Getting into top colleges

Farrukh Azmi, MD, PhD
But Why?
The first revealed word of the Quran?
إنَّ في خلق السُّمَوَّاتِ والأَرْضِ وَالْفَلَاقِ تَجَّرَى بِالْبَحْرِ وَما أَنزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَآءٍ فَأَحْيَاهُ بِالأَرْضِ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَتَّ فِيهَا مِنْ حَكْمٍ ذَاتِ عِلْمٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الْرَّيْحِ وَالْسَّحَابِ الْمُسْحَحِرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ لَأَيْتَ لَقُومٍ يَعْقِلُونَ
Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day: and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man: and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon: and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all this] there are messages indeed for people who use their reason.
130
Battle of Badr and Prisoners
Avicenna and Etiology of Small Pox
Top Colleges

- Harvard
- Princeton
- Yale
- Columbia
- Cal Tech
- MIT
- Stanford
- UChicago
Ivy League

- Harvard
- Princeton
- Yale
- Columbia
- Penn
- Cornell
- Dartmouth
- Brown
Top Colleges
Less than a day’s drive

- Carnegie Melon
- Georgetown
- Columbia
- Harvard
- UChicago
- North Western
- Williams
- Penn
- Princeton
- Yale
- MIT
- Cornell
- Vanderbilt
- Swarthmore
Why Top Colleges Presidents

- Bush Senior: Yale
- Clinton: GT, Oxford, Harvard
- Bush Junior: Yale
- Obama: Columbia, Harvard
- Romney: Stanford, Harvard
- Trump: Penn
Why Top Colleges
Supreme Court Justices

✧ Harvard: 18
✧ Yale: 10
✧ Columbia: 7
✧ U Michigan: 3
Why Top Colleges
Nobel Laureates

- Columbia 96
- Chicago 87
- MIT 77
- Stanford 54
- Yale 49
- UC Berkeley 47
- Harvard 46
- Cornell 42
Most Billionaires

- Penn
- Harvard
- Yale
- Stanford
- USC
- Cornell
- Princeton
Medical School Admissions for Premeds Average 33%

>90%

Brown
Johns Hopkins**
Berkeley
Northwestern
Columbia
Dartmouth

Harvard
Ann Arbor
Penn
Chicago
Cornell**
Duke*
Graduate School Admissions

- Where you earned your undergraduate degree can influence the evaluation of your GPA.

- If you went to one of the most prestigious undergraduate schools, your grades were earned in competition with other very talented individuals.
Graduate School Admissions

다는 The law schools will reach more deeply into your class to take students, and students from your school with lower GPA than those of students from lower ranked schools

Joyce Putman Currll

Dean of Admissions

Harvard Law School
Bill Gates
HARVARD
Mark Zuckerberg
HARVARD
Warren Buffett
Penn
Columbia
Ben Bernanke
Harvard, MIT, Princeton
Janet Yellen
Brown
Yale
Networking
Narola Diamond

Rough Diamond
BUT HOW?
BUT HOW ABOUT MORTALS LIKE US?
Verily, God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves.
Elementary School

➤ A love of learning
➤ Start reading books and develop a love of reading
➤ Strengthen math skills (Kumon?)
➤ Knowledge games (Name games)
Middle School

✧ Take **honors track** courses

✧ **Extracurricular** activities, including sports, geography bee, spelling bee and other academic competitions

✧ **Gifted** program
High School

✧ Make a good early impression on teachers
✧ Be prepared for class
✧ Make well thought-out comments during class
✧ Be humble and impress your teachers with sense of maturity and character
✧ Leadership Position
✧ Private Tutoring?
The 1000 Most Common SAT Words
Adobe PDF
SAT Vocabulary

http://img.sparknotes.com/content/testprep/pdf/sat.vocab.pdf
High School
Freshman year

✧ Take advance level classes
✧ Participate in class discussions
✧ Develop long term extracurricular activities
✧ Start reviewing SAT books
✧ Read, read and read in your spare time
✧ Take online SAT course during summer vacation
Activities

- Phage Hunting
- Home Town High Q
- Mock Trial
High School Sophomore Year

- Keep reading
- Take AP courses
- Take PSAT
- Keep up with your homework
- Boost your vocabulary
- Get a job
- If possible visit colleges
High School
Junior year

✦ Hardest academic year
✦ Take PSAT
✦ Take as many AP classes as possible
✦ Take SAT/ACT course
✦ Take SAT/ACT in fall or early spring
✦ Take Subject SATs
High School Senior Year

- Start working on your college essay during summer vacation
- Keep up your grades
- Apply for early Decision/Action
Khan Academy

High School Lectures

SAT Prep classes
What does it take for acceptance to selective college?

- The more selective the more it is expected that student will have AP’s if available
Schools with No AP Courses

- Colleges expect you to **challenge yourself** with the courses you have available.
- If you go to a school with few or no AP courses, colleges will understand
Classes to Take

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Math
- 4 years of Science
- 4 years of Social/History
- 4 years of single Foreign Language

- Take most challenging courses you can and still do well
Test Scores

✧ No preference for SAT or ACT
✧ Selective colleges require SAT Subject tests
✧ Student should compare their test scores with middle 50% of test scores to a particular college
At most selective colleges all of the students have great grades and test scores.

Selective colleges generally figure that 80% of students applying can do the work.

So how do they decide who to admit?
The HOOK

- Great athlete is a hook
- Legacy is a hook
- Under represented minority is a hook
- But what about everybody else
  - What makes you different from all of the other good students
  - And how can you show that to a college
Application Essays

- Colleges use essays for two reasons

  - Evaluate student’s writing ability
  - Gives students chance to tell something about themselves not otherwise on application
  - What makes you interesting
Application Essay

- Spelling and grammar are important
- Important to answer the question you are asked
- Pay attention to requested length of essay
  - Should not exceed requested length by more than about 5%
Essays Cont.

- **Student** should be the focus of essay not grandma.
- **Focus** of essay should be very tight. One small thing to explain something about student to college.
College Specific Essays

- College specific essays often ask why student is interested in that college
- Give specific reasons
  - If have been on campus mention that
  - Mention specific programs that you like
  - Mention professors that you have met or researched that you would like to work with
Students with Feelings

- Colleges like to see a student with a **passion** but also students with **compassion**
- **Volunteer** efforts can be very important
- Doesn’t matter what volunteer effort student does
- BUT if you can **tie** a volunteer effort into your passion, you make your self strong candidate
Teacher
Recommendations

👉 Generally will need **two**

👉 Choose teacher of academic subject that you had as **junior or senior**.

👉 Choose someone who knows you **well**.

👉 Doesn’t need to be the teacher you got the best grade in

👉 Provide teacher with a **resume** of all your activities
Counselor Recommendation

- Get to know your counselor *early* so that they can write the best recommendation

- Colleges understand that not everyone knows their counselor

- If there is a problem that you had the counselor can put it into perspective
Demonstrated Interest

- Demonstrated interest is simply showing interest in a college
- Visiting a college shows interest
- Emailing admissions counselor with questions shows interest
- Requesting information about the college shows interest
Interview

- 2 types of college interviews
  - Evaluative and Informational

- **Evaluative** - college wants to see if you are a good fit for the college. Admission decision may be influenced by interview

- **Informational** - college there to give information only and has no effect on admission decision
Interviews

- May be with admissions officer
- May be with local alumni
- Show up on time
- **Dress** Appropriately
- Be prepared to **answer** questions
- Be prepared to **ask** questions
Most colleges will say this has little effect on admissions decisions.

BUT at highly selective colleges it can make a difference.

Very few students at these colleges have ever worked.

You demonstrate maturity if you have worked.

If you can tie work into your interests, even better.
Other Factors

- Boy or Girl

- Colleges like to try and keep fairly even ratio

- Most colleges have many more girls than boys applying so admission rates lower for girls

- But some colleges have more boys and girls have easier chance. MIT is example
Application Timing

- Early Decision - ED
- Early Action - EA
- Regular
- Rolling
Guaranteed Medical School Admission
Application Process

- Avoid being too subtle
- Don’t try to hide your accomplishments
- Don’t come across as a preppy, well off kid
- Avoid tendency to brag
- Under state your parents accomplishments
The Academic Index

- SAT
- Subject SAT
- Class Rank
- The selective colleges give much more weight to AI than to extracurricular activities
- Scale of 1-240
# Class Rank Score (350-399)

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The Academic Index

\[ AI = (SAT_V + SAT_M) + \text{SAT II} + \text{SAT II} + \text{CRS} \]

2 2
The Academic Index

AI = (75+80) + (76+72) + 71 = 222.5

Class rank 1=80, Class rank 10=71
The Academic Index

🔹 Dartmouth’s 1-9 academic ranking

189-190 = 3
191-198 = 4
200-209 = 5
210-215 = 6
216-220 = 7
221-224 = 8
≥ 229 = 9
The Academic Index

❖ Dartmouth Admission Rate
❖ 9s 94%
❖ 8s 92%
❖ 7s 76%
❖ 6s 52%
❖ 5s 25%
❖ 4s 11%
❖ 3s 7%
Paying for College

Given the choice, I would not live in an expensive house nor drive a luxury car. Instead, I would choose to send my child to a top college.
Paying for the college

529 college savings plan
Financial Aid

- Harvard: <65k/year free,
- Harvard: 120-150k/year 10%
- Yale: <65k/year free
- Yale: 65-130k 1-10%
- Stanford: <100k free
- UC Berkeley: <150k/year 15%
Application Process
If you are deferred

✦ Call the admissions office and get a sense of your weaknesses
✦ Leave your parents out of the loop
✦ Encourage your guidance counselor to call
✦ Write a brief letter saying that the school is still your top choice
✦ Any new awards or accomplishments
Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.

ANY QUESTIONS ?