DOC), the largest collegiate outing club in the U.S., offers activities like hiking, skiing, and cabin trips. Flagship student spaces include the Collis Center and Robinson Hall, while eateries like Foco, Collis Café, and Novack cater to varied dining preferences, including South Asian students.

### **Greek Life & Traditions**

Greek life is integral to Dartmouth, with 70% of upperclassmen participating in 32 Greek houses, including 17 fraternities, 12 sororities, and 3 co-ed groups. These houses function as social and residential hubs, especially during signature weekends like Homecoming, Winter Carnival, Green Key, and Fieldstock. Traditions are a core part of Dartmouth's identity. From First-Year Trips, an outdoor pre-orientation experience at Moosilauke Ravine Lodge, to the Twilight Ceremony, students are welcomed into a heritage-rich community. Time-honored rituals such as the bonfire run, swim test, and chariot races build a sense of continuity and belonging.

### **Career Outcomes & Notable Alumni**

On the career front, the Career and Professional Development Center (CPD) offers tailored services, including help for international students, visa navigation, and U.S. job market strategies. Dartmouth's alumni network plays a powerful role in job placement, with graduates thriving in fields like finance, consulting, tech, and public service, landing positions at Google, Goldman Sachs, and McKinsey. Dartmouth's legacy is carried by alumni like:

- **David Packard** (HP co-founder)
- **Paul Sagan** (ex-CEO of Akamai)
- **Ravi Kumar** (Infosys President)
- **Neil Gaiman** (award-winning author)



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# WHY I LOVE THE COLLEGE FINDER: A TRIED AND TRUSTED RESOURCE

The Book that Counselors Across the Globe Trust to Expand, Not Limit, Options

By  
Jay McCann

Associate Director of College Counseling

The Westminster Schools

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Jay McCann

"If you really want to learn about colleges, you've got to get to know this book." What now sounds like a sales pitch was actually advice from a retiring college consultant. It was over ten years ago, during a college tour and professional development workshop in Colorado when Pam Decker shared this wisdom that set me on a journey.

The College Finder was the mentor that I had been looking for. I would flip through each list to make sure that I was understanding the personality, opportunities and majors of colleges that showed up continually on the lists. I remember handing the Third Edition to my wife at night, who heroically tolerated my fascination by quizzing me on the latest list I had been reviewing.

"Tonight quiz me on Biology programs, then flip over to "Colleges for Introverts" and "Best Dorm Rooms." She was an exasperated saint, but it was the kickstart towards my passion in college counseling. Still, I keep coming back to it, even now as a co-author, because it provides a resource that is the culmination of experts across the country and globe.

To create this book, we didn't rely on marketing materials or rankings. We listened.

We collected over 1,500 surveys from college counselors and consultants — many from international schools and independent counseling practices — asking them: What colleges have worked well for your students? Which schools are supportive? Where have students with specific interests or learning styles truly thrived?

This global perspective helped us build categorized lists of colleges that go far beyond the typical. And many of the schools that surfaced are not the ones at the top of commercial rankings — but they are places where students succeed.

Now in its fifth edition, The College Finder includes over 700 lists of colleges grouped by the qualities students care about most — not just GPA or test scores.

Here's what you'll find inside:

- Colleges for conservative students, virtuous students, those with dietary restrictions or even Comic Con attendees
- Schools with excellent financial aid and scholarships
- Colleges that support students interested in entrepreneurship, pre-med, or the arts
- Institutions known for strong support of mental health or neurodiverse learners
- Hidden gems with strong teaching and career outcomes

Each list was intended to spark reflection, not to narrow options. Whether a student is curious about a Jesuit liberal arts college in the Midwest or a tech-focused research university in the West, this book helps open that door.



As a college counselor, there are so many ways that we celebrate our students' journey. For some, it's a party when they are admitted to their dream school, yet for me, I cherish the students who have experienced the transformative power of the right college environment.

A former student, who was bound to be at the most selective college for pre-med, instead found Colorado School of Mines. While the captain of the soccer team, he studied Quantitative Biosciences and Engineering and is now bringing his love of machine learning and chemical synthesis to Harvard Medical School as a future doctor. It's the exposure to pathways that students don't know about which excite me as well.

This past year, I remember one of my students who was feeling pressure to apply binding to Middlebury for linguistics, but she wasn't sold on it for a number of reasons. After providing her a broader list of options, she was jumping over the moon for McGill, where she'll be enrolling this fall. I loved celebrating with her when she wore her t-shirt!

The College Finder doesn't promise to make the decision for anyone — but it will absolutely give students more thoughtful options to consider.

I know many of you in India are guiding ambitious, thoughtful students — and often helping families navigate both aspiration and anxiety. My hope is that The College Finder becomes a trusted companion in your practice. It is a resource that helps reframe the search from selective to reflective.

Whether you are advising first-time applicants to the U.S. or seasoned families with high expectations, this book provides common language, unexpected options, and counselor-sourced guidance you can rely on.

We are committed to supporting you. If you want to explore the just-released Fifth Edition, have questions or want to join our community, visit [www.TheCollegeFinder.net](http://www.TheCollegeFinder.net).

A NEWSLETTER FOR

# INDIA'S COUNSELING COMMUNITY

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**27** average class size

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

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

**99%** faculty teach undergraduate classes

**9,445** undergraduate students

**10,918** student population



## LOCATION

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

## INDEPENDENT

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

## FACILITIES

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

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

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

## CAMPUS

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

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES & ATHLETICS

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

## APPLYING TO TCU

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

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

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

### Transfer Deadlines

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



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## AREAS OF STUDY

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| Art Education                                | Latin American Studies                      |
| Art History                                  | Mathematics                                 |
| Arts Administration*                         | Middle East Studies*                        |
| Arts Leadership & Entrepreneurship*          | Movement Science                            |
| Asian Studies*                               | Music                                       |
| Astronomy                                    | • Brass                                     |
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| Computer Science                             | • Pre-Physician Assistant                   |
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| Education                                    | Reserve Officers' Training Corps            |
| • Accelerated Masters Program                | (U.S. Citizens & Residents)                 |
| • All Level: Early Childhood-12              | • Aerospace Studies (Air Force)             |
| • Early Childhood Education                  | • Military Science (Army)                   |
| • Middle School Education                    | Social Work                                 |
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| • Mechanical                                 | Sports Broadcasting                         |
| English                                      | Strategic Communication                     |
| Environmental Science                        | Strength & Conditioning                     |
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| Interdisciplinary Inquiry                    |                                             |

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# THE RISE OF ENTITLEMENT IN GEN Z & TEENS

## Understanding, Preventing, and Shaping a Healthier Mindset

By

Soumya Ramaswamy

Founder & Parenting and Teen Coach

Shaping Futures



**Soumya  
Ramaswamy**

In homes, classrooms, and social circles, a quiet frustration echoes among adults: “Why do they expect so much... without doing much?”

Entitlement among today’s teens and Gen Z is increasingly visible. From demanding instant gratification to resisting responsibility, it’s easy to label this behaviour as “spoiled” or “lazy.” However, if we pause and look more closely, a more compassionate truth emerges: entitlement is not innate. It’s learned.

Our teens are growing up in an environment we helped shape—one filled with conveniences, hyper-connectedness, and often, well-meaning parenting that inadvertently shelters them from struggle. To truly help them, we need to understand the roots, recognise the signs, and gently guide them toward a mindset grounded in effort, gratitude, and resilience.

### What’s Fuelling This Sense of Entitlement?

- **The World at Their Fingertips**

We live in an era of instant everything. Hungry? Tap. Bored? Swipe. Want validation? Post a selfie. The delay between desire and reward has disappeared. While convenience has its benefits, it has also quietly eroded our children’s patience and their ability to delay gratification. Over time, this creates a belief that success, attention, and even happiness should come easily and fast.

- **Overpraise Without Substance**

In the effort to boost self-worth, many parents and teachers have leaned toward abundant praise. While encouragement builds confidence, **praise without effort creates an illusion of confidence**. When children are constantly told they’re amazing without having to try, they begin to expect recognition just for existing.

- **Overprotection & the Fear of Failure**

Modern parenting often comes from love... and fear. In trying to protect children from pain, we sometimes remove every obstacle in their path. But each problem we solve for them is one less opportunity for growth. Children need the experience of struggle—falling, trying again, and discovering their resilience. Without this, real-world responsibilities feel foreign and overwhelming.

- **Social Media’s Mirage**

Teens scroll through highlight reels of other people’s lives—lavish vacations, glowing skin, fame, and fast success. Rarely do they see the hours of hustle, the heartbreaks, or the discipline behind those snapshots. This breeds comparison, envy, and a distorted idea that **reward should come without the journey**.



- **Healing & Rebuilding: What Can We Do?**

Here's the hopeful truth: entitlement can be unlearned. It's not a character flaw, it's a mindset—and mindsets can shift with intention, reflection, and connection.

### **1. Create Real-World Learning Environments**

Children don't grow through lectures. They grow through experience. Let them earn money by helping around the house, taking public transport alone, managing a small budget, or working a part-time job. Let them fail. Let them forget. Let them feel the discomfort of trying again. These experiences build resilience, not in theory, but in muscle memory.

### **2. Praise the Process, Not Just the Outcome**

Instead of saying "You're so smart," try "I saw how hard you worked on this." Celebrate effort, learning from mistakes, and bouncing back more than the final mark or trophy. This subtly shifts their self-worth from what they achieve to how they grow.

### **3. Allow Natural Consequences**

A teen forgets their homework? Don't email the teacher. A child spends all their allowance in one day? Let them feel what it's like to wait until next week. When we remove consequences, we rob them of the chance to connect actions to outcomes.

### **4. Reclaim Responsibility at Home**

Ask: "How can you contribute to our home this week?" Whether it's setting the table, watering plants, or cooking dinner once a week, minor roles give them a sense of ownership—and dismantle the idea that others exist to serve them.

### **5. Talk About Struggles—Yours and Theirs**

Share your failures. Let them see that you once bombed a test, got rejected from a job, or struggled with a skill—Normalise mistakes and perseverance. When teens hear about the importance of effort and failure, they feel less pressure to be perfect and are more inspired to try.

### **From Entitlement to Empowerment: One Teen's Reflection**

A 15-year-old client in a recent coaching session told me: "I used to think my parents were supposed to make everything okay for me. Now I see... I like figuring things out on my own. It makes me feel proud." That's the shift we're aiming for: not obedience, but ownership. Not perfection, but participation.

### **Final Thought: We're Not Raising Children. We're Raising Adults.**

Entitlement is simply a signal—one asking us to reconnect our kids with reality, resilience, and responsibility. We don't need to shame or fix them; we need to listen to them. We need to guide them. Let's raise a generation that feels empowered by effort, grateful for what they have, and excited to contribute. Not "What can I get?" but "How can I grow?"

Let's prepare the child for the path and not the path for the child".

# SCHOOL COUNSELLOR OF THE MONTH

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

There was this one Humanities student, very bright, especially in Psychology, but barely surviving Mathematics. When I asked why, she said, totally seriously, "Miss, I am the Psychology syllabus. I am living anxiety, stress, depression all of it." I barely held back my laughter and told her I appreciated the method acting, but unfortunately, colleges still want a good grade in Math. To her question of why - psychology is a science and not just opinions & statistics helps us test theories

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

"I think that it would probably be something along the lines of: "Holding the Ladder." That is how I see this. It's not a job or a career it's passion. It's about connecting, understanding students. I am not the one climbing. I am the one steadying things from below for my students, hoping they never have to come down. I think there is a quiet joy in helping and seeing students rise, being part of their success journey knowing they will look from the top one day and realise they did not do it alone.

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

I have worked with so many students over the years, and I do get attached; it is hard not to. So when someone comes back years later, sometimes after their first semester or even after their final year of college, and says, "Miss, I am so glad you were there when I was figuring this out," when they want you to be part of their graduation virtually, when they want you to be part of inaugural business, to meet their life partners, to give honey to their kids, it is really why I love what I do. When they come back and talk about their life, their fears, their excitement for the future and also being ready to help juniors.

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

If I could have a superpower, it would be the ability to instantly read a teenager's mind. I work with 16 to 18-year-olds, and some of the most important conversations I have had started with a shrug or an "I am fine." I have developed the skill to listen carefully to what is not being said, but I will admit, being a telepath would have come in handy, especially when my own daughter was a teenager. Let me tell you - it feels it is much easier when it is someone else's child but it is not. I had my mentor Mrs Vas advise me once "Treat every child as Rhea (my daughter). If you won't advise Rhea for something you don't see as good don't advise others for the same." even though I still also keep in mind no same shoes fits others. You have a student who is thinking am I going to judge them, am I going to understand them, am I going to really help them in exploring, or just coming to me because parents wanted them. And I want to tell my students "you matter, your opinions matter & I will respect who you are and who you are going to be and for me parents aspirations, opinions, judgements will never be above my students. Parents, school, me all want you to be successful & it's just the way I look at it we are your pillars. Because failure, struggle is inevitable in path of success but how soon can you get up from that fall is where we all help in different ways".

## Which fictional character do you think would make a surprisingly great guidance counsellor?

Minerva McGonagall. My daughter Rhea is a huge Harry Potter fan, and I think she would approve. Like McGonagall, I have been feared for my strictness and sometimes discipline and loved for my reliability. I am sharp, fair, and always do what is best for the child, even when the child does not agree. That is the balance I try to strike every day. When these students every year after getting their college and come back and say Miss thank you. It would not have happened without you, without your honest opinion, bluntness ..... and I needed the wake up call. "the smile on their lips, their hugs their happiness is all worth and the cycle continues every year.

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

"This too shall pass." It is such a cliché. I know. But during December college results, every round of university application results, exam weeks, board results, or those long spells of self-doubt, I have seen how much it helps when a student hears it and believes it, even for a second. Also I believe before students discover their potential and believe in themselves they need someone to believe in them and that's what we at Jamnabai Narsee School do- starting from heads to teachers to faculties we believe in our students. Being in Jamnabai Narsee school & earlier year I have seen students struggling in school but doing so well outside. I want to tell each of my students "I am so proud of who you are and wherever you are my blessings and best wishes will always be with you. We might not speak often but I always everyday have a small prayer lifted for you, your success, your well being. May all your dreams come true."



**Teji Varghese**

Sr. Academic College & Career  
Guidance Counsellor  
Jamnabai Narsee School - ISC

Behind every successful student is a mentor who listens, encourages, and sometimes even shares a laugh in the hallway. This month, we celebrate Amit Banerjee from Billabong High International School, Bhopal—a counselor whose two decades in education have left a lasting impact on students, teachers, and administrators alike. From hearing the funniest student comments to imagining a comic book superpower, Amit brings wisdom, empathy, and a healthy dose of humor to his work every day. Get to know the person behind the guidance, and discover what keeps him inspired after all these years.





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# # Industry Leader SPOTLIGHT



## Gloria Crawford

Co-founder and COO  
InitialView

In this section, Aiiyo brings you insights from counseling trailblazers who have made a significant impact with their work. Through candid interviews, we explore their journeys, passions, and personal philosophies. This month, we sit down with Gloria Chyou, the Co-founder and COO InitialView, 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?

B.A. in Psychology from Wellesley

### Your Favorite Book

A recent book I couldn't put down: "Homeseeking" by Karissa Chen

### Your Comfort Food

Anything sushi-like, and Three Cup Chicken with a bowl of white rice

### A School/College you really enjoyed visiting

Georgia Tech on move-in day!

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

This was a hard question for me. I realize that's a very privileged and blessed place to be — I have already gotten to experience some pretty amazing things in life! But if I have to pick, I'll say designing and building my own kitchen (and very belatedly joining the sourdough bread-baking trend)!

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

Surround yourself with people who encourage you and push you to try new things.

### Your Life Mantra

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)

### One thing you would most like to change about the world

I love technology, but don't love how it makes us think we know more than we do or are closer to people than we are. We all hope that it can instead facilitate and help people build deeper and more meaningful relationships. Ultimately, I want people to be more present with one another (to learn how to ask good questions and to listen better) — and that includes myself!

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

To be frank, my husband is my co-founder, and pre-InitialView, he was working a corporate law job that was time- and soul-sucking. We knew a change would be good for our family, and the joke is that when we started InitialView, he gained all his freedom back while I lost mine. All joking aside, I love working with my husband, I love the flexibility and control that comes with working for yourself, I love being a part of something that solves a problem, and I love interacting with all sides of the admissions table!

### A secret to balancing work & life

We intentionally set aside Sundays as a no-work day (including not talking about work). Our kids even try to finish all of their homework before Sunday. It helps us reset for the week and to be intentional about our time together.



# THE EARTH WITHOUT ART IS JUST 'EH'

## How We-Learn Is Molding the Next Generation of Eco-Conscious Designers

By  
Neha Pandit  
Founder  
We-Learn



Neha Pandit

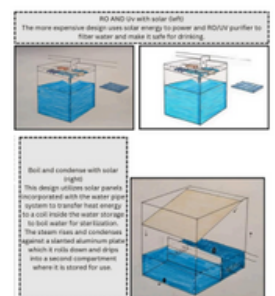
What if your next sketch, design, or DIY project did not just express your creativity but also helped save the planet? That is exactly what We-Learn is all about – a fresh, youth-driven learning space in Mumbai that is making sustainability cool, especially in art and design. At We-Learn, sustainability is not a trend, it is a mindset. Students here do not just create; they learn to question, evaluate, and reimagine their impact. Every project begins with a dialogue: What is the source of your material? Can it be reused, repurposed, or replaced with something kinder to the planet? Through brainstorming sessions, mentorship circles, and critical discussions, students explore what can and cannot be done in sustainable design.



Take Alliya, for example, she is pursuing green urban planning in interior and furniture design, she initially leaned toward glossy, modern materials. But through guided classes at We-Learn, she discovered bamboo and fast-renewable resources. After building a bamboo pen stand and winning first place in a design competition, she developed her brand, Ethical Edge. “The way We-Learn opened my eyes to bamboo’s potential, it was a game-changer,” she shares. “They did not just tell me what to use, they helped me test and compare it, explore finishes, and understand long-term durability.”



This active mentorship approach also helped Samarth turn his idea of a solar-powered RO/UV water purifier into a prototype. Faced with the issue of energy availability in rural areas, We-Learn helped him break down the problem. “They pushed me to consider alternatives: why solar over batteries? How could filtration be effective?” he says. With their help, Samarth combined recycled components, solar panels, and RO/UV filtration into one self-sustaining design.



### SOUTH INDIAN INSPIRED ECO FRIENDLY MODEL OF FOLDING CHAIR



For Sumer, an aspiring sustainable architect, a love for traditional craftsmanship met modern innovation. Through We-Learn’s deep dive into local craft heritage and environmental responsibility, he designed a foldable South Indian chair made entirely from wood. “They challenged me to go beyond appearance,” Sumer says. “Could I make it collapsible? Their ‘what-if’ sessions made all the difference.”

The spirit of collaboration is equally nurtured at We-Learn. One group fashion project began with a challenge. Students scavenged homes for discarded fabric, then spent weeks remixing scraps into a bold outfit. “We kept hitting roadblocks, too stiff, too torn, too mismatched,” recalls Nayesha. “But the mentors at We-Learn kept throwing new ideas at us, layer it, dye it, patch it. That process gave the piece soul.”

Jayaditya, an ambitious future sustainable fashion designer, found a similar groove with his project inspired by chindi, or master's scraps. We-Learn not only supported his idea but helped him understand the fashion industry's waste ecosystem. "They showed me photos of landfills filled with textile waste. Then they encouraged me to reimagine what that waste could look like stitched back together as ethnic fashion," he says.



The environment at We-Learn also cultivates bold, experimental thinking. Yuvika's Bridgerton-inspired outfit, made entirely of papier-mâché, started as a sketch. "I was not sure if papier-mâché could even hold its shape," she laughs. "But my mentors were all in. They helped me prototype bodices. That kind of support pushes you to take risks."

Gehna took a similar leap, designing a bustier from papier-mâché and a skirt using recycled paper strips. "I thought paper was too fragile," she says. "But the team showed me paper weaving, lamination. They let me fail and rebuild until it worked." That is the We-Learn way: empowering students with technical guidance while leaving room for experimentation.



Practical sustainability is another pillar at We-Learn, and no one embodies that better than Dhriti. Dhriti is striving to pursue green product designing. Her recycling station concept, EcoTether, was born from a class on sustainable design. "We did not just learn theory, we mapped real-life user behavior," she explains. "With We-Learn's help, I designed a machine with a dual chamber, one for shredding and another for donations. They challenged me to go further, so I added a reward system and parts-reuse feature."

Practical sustainability is another pillar at We-Learn, and no one embodies that better than Dhriti. Dhriti is striving to pursue green product designing. Her recycling station concept, EcoTether, was born from a class on sustainable design. "We did not just learn theory, we mapped real-life user behavior," she explains. "With We-Learn's help, I designed a machine with a dual chamber, one for shredding and another for donations. They challenged me to go further, so I added a reward system and parts-reuse feature."

We-Learn is more than a place to make things, it's a place to think through things. Whether students are dyeing fabric with vegetables or prototyping with materials, they're backed by mentors who ask hard questions: Is it safe? Does it truly reduce harm? Outside the classroom, students bring these learnings to life. From upcycled art to zero-waste fashion pop-ups, their work becomes a statement. It's not just beautiful, it's intentional.



And these lessons open doors to real careers. The demand for sustainable thinkers in creative industries is growing fast. Students from We-Learn are already preparing to pursue roles as climate-conscious graphic designers, eco-fashion designers, zero-waste furniture makers and sustainable architects, even product designers specializing in biomaterials, upcycle artists, or even consultants for sustainable branding and design strategy. As global brands shift toward eco-conscious operations, creative professionals who understand materials, systems, and aesthetics are more valuable than ever.



So if you are the kind of student who dreams in color, designs with purpose, and secretly hoards cardboard because “you might make something out of it,” then We-Learn is your tribe. At We-Learn, sustainability isn’t the end goal, it’s just the beginning.

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# WHY COLLEGES ASK STUDENTS TO WRITE ESSAYS: THE FIVE-FOLD PURPOSE

By  
Bhupender Bhardwaj  
NM Squad

When it comes to college admissions, the essay often looms as both a formidable challenge and a thrilling opportunity. Beyond the numbers—test scores, GPAs, and transcripts—colleges want to understand who you really are. So why do colleges ask students to write essays? In truth, it's not just about your ability to craft coherent paragraphs. It's about communication, character, passion, identity, and fit—five core elements that paint a complete picture of an applicant.

## 1. Evaluating Language Skills and Communication

At the most fundamental level, colleges use essays to assess your language skills and communication ability. The capacity to express ideas clearly, use grammar and syntax appropriately, and structure your thoughts logically is crucial in any academic environment. Take, for instance, the University of Southern California's Personal Insight Question: 'Many of us have at least one issue or passion that we care deeply about – a topic on which we would love to share our opinions and insights in hopes of sparking intense interest and continued conversation. If you had ten minutes and the attention of a million people, what would your talk be about?' They're not just probing for your life story—they're checking whether you can articulate it in a concise, engaging manner. Case studies have shown that admissions officers can spot poor writing mechanics instantly. Thus, colleges expect you to showcase not only your voice but also your precision with language.

## 2. Revealing Mindset, Attitude, and Personality

Beyond writing mechanics, essays reveal the mindset, attitude, and personality of the applicant. Unlike a GPA or SAT score, your essay gives colleges a window into how you think, what motivates you, and how you respond to challenges. Consider an applicant to the University of Chicago, known for its quirky prompts. Sample this: We're all familiar with green-eyed envy or feeling blue, but what about being "caught purple-handed"? Or "tickled orange"? Give an old color-infused expression a new hue and tell us what it represents. In a memorable response, a student compared their personality to a Rubik's Cube—"complex, colorful, and endlessly engaging." That metaphor spoke volumes about their curiosity and creativity, traits not evident from their test scores. In this way, essays allow colleges to identify applicants who would bring vibrancy to campus life.

## 3. Demonstrating Passion and Subject Engagement

Colleges also use essays to measure your passion for the chosen subject or field of study. Are you genuinely interested in biology, or do you just want a brand-name degree? For example, the National University of Singapore's prompt specifically asks students: 'Tell us something you have done outside your school curriculum to prepare yourself for your chosen degree programme(s).' Even, the UKPS induces applicants to: Explain their reasons for wanting to study the subject while demonstrating their enthusiasm for and commitment to their chosen course.

Furthermore, MIT's supplemental essays often inquire about your academic interests and extracurricular experiences. A recent MIT prompt reads as follows: 'While some reach their goals following well-trodden paths, others blaze their trails, achieving the unexpected. In what ways have you done something different than what was expected in your educational journey?' In a related standout essay, a student described "building a robotic arm to help a friend with mobility challenges"—a powerful demonstration of their commitment to engineering. Similarly, responding to a Princeton University prompt to the tune of:

'Princeton has a longstanding commitment to service and civic engagement. Tell us how your story intersects (or will intersect) with these ideals,' a successful applicant wrote about "creating a community garden in their neighborhood," showcasing a real-world application of their interest in environmental science. These narratives demonstrate a depth of engagement and a readiness to contribute meaningfully to the college's academic culture.

#### **4. Highlighting Holistic Identity Beyond Academics**

Who are you beyond the classroom? That's another question colleges want to answer through your essay. Maybe you're a horseback rider who spent years training for competitive events, or a violinist who performed at a youth orchestra. Admissions officers value applicants who bring diverse talents and experiences that enrich the campus community. For instance, aligned with 'We believe a wide range of personal perspectives, beliefs, and lived experiences are essential to making Duke a vibrant and meaningful living and learning community. Feel free to share with us anything in this context that might help us better understand you,' an applicant wrote about their journey in competitive fencing, linking it to their "perseverance and strategic mindset." Such examples enable colleges to see you as a multidimensional person, not just a bundle of grades and accolades.

#### **5. Understanding Institutional Fit and Genuine Interest**

Finally, many colleges want to know why you're attracted to their college in particular. The "Why Us?" essay, a staple of applications to schools like NYU and Penn, distinguishes applicants who have done their homework from those chasing rankings. An applicant to Penn, for instance, wrote passionately about its interdisciplinary programs and how they aligned perfectly with their goal of "bridging technology and social impact." Colleges want students who understand their mission and culture—those who will thrive there because of a genuine fit, not just prestige.

In the end, college essays serve as a multifaceted tool for admissions officers to see you as more than just a data point. They reveal your abilities, values, passion, identity, and fit. When writing, remember that this isn't merely a hoop to jump through. It's an opportunity—a chance to tell your story, reflect on your journey, and show why you belong at the college of your dreams.



# FROM MUMBAI TO MASSACHUSETTS

## How Indian Students Can Make the Most of College Visits Abroad

By  
Naren Kachwala  
Partner  
Argee Corporations



**Naren  
Kachwala**

If you're a student from India dreaming of studying at a top university abroad, you've probably spent countless hours researching colleges online, watching YouTube campus tours, and reading Reddit threads. But nothing compares to actually setting foot on a campus. A college visit is more than sightseeing—it's about figuring out where you'll spend the next three or four years of your life. For Indian families making the investment to travel to the U.S., Canada, or the U.K., every campus stop should yield actionable insight—not just selfies and brochures. Here's how to make the most of a college visit—and how that experience can directly benefit your admissions process.

### **Choose Visits That Match Your Academic Goals**

Don't just pick the most famous names. Start with your intended major. For instance, if you're planning to major in computer science, consider visiting the Paul G. Allen School at the University of Washington, or the CS program at Carnegie Mellon University—ranked among the best globally. Similarly, if you're interested in economics, the University of Toronto's Department of Economics or the University of Warwick in the U.K. could be more aligned with your goals than simply visiting Oxbridge. For students interested in liberal arts with flexibility to explore, look at schools like Wesleyan, Bowdoin, or University of British Columbia (UBC).

Anecdote: Riya, a CBSE student from Pune, was set on applying to NYU because of its prestige. But after sitting in on a psychology class during her visit to the University of Chicago, she realized she preferred the depth of the Core Curriculum there and shifted her Early Decision choice accordingly. She's now a second-year at UChicago.

### **Book Official Tours—but Don't Stop There**

Once you shortlist schools, register for their official campus tours and information sessions through their admissions websites. Most universities host daily guided tours led by current students. But here's the key: Use these official sessions to gather facts, then break away for independent exploration. Walk through the engineering labs at MIT, grab lunch at Cornell's Trillium Dining Hall, or explore residence halls at McGill. You'll notice things no brochure mentions—like how multicultural the campus is, or how students interact in common spaces.

Example: When Arjun, a Mumbai-based ISC student, toured the University of Waterloo, he stayed afterward to chat with students in the Velocity entrepreneurship incubator. That unplanned visit sealed his decision to apply there over other Canadian schools.

### **Schedule Time With Departments or Professors**

Reaching out to professors may sound intimidating, but many are open to meeting prospective students—especially if you've shown genuine interest in their work. A short, polite email a few weeks in advance can go a long way.

If you're passionate about political science, ask to visit the Department of Politics and International Studies at Cambridge or attend a seminar at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. If you're into AI, try to sit in on a talk at Stanford's Human-Centered AI Institute.

### **Ask Targeted, Culturally Aware Questions**

As an Indian student, your concerns may be different from those of local applicants. Ask questions that reflect that context: What's the Indian student community like here? Are Indian festivals or food represented on campus? How does the college support visa and work permit transitions after graduation? Don't be shy about discussing job prospects or PR (permanent residency) pathways—especially in Canada and the U.K., where these systems are structured. At universities like University of Toronto or McMaster, career centers often have data on international student outcomes.

### **Explore International Student Support Offices**

These offices are a goldmine of resources, and Indian students should definitely stop by. Staff here can walk you through visa logistics, medical insurance, student employment, and transition help for international students. For instance, UBC's International Student Advising Office holds one-on-one sessions to help Indian students understand study permits, co-op eligibility, and permanent residency timelines. Similarly, LSE in London has a South Asia-focused admissions staff member you can speak with during your visit.

### **Don't Just Look—Listen**

The real essence of a college visit often comes from conversations. Find a quiet moment to speak to current Indian students if possible. Ask them how they adjusted to the academic system, what they miss about India, and what they love most about their campus. The standard is that most people visit colleges during the summer break, but most of the colleges are shut at this time. If you're visiting during Diwali or Holi season, check if the South Asian student association is hosting any events. At Yale, for example, "Monsoon," a South Asian cultural show, is one of the biggest events on campus. Attending such programs gives a glimpse into your future social life and support network.

### **Reflect—And Use Your Insights in Applications**

Once you're back from your trip, write everything down. Don't rely on memory—your essay-writing self three months from now will thank you. Mention these insights in your "Why This College" essays:

- "During my visit to the Columbia Engineering Makerspace, I spoke with a senior working on sustainable energy sensors—mirroring my own interest in applying STEM to real-world challenges in rural Maharashtra."
- "Attending an open lecture at NYU on postcolonial literature helped me imagine the kind of critical conversations I want to be part of."

This specificity signals genuine engagement—something top-tier schools love.

### **Parents Matter Too—Include Them Strategically**

Indian parents are deeply invested in their children's education. During the visit, involve them in sessions about safety, career prospects, or post-grad opportunities. Many schools, like Boston University or the University of Edinburgh, offer parallel info sessions for parents. However, ensure they give you space to form your own impressions. After all, you're the one who'll be living there.

### **Conclusion: Your Visit Is Your Advantage**

Visiting colleges abroad is a privilege—and a powerful opportunity to make smarter, more personal, and ultimately more successful applications. As a student from India, you bring a distinct perspective. A well-planned visit can help you find where you'll thrive, deepen your essays, and give you a real edge in the competitive admissions game. So when you walk through Harvard Yard, or climb the steps of Trinity College, or stroll through the snowy quad at McGill—don't just imagine getting in. Picture belonging. And let every conversation, observation, and insight from your journey move you closer to that goal.



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

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**#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. You'll apply directly to one of the University's 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](https://syracuse.edu/admissions/apply).

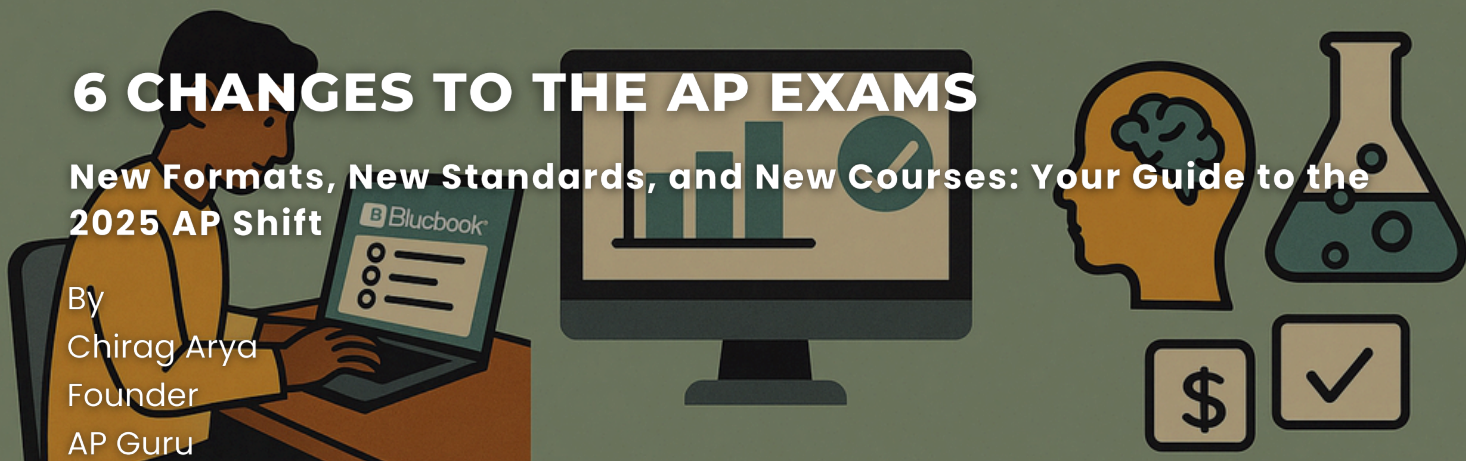




# 6 CHANGES TO THE AP EXAMS

## New Formats, New Standards, and New Courses: Your Guide to the 2025 AP Shift

By  
Chirag Arya  
Founder  
AP Guru



Chirag Arya

If you know only the basics of Advanced Placement—college-style courses in high school, 2025 is the year to take a fresh look. The May 2025 exams are now completed, and they marked the largest single overhaul in AP history: most tests were taken on computers instead of paper, a new data-driven scoring system went fully live, and several popular courses debuted tighter, more college-aligned syllabi.

### 1. Paper to Pixels—Now Proven in the Field

During the just-completed May window, 28 subjects—English, U.S. History, Computer Science, and 13 others—were delivered entirely online in the Bluebook™ app; another 12 used a hybrid model (digital multiple choice, paper free-response). The switch was fast-tracked after security breaches with paper forms, and early reports point to smoother check-ins and faster uploads of student work. Bluebook app required internet only at the start and end, so mid-test Wi-Fi hiccups did not derail sessions.

### 2. A New Way to Decide Scores

Behind the scenes, the College Board replaced its traditional “curve” with Evidence-Based Standard Setting (EBSS). Instead of comparing this year’s students to prior years, EBSS anchors each cut-score to specific college assignments and massive data sets. One visible result: the share of students earning 3 or higher on AP U.S. History jumped to 72 percent in 2024 (the first big EBSS rollout) and stayed high in 2025. Supporters cheer fairer, skill-anchored results; skeptics worry about grade inflation, but the method is here to stay.

### 3. What Changed Inside the Courses

The digital platform grabbed headlines, but three flagship science and social-science syllabi also saw content surgery. In one sentence each:

- **AP Physics:** Physics 1 now has eight units instead of seven because a brand-new Fluids module was imported from Physics 2. Physics 2 reorganized Waves & Optics into two clearer units, while both Physics C courses kept content but adjusted timing and wording for consistency.
- **AP Psychology:** The course material is now grouped under five themes—biological, cognitive, developmental, social & personality, and mental/physical health—and the exam was slimmed to four-choice multiple-choice questions plus two longer free responses.
- **AP Chemistry:** Topic titles were simplified, two thermodynamics lessons swapped places for better logic, and the equation sheet was redesigned to match other AP science courses, with no change to overall scope.

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### 4. Coming Attraction: AP Business Principles / Personal Finance

For 2026–27, the College Board will launch a Business Principles/Personal Finance course that covers entrepreneurship, marketing, accounting, and nationally recognized personal-finance standards. Students may earn both college credit and an employer-endorsed credential—an appealing option for teens headed to business majors or the workforce.

### 5. What Stayed the Same

- Registration deadlines were still end November for early registrations and early March for late registrations.
- The registration process for students in India and internationally remained the same
- There are still windows in May to give the APs – a two week window for regular testing in early May and a 3 day window for late AP testing in late May
- U.S. exam fees rose by just \$1 to \$99; international centers charge upwards of \$129
- Studio Art portfolios and world-language speaking tasks remain paper or audio uploads rather than Bluebook tests—for now.

### 6. Key Takeaways for Newcomers

- Expect laptops, not bubble sheets. If you supervise students, schedule at least one practice run in Bluebook so navigation is second nature on test day.
- “Passing” now tracks mastery, not historical curves. Use updated practice sets (July 2024 or later) so question counts and timing match the new blueprints.
- Note the syllabus tweaks. Physics adds Fluids, Psychology pivots to five themes, Chemistry reorganizes its equation sheet—small shifts that can trip up last-minute cramming.
- Watch the horizon. Career-oriented AP Business Principles shows the program’s push beyond pure academics toward real-world skills.

The AP program that wrapped up in May 2025 is leaner, more secure, and more tightly connected to first-year college work than ever before. Whether you’re a student, parent, or educator who only “knows the basics,” understanding these shifts now will pay dividends long before the next exam season rolls around.



# INSIDE SMU'S INTERVIEW PROCESS: A DEEP DIVE ACROSS SCHOOLS

## What to Expect, How to Prepare, and Why Every SMU School Does It Differently

By

Kritika Bagaria

Founder & College Admissions Mentor

Kritika Bagaria Associates



**Kritika Bagaria**

The Singapore Management University (SMU) is well known not only for its strong academic rigor but also for its distinctive interview-based admissions process. These interviews are a critical evaluative component designed to assess not just academic merit, but also a student's fit with SMU's interactive pedagogy, which centers on discussion-driven, seminar-style learning. SMU looks for articulate communicators, critical thinkers, and students who are likely to thrive in collaborative learning environments.

### General Structure and Timelines

Interviews are typically held after online application submission but before board exam results are released. Final admission decisions, however, are made only after evaluating actual board marks. All interviews are conducted online, and formats vary significantly by school, ranging from 1:1 conversations to panel discussions and group activities.

### School-Specific Interview Formats

#### 1. School of Business

The School of Business conducts a group interview led by one professor. Students begin with a self-introduction, followed by a spontaneous group discussion on a surprise topic. Previous discussion prompts have included themes such as favorite social media influencers and the impact of AI on business. The format is designed to observe how students communicate, listen, and respond under pressure.

#### 2. School of Computing and Information Systems (SCIS)

The SCIS interviews are streamlined and skill-specific, differing based on the program applied for:

- **Information Systems (IS):** This 15-minute interview includes an estimation question, where students are allowed to draft their response on paper. Sample questions are provided online to practice analytical thinking. Students are also asked about relevant project experience, which can include schoolwork, family business, coding competitions, or internships. The interview often closes with time for students to ask questions.
- **Technology Application & Innovation:** Students are expected to analyze the given business scenario, identify relevant information technologies, and propose ways to enhance business and societal outcomes. Students may voluntarily connect these ideas to their own tech experiences.
- **Computer Science:** This interview includes two mandatory activities:
  1. **Activity A:** A Karel programming task, for which students should prepare using the Stanford Karel tutorial. They will be asked to modify simple patterns in real-time.
  2. **Activity B:** A Quantitative Reasoning question, requiring students to solve and articulate a math problem clearly. Practice is advised for analytical clarity and communication.

### 3. College of Integrative Studies (CIS)

Applicants to CIS must prepare by reviewing three specific resources:

- Interdisciplinarity in AI
- Master of Many Trades
- A video interview with Professor Winston Chow

These materials underpin CIS's commitment to interdisciplinary education and help interviewers assess students' intellectual agility and integrative thinking.

### 4. School of Economics (SOE)

SOE conducts a panel interview with two professors, and students are asked to apply economic concepts to real-world issues. Sample questions include: "Should people have kids from an Economics perspective?" and "Name a book you liked and one you didn't." Occasionally, candidates may be asked to solve a math problem live. The key here is to demonstrate original thought and analytical reasoning, not just rote knowledge.

### 5. School of Social Sciences (SOSS)

SOSS interviews are more generalized, often combining applicants across interests like Psychology, Sociology, and Political Science. Students must address questions from the lens of their intended major. Prompts include: "Pros and cons of AI" or "An issue prevalent in Asia." Standard interview questions like "Tell me about yourself" and "Why SMU/SOSS?" are staples. Being prepared with thoughtful questions to ask interviewers is also expected.

### Final Thoughts

The SMU interview process is designed not as a formality, but as a vital touchpoint for understanding the personality, mindset, and communication style of each candidate. Regardless of the school or major, students should prepare to show intellectual curiosity, clarity of expression, relevant experience, and a genuine interest in SMU's discussion-driven academic culture. While formats differ, a common thread is the emphasis on thinking on your feet, engaging in real-world problem solving, and showing your unique perspective.

For applicants aiming to succeed, the advice is simple but crucial: don't rehearse—reflect, don't memorize—analyze, and most importantly, don't perform—participate. That's the SMU way.



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# RED ALERT: THE SIGNS THAT YOU ARE ENGAGING WITH A CRAPPY AGENT

## Your College Dreams Deserve Better Than This

By  
Megan Mankerian-Stem  
Founder & Executive Director  
Global Leaders Collective



Megan  
Mankerian-Stem

The process of researching, applying, sorting the documents, making a decision, and getting a visa to go to a university abroad is challenging and confusing for many countries. As students begin this process, families tend to look for support and guidance to navigate through these tricky waters. This has become the norm for many, however, it then comes a new level of choices: do you work with your school counselor or principal only? Do you seek out an agent consultant? Are there other options out there? How do you know what is best for your family and your child?

With flashy advertising on every building, it is almost effortless to find agent consultants to hire in your community. But, are they the right fit to truly support your family in gaining admissions to the right universities? Here are three warning signs that you are engaging with a crappy agent consultant, and three pieces of advice to find the right support.

### Promises, Promises

Whenever I am traveling around India and see advertisements for agent consultants that promise admissions to top universities, or full scholarships, or a visa, I laugh. There are no guarantees in the process of applying to universities, as well as for funding or a visa. While working with a partner organization can help increase your chances of the above, any credible guide will be honest about these pieces of the process.

Make sure to ask questions about their success rates for admissions, but also be prepared with your own research. Many universities share data on admissions rates each year on their websites and social media accounts, so you can make a list of universities you are interested in and note these data points. For example, if Stanford is your dream university and an agent consultant tells you that 100% of their applicants have been admitted, start considering other partners. Stanford's admission rate is around 4%.

### University List: Flexible or Prescriptive?

When you are interviewing agent consultants about their process, make sure to ask about the range of universities they work with and where their previous students have gained admission. If it seems like they are only listing a few universities, or will not let you add universities to your list, then it is time to keep searching for a new partner in this process.

You want to work with someone who will help you build a balanced list of universities to apply to that includes a few dream universities that are competitive (less than 20% admission rate), a group of target universities that match your grade and testing stats (usually 20-50% admission rate) and a small number of highly likely universities (60%+ admission rates).

### Control of the Process and Your Documents

Sadly, I have met many students who were caught submitting fraudulent documents in the application process. When I have talked to them about why and how this happened, they are shocked to see that the documents I received are not the same documents they shared with their agent consultant. In fact, it is often clear to see where the agent consultant edited the documents to increase the student's scores,

such as changing the Year 10 exam results, increasing IELTS or TOEFL scores, or even changing the headshot on official documents.

Make sure you understand and know how your documents will be submitted for your applications, and if you will be able to do a final review of anything they may submit on your behalf. University admissions is trained to look for fraudulent documents and with the rise in using AI in admissions offices, it will become easier to spot any forgery.

So what can you do to make sure you have a good partner in the admissions process? Here are several ideas and tips to put you on the right path for success:

- **Reach out to universities directly for help.** Many universities have representatives in India who can support you or they can give references to agent consultants or other offices that you can trust.
- **Look for free resources**, such as EducationUSA, British Council, Study in Canada, and others, who host in person and virtual sessions throughout the year that offer tips and advice for the application and visa process. Make sure to follow all their social media accounts!
- **Talk to your school university counsellor**, if you have one! They are trained to help you through the process, submit your official documentation on your behalf, and often know your student better than any external partner will.
- **Consider independent college counselors**, such as those associated with AIEEC, HECA or IECA. They not only provide unbiased application support, but can also give guidance on career planning, support on time management, and help with the transition to university. Independent counselors in any of these organizations take an oath of ethics to support students and families, and often have university degrees and certifications in university counseling.

Also, keep reading Aiyoo for lots of information directly from university admissions officers and other experts in the field, and be on the lookout for in-person events happening later this year that can connect you directly to university representatives!

# PREPARING FOR U.S. UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS **VIRTUAL SERIES**

## EVENT SCHEDULE

**23**

JULY

**MOCK ADMISSIONS FOR AN  
ENGINEERING/CS STUDENT  
\*FOR STUDENTS**

**30**

JULY

**MOCK ADMISSIONS FOR A  
BUSINESS STUDENT  
\*FOR STUDENTS**

**06**

AUGUST

**ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR  
SCHOLARSHIPS OR  
FINANCIAL AID?  
\*FOR PARENTS**



**REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

**TIME: 7PM – 8PM IST**

**LOCATION: VIRTUAL**

**\*SESSION LINK WILL BE EMAILED**



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FOR MORE INFO : [HELLO@GLCOLLECTIVE.CO](mailto:HELLO@GLCOLLECTIVE.CO)



# THE UNSPOKEN CHALLENGES OF MOVING BACK TO INDIA AFTER STUDYING ABROAD

## 5 Unexpected Challenges I Faced When Home Didn't Feel Like Home

By  
Aashna Saraf  
Founder  
CreatED



Aashna Saraf

Studying abroad is often painted in shades of adventure, independence, and discovery. But what rarely makes it into the conversation is the quiet turbulence of returning home. For many students who move back to India after years of overseas education, the "homecoming" is far from seamless. It is not about nostalgia or patriotism. It's about readjusting—to your own country.

Here are five challenges I didn't expect when I moved back to India after studying abroad:

### 1. Reverse Culture Shock: When Familiar Feels Foreign

You never forget your own country. But after living in places where texting "I'm stepping out" was a courtesy, not a rule. I also had to relearn how to sleep through to the ding-dong of the doorbell—ten times before noon—whether it was the maid, the driver, the vegetable vendor, or someone delivering milk.

And then there was my room. What was once my quiet corner for Zoom calls and mental resets became a multi-purpose garden-slash-dumping ground. Flowerpots lined my window sill, my study table held boxes of mangoes, and my bed became a storage unit for winter blankets—because, of course, I was "hardly home."

### 2. Pollution: You Can't Breathe Through Nostalgia

Let's talk about air. The moment I landed in Mumbai, I felt it—an invisible weight on my chest. Within days, my throat felt like it had sandpaper lining and I found myself constantly reaching for cough drops. And no matter how many memories I had tied to the smell of the monsoon hitting Indian soil, I couldn't deny that my lungs were struggling to readjust.

### 3. The Love That Shows Up As Food

I expected affection. I didn't expect four full meals a day. Breakfast turned into brunch, followed by a "light lunch," followed by a "let's quickly make something" at 5 p.m., followed by a dinner fit for a wedding guest. Add to that: a never-ending roster of relatives, each armed with sweets and savories, "just because you're back." I put on five kilos in the first month and not a single regretful one.

Because here, food is love. Declining a second serving? Almost an insult. Fitting back into your pre-India jeans? Optional.

### 4. Maintaining Global Ties in a Local World

One of the quieter losses of returning home is losing access to a global peer group. The late-night intellectual arguments, spontaneous coffee runs, and the multicultural conversations over dinner—reduced to scattered WhatsApp voice notes and mismatched time zones. You try to keep in touch, but life picks up pace in two geographies.

You're caught between two worlds—never fully in either.

### 5. Coming Home Is Its Own Kind of Journey

It's reconciling the independence you gained with the interdependence you left behind. It's learning to celebrate a festival with fireworks and air purifiers. It's holding onto global friendships while rediscovering hyperlocal identities.

Coming home isn't always about returning to the person you were. Sometimes, it's about figuring out who you've become.



# Thank You, From Team Aiiyo

Thank you for taking the time to read Aiiyo. 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@aiiyo.in](mailto:contact@aiiyo.in). Until next time, stay sharp and stay inspired.

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