



# STUDY IN AMERICA

THE APPLICATION PROCESS DEMYSTIFIED

**St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School**

**25 March 2014**

**Presenter**

Stuart Gordon (Head of Harvard UK Outreach)

# This session will cover...

- **Why study in the US?**
- **Differences between US & UK higher education**
- **Researching US colleges and finding a 'good fit'**
- **US application process**
  - **Common Application Form**
  - **Standardised tests**
  - **School report/teacher recommendations**
  - **Student essays**
  - **Interviews**
  - **Financial aid**
- **Life on a US campus**

# Why study in the US?

1. Quality and reputation of US universities
2. Wide choice – 2,400 colleges in the US offer undergraduate degrees
3. Opportunity to study a broad range of subjects – no specialisation for the first 18 months
4. Learn about a new culture and expand your horizons
5. Internationalise your CV

# US vs. UK University Systems

## MAIN DIFFERENCE: BREADTH vs. DEPTH

- In the UK, you apply to a university department to study a particular subject area that you have chosen in advance
- In the US, you apply to the university as a whole and can study what you like (except for a small core curriculum) until mid-way through the second year

# US vs. UK University Systems

<b>American Universities</b>	<b>British Universities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broad curriculum with wide range of disciplines and courses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specialised curriculum within a particular subject area</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More contact time with greater emphasis on classroom teaching and discussion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Typically not as much contact time and greater opportunity for private study</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balance between academic study and extracurricular activity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extracurricular activity in own time</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More emphasis on continuous assessment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More emphasis on end of year exams</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions tutors look for a broad range of attributes including extracurricular achievements and personal qualities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions tutors look mostly at academic achievement and your potential to excel in a particular area of study</li></ul>

# Example: teaching and learning at Harvard

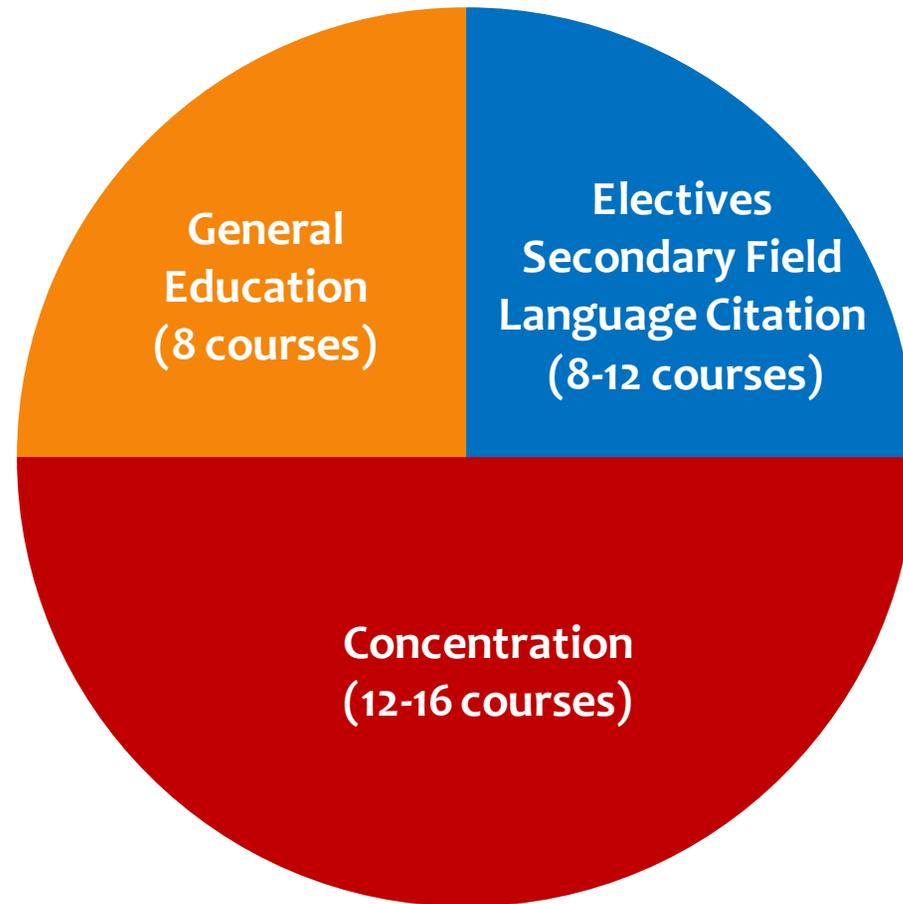


- Average class size: 17
- 8:1 Student/faculty ratio
- 3,500 Courses
- 40+ Concentrations
- Extensive facilities (200-acre campus with 400 buildings, labs, libraries)

- Coursework split between subject, General Education requirements, and 'electives'
- General Education covers analytical and communication skills in eight broad fields
- Opportunities for small seminar courses (ex. Freshman Seminars)



# Academic Program



Total Classes = 32  
(4 classes/term)

# General Education

**Aesthetic & Interpretive Understanding**  
**Culture and Belief**  
**Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning**  
**Ethical Reasoning**  
**Science of Living Systems**  
**Science of the Physical Universe**  
**Societies of the World**  
**United States in the World**

**Opportunities for students to learn and for faculty to teach in ways that cut across traditional departmental lines**

**Link the arts and sciences with the 21st century world**

# General Education

Literature and Medicine

Nazi Cinema: The Art and Politics of Illusion

The Contested Bible

Concepts of the Hero in Classical Greek Civilization

The Art of Numbers

The Business and Politics of Health

Aesthetic & Interpretive Understanding  
Culture and Belief

Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning  
Ethical Reasoning

Science of Living Systems

Science of the Physical Universe

Societies of the World

United States in the World

Slavery, Capitalism, Imperialism:  
The U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Medicine and Society in America

Political Justice and  
Political Trials

Understanding Darwinism

Trees, Forests, and Global  
Change

Energy: Perspectives,  
Problems, Prospects

The Two Koreas

Pyramid Schemes: The Archaeological  
History of Ancient Egypt

# 1<sup>st</sup> Year Seminars

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**Limited to 15 Students**

**Over 130 Freshman Seminars including:**

- **Mimicry and Camouflage in Nature**
- **Impact of Infectious Diseases on History and Society**
- **Evolution, Buddhism and Ethics**
- **Dreams: Our Mind by Night**
- **Theatre and Magic**

# Study Abroad



Locations across the world include: Australia, Belize, Botswana, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Scotland, Thailand, Turkey



# What are US colleges looking for?

1. Academic achievement (grades, scores, teacher comments)
2. Extracurricular involvement (activities and achievements outside academic study)
3. Personal attributes (interest in your academic field of choice, initiative, leadership potential, open mindedness, enthusiasm)
4. Context and background (socio-economic, geographic, ethnic, parents' education and jobs, advantages or disadvantages growing up, barriers overcome)
5. Goal is to obtain fullest picture of applicant – both past accomplishments and future potential

# Application Timeline

School Year	Task List
Year 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Start researching possible colleges to which you might apply</li> <li>•Think about what subjects to study in Years 12 and 13</li> </ul>
Summer Holiday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Undertake work experience and/or community service if possible</li> </ul>
Year 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Register for the standardised tests (SAT or ACT) and leave sufficient time to practise before taking them</li> <li>•Do additional research to make a short list of colleges</li> </ul>
Summer Holiday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Complete the Common Application Form including essays</li> <li>•Research funding options and finalise your selection of colleges</li> </ul>
Year 13 (Autumn Term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Compile all application materials</li> <li>•Submit admissions/funding applications (early deadlines in November; regular deadlines in January)</li> </ul>
Year 13 (Spring Term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Receive admissions decisions (end of March)</li> <li>•Accept/decline any offers by 1st May</li> </ul>
Summer holiday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Apply for your visa</li> <li>•Read the pre-departure section of Fulbright website</li> </ul>
Aug. / Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Begin study in the US!</li> </ul>

# Researching US universities

1. Think before you search. Prioritise the factors that are important to you.
2. Begin your search using online search engines, print guides and personal recommendations to narrow your search to 10-20 good options.
3. Do your homework. Roll up your sleeves and research these, narrowing the list to the 6-10 you apply to.

# 1. Prioritise factors important to you

- Academic
  - Competitiveness of admission
  - SAT/ACT scores of admitted students
  - Courses offered; centres of excellence for certain fields
  - Enrichment opportunities: study abroad, internships, undergraduate research
- Extracurricular activity & profile of student body
  - Range of clubs, societies, international groups, religious groups, performing arts groups, publications and community service groups
  - Atmosphere, campus size, student body
  - Percentage of international students and where they are from
- Location
  - Cost of living & lifestyle issues of being in urban, suburban or rural areas
  - Proximity to public transport /airports
  - Weather and climate
- Costs and availability of university funding for international students

## 2. Use online search engine

- College Board Search  
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>
- Peterson's College Search  
<http://www.petersons.com/>
- Hot Courses Abroad  
<http://www.hotcoursesabroad.com/usa/>
- The Fulbright Commission 'Choosing Universities' page  
<http://www.fulbright.org.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/choosing-universities>



Find Colleges, Advice and More

Search

Sign up | Sign in

Get Started | Find Colleges | Explore Careers | Pay for College | Get In | Make a Plan

Home / Find Colleges / College Search

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## College Search

Save Selections Clear All Selections

### SELECT FILTERS

Test Scores & Selectivity

Type of School

Location

Campus & Housing

Majors & Learning Environment

Sports & Activities

Academic Credit

Paying

Support Services

Diversity

Save Selections Clear All Selections

You have 3,961 college options. Choose a category on the left to find the right ones for you. We'll help along the way.

Not sure where to start? Go to College Search Step-by-Step, an interactive guide.

Home → College Search

# Find a college that's right for you!

## Use our 3-Step College Match Tool

### #1 What type of college are you looking for?

- Traditional Colleges and Universities
- Community Colleges
- Online Degree Programs

NEXT STEP »

## College Search by School Name or Keyword

Type keyword...

SEARCH

Search by school name, major, location, and other keywords.

### Try searching for stuff like:

- "Harvard University"
- "Applied Mathematics"
- "Boston, Massachusetts"

Other ways to search: Colleges by State Colleges by Major

FEEDBACK

HOW TO CHOOSE

HOW TO GET IN

HOW TO PAY

TEST PREP

## SAT Prep Guide



The SAT. The T-Rex of standardized tests for college. Ready to go a-hunting? We've got the tips, tools, and techniques that are going to help you conquer this beastie.

CONTINUE READING →

## Most popular articles:



About the ACT



Choosing the ACT or SAT



Last Minute Test Prep Tips

## Campus Photo Tours See what life is really like on campus!



Stevenson University

Stevenson, MD

Stevenson University, a private liberal arts institution is located in Baltimore County, Maryland.



Naropa University

Boulder, CO

Naropa University is a nonprofit, private, nonsectarian liberal arts university founded in



Mercy College

Dobbs Ferry, NY

Mercy College is a private, not for profit institution based in Westchester, NY offering more than 90

EssayEdge

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### Revolutionary Financial Aid

Seventy percent of Harvard students receive some form of [financial aid](#). A Harvard education is more affordable than a state school for 90% of American families.

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[Admissions Statistics](#)

## Why not Harvard? Why not you?



Discover the real Harvard. See how our curriculum, extracurriculars, students, faculty, and financial aid program combine to produce a 98 percent graduation rate.

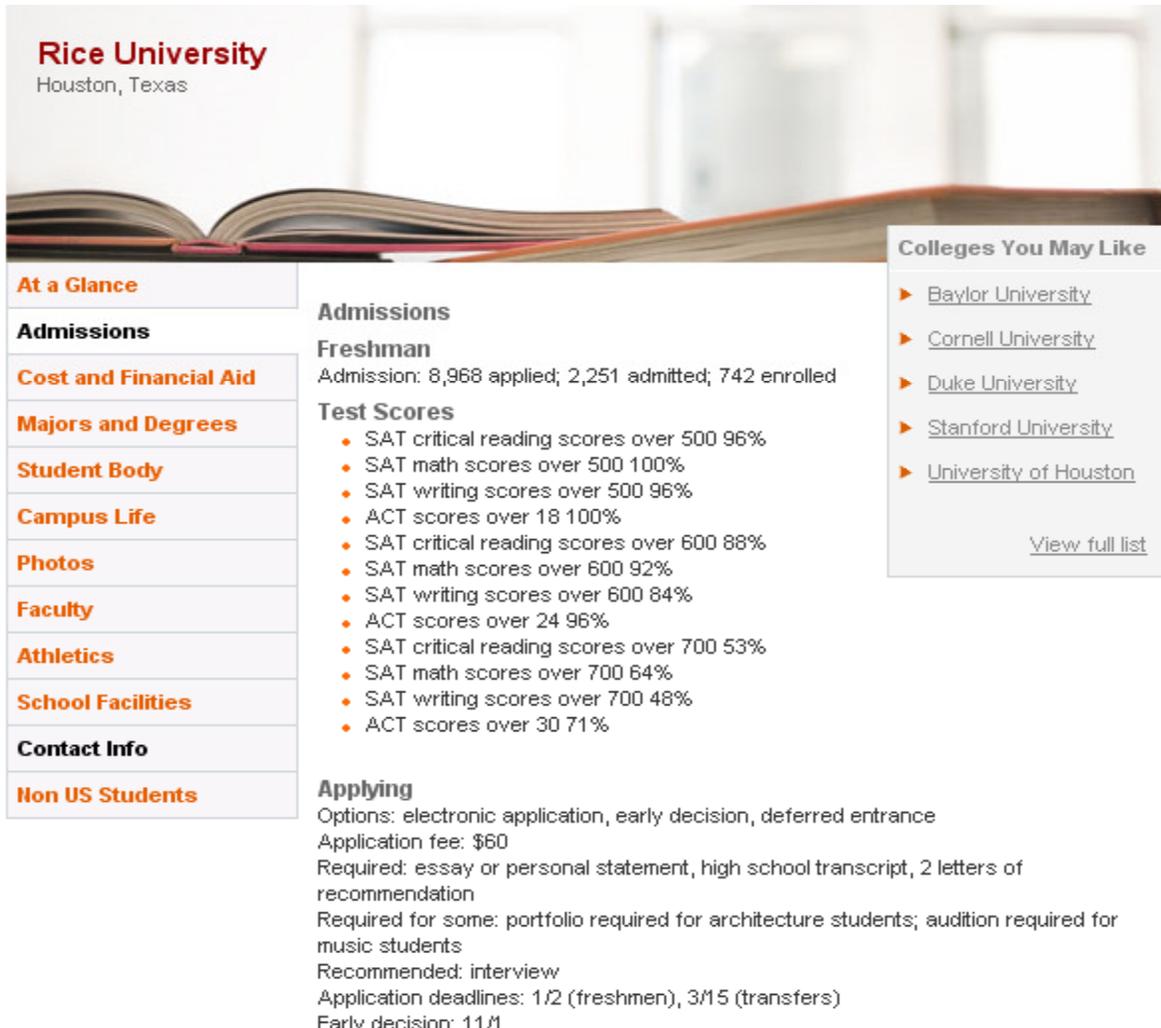


Attend an Admissions information session and tour. Experience the past and present—and envision your future—by visiting Boston, "America's college town."



Apply now! We'll guide you through the process of the Common or Universal Application and answer any questions you have along the way.

# Don't forget to check out the student profile...



**Rice University**  
Houston, Texas

**At a Glance**

- Admissions**
- Cost and Financial Aid**
- Majors and Degrees**
- Student Body**
- Campus Life**
- Photos**
- Faculty**
- Athletics**
- School Facilities**
- Contact Info**
- Non US Students**

**Admissions**  
**Freshman**  
Admission: 8,968 applied; 2,251 admitted; 742 enrolled

**Test Scores**

- SAT critical reading scores over 500 96%
- SAT math scores over 500 100%
- SAT writing scores over 500 96%
- ACT scores over 18 100%
- SAT critical reading scores over 600 88%
- SAT math scores over 600 92%
- SAT writing scores over 600 84%
- ACT scores over 24 96%
- SAT critical reading scores over 700 53%
- SAT math scores over 700 64%
- SAT writing scores over 700 48%
- ACT scores over 30 71%

**Applying**  
Options: electronic application, early decision, deferred entrance  
Application fee: \$60  
Required: essay or personal statement, high school transcript, 2 letters of recommendation  
Required for some: portfolio required for architecture students; audition required for music students  
Recommended: interview  
Application deadlines: 1/2 (freshmen), 3/15 (transfers)  
Early decision: 11/1

**Colleges You May Like**

- ▶ [Baylor University](#)
- ▶ [Cornell University](#)
- ▶ [Duke University](#)
- ▶ [Stanford University](#)
- ▶ [University of Houston](#)

[View full list](#)

...and whether they have an international office

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- VIP
- FISS
- Clubs
- IEW
- Other Activities

### FISS - Friends of International Students & Scholars



# If you definitely want to study in the US:

- Select a well-rounded list of 6-10 universities:
  - ✓ 1-2 dream schools
  - ✓ 4-6 match schools
  - ✓ 1-2 safety schools
- Use a similar method to apply to a maximum of 5 UK universities through UCAS
- Reach for the stars! (but spread the risk)

# Application components

1. Common Application Form (academic record, extracurricular achievements)
2. SAT/ACT test scores
3. School report/teacher recommendations
4. Personal essay(s)
5. Alumni interview in the UK (top colleges only)

# 1. Common Application Form

- Forms completed online and sent to many colleges, but no limits on how many
- Common App. form asks for basic demographic information and extracurricular activity
- Some colleges have a supplement for additional information
- School forms also are submitted online (two teacher reports, grades, profile and additional recommendation letter from someone at school)

## 2. SAT tests [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

- **SAT I Reasoning test** - Critical Reading, Maths, Writing
- **SAT II Subject tests** - 2 or 3 subjects required. Subject choices include maths levels 1 and 2, physics, chemistry, biology, English Literature, French, German, Spanish
- **Tips:**
  - Don't panic. If you're good enough to get good grades at A Level, you're good enough to do these tests.
  - Prepare by downloading/purchasing past papers and doing a few practice tests. You will then know in advance how you measure up. Each test is scored from 200-800. Scores in the 600s are respectable; 700s are good.
  - Register with the College Board and book your place at a test centre early – places fill up very quickly.
- **Cost:** \$86 Reasoning; \$72.50 (each) Subject

# ACT [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

- The ACT can be taken instead of the SAT Reasoning Test - but not the SAT Subject Tests, for which there is no alternative
- A good A-level student will have the knowledge to perform well in both tests, but they are structured differently so the most suitable test often boils down to the style of exam you prefer
- The two tests are offered on different dates and locations, increasing your choice of testing dates and venues

# SAT vs. ACT (main differences)

- Structure: SAT questions get harder as you go along, ACT questions remain of a similar difficulty; the maths section of the SAT is not entirely multiple choice, whereas it is in the ACT; the SAT essay is at the beginning of the test, in the ACT it comes at the end.
- Scoring: the scales used to score the two tests are completely different.
- Guessing penalty: you are penalised for random guessing in the SAT, but not in the ACT.
- Science test: the ACT contains a science reasoning test, the SAT does not.
- Vocabulary: the SAT critical reading sections have more emphasis on vocabulary than the ACT.

Learn more about the SAT and ACT at:

<http://www.fulbright.org.uk/study-in-the-usa/undergraduate-study/admissions-tests>

# SAT Subject Tests

- Select your strongest subjects
- SAT subject tests are not offered in all subjects on all testing dates so consult the schedule and plan ahead.
- Take the SAT subject test as soon as possible after completing a course in the subject
  - For example, register for the June administration of the chemistry subject test after a year's study of chemistry in school

# Free practice tests online

SAT I Reasoning Test:

<http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-practice-test>

ACT Practice Test:

<http://media.act.org/documents/preparing.pdf>

SAT II Subject Tests:

<http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-subject-test-preparation>

# Test Dates 2014

## SAT test dates:

Test Date	Registration Deadline
3 May 2014	4 April 2014
7 June 2014	9 May 2014

Additional dates in October, November, December, and January 2015

## ACT test dates:

Test Date	Registration Deadline
12 April 2014	7 March 2014
14 June 2014	9 May 2014

Additional dates: 13 September 2014, 25 October 2014,  
13 December 2014, 18 April 2015, 13 June 2015

# 3. School Reports

Examples of school reports are available on the Harvard UK website:

[www.harvard-ukadmissions.co.uk](http://www.harvard-ukadmissions.co.uk)

- **UK:** Sue Smith is a very likeable student with a solid future ahead of her. She interacts well with her classmates and seems to be quite popular amongst her peers. Academically, she achieves decent marks and has good relationships with her tutor, although she could be more focused upon deadlines...
- **US:** It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Sue Smith who ranks amongst the top five percent of students within her classes. She is not only passionate about her field of study, but also about involvement in the community and school. I have no doubt she will be an asset to your programme...

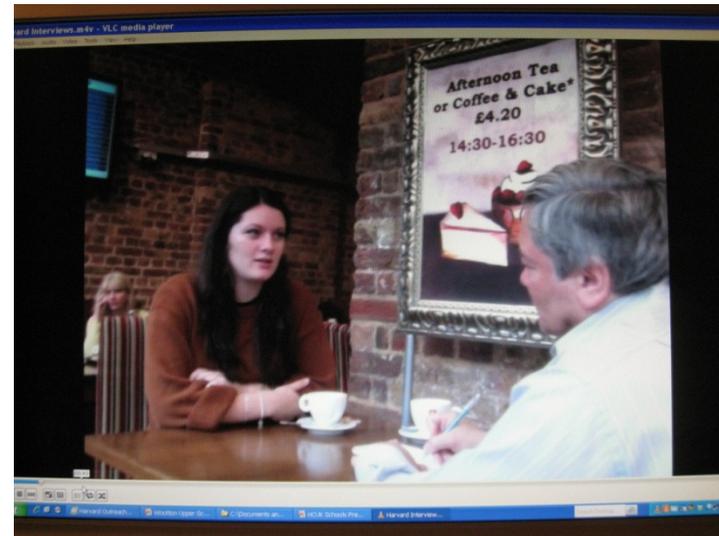
# 4. Student Essays

Examples of student essays are available on the Harvard UK website:

[www.harvard-ukadmissions.co.uk](http://www.harvard-ukadmissions.co.uk)

- Essays for US colleges have the same overall purpose as the UCAS personal statement (to set yourself apart from other candidates), but require a different approach
- The UCAS personal statement should focus on why you are interested in, and prepared for, a particular course of study
- Essays for US colleges should provide a picture of you as a whole person
- 1-3 essays are required – you can usually re-use elements of essays for different colleges

# 5. Interviews



Link to interview  
video on YouTube:

<http://youtu.be/rgelZujuHRc>



# Financial Aid

- Need based financial aid is available to international students at over 150 US colleges, but may be limited in some cases
- Six US colleges (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, MIT, Dartmouth and Amherst) provide the 'full demonstrated financial need' of all international students (based on family income), and several other colleges come very close
- Every college website has a Net Price Calculator to help you find the likely cost to you
- In addition, merit based aid (for athletes, musicians, top scholars, etc) is available at many US colleges

# Financial Aid

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Guiding philosophy: Harvard admits students irrespective of their ability to pay and then offers financial assistance based on family income

- Harvard guarantees adequate financial aid for all four years; loans are not required
- Over two-thirds of all undergraduates receive some form of assistance
- Harvard undergraduate financial aid totaled over £120 million this past year
- Parents pay zero and student has full aid with family income below £ 42,000
- On a sliding scale, families with incomes up to £ 100,000, with typical assets, contribute 0-10% of annual income



## 2013 American Institutions with Financial Aid for International Undergraduates

Doug Thompson, 36 Reservoir Road, Marlboro, NY 12542, dthompson@hvc.rr.com, 845-236-3074

College Name	Cost to Attend	Avg. Award	Total Awarded
Harvard College MA	\$52,650	\$50,100	\$26,302,500
Yale University CT	\$55,300	\$50,897	\$17,712,156
Mount Holyoke College MA	\$53,596	\$36,496	\$17,700,560
Princeton University NJ	\$51,280	\$42,028	\$17,347,488
Mass. Instit. of Tech. MA	\$52,507	\$43,800	\$15,461,400
Univ. of Pennsylvania PA	\$55,934	\$40,974	\$12,360,582
Dartmouth College NH	\$57,996	\$45,098	\$12,131,362
Bard College NY	\$55,592	\$41,699	\$9,006,984
Stanford University CA	\$53,971	\$35,945	\$8,770,580
Illinois Inst. of Technology IL	\$48,540	\$15,593	\$8,622,029
Parsons School of Design NY	\$54,610	\$7,060	\$8,366,100
Middlebury College VT	\$55,950	\$43,798	\$7,911,148
Brown University RI	\$54,974	\$40,414	\$7,597,832
Macalester College MN	\$54,069	\$34,346	\$7,212,660
Amherst College MA	\$54,898	\$50,989	\$7,176,618
Trinity College CT	\$57,530	\$50,853	\$7,068,567
Worcester Poly. Inst. MA	\$54,296	\$22,012	\$6,603,600
St. John's University NY	\$49,075	\$18,863	\$6,432,283
Williams College MA	\$56,770	\$50,590	\$6,424,930
Smith College MA	\$55,320	\$42,387	\$6,400,437
DePauw University IN	\$48,950	\$23,682	\$5,873,136

**Total no. of Colleges on list: 154**



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# Net Price Calculator

Print

## Family Information

Every family is different and many of them are complex – something which is hard to capture in a calculator. Remember this is only an estimate and pick options that best resemble your situation. Once you are admitted, we will work closely with you to fully understand your family.

- [Unmarried / Divorced / Separated](#)
- [Remarried](#)

Your citizenship

Primary residence

The number of children in college

The number of people in your family

## Parental Income

You should use your most recent year's income information (converted to U.S. dollars if applicable). We will request tax forms and other financial documents to verify this information when you complete a financial aid application.

Gross wages/salary

Interest/Dividend income

Business/Farm income

Real estate income

Other income

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Total income:

## Your Net Price Estimate

**YOUR ESTIMATED SCHOLARSHIP**

**YOUR COST**

Cost to Parents	\$0
Student Summer Work	\$0
Student Asset Contribution	\$0
Student Term-time Work	\$3,000

**TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE**

Tuition & Fees	\$42,292
Room & Board	\$14,115
Books & Personal Expenses	\$3,543
Travel Allowance	\$0

[Less detail](#)

# The People

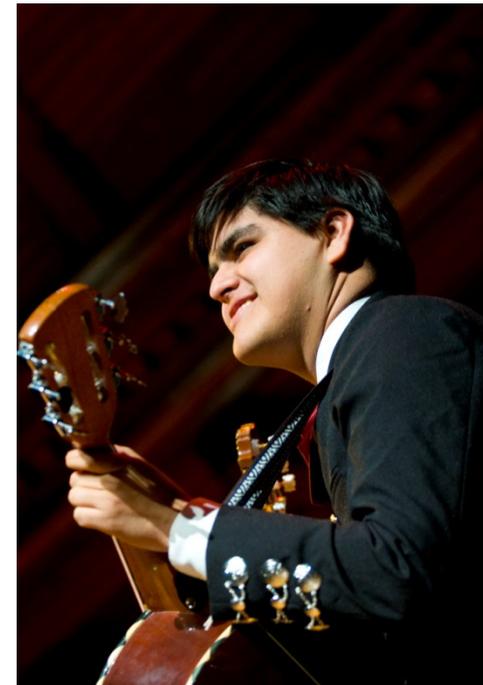
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“What’s my favourite part of Harvard? The people! They come from so many different places, because Harvard attracts students from all over the world. I wanted to go to a school where I would learn from people who have different backgrounds from my own. What I love most is everyone’s passion and energy for both academics and extracurricular activities.”



# Life Outside the Classroom

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**“At least 50% of what I learned at Harvard, I learned from outside the classroom. Harvard students have an incredibly diverse range of passions and interests.”**

**-Doris Huang '06 (London)**

# Life Outside the Classroom



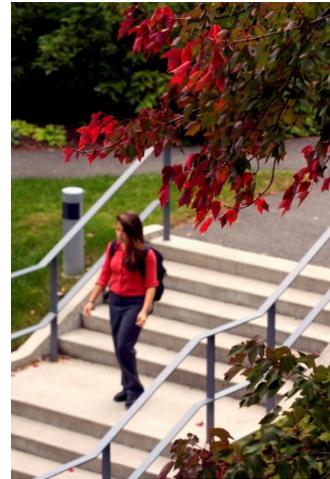
- Sample student organisations:
  - International groups (British Undergrads club, Chinese Student Association, South Asian Association, Brazilian Organisation)
  - Religious groups (Hillel for Jewish students, Christian Fellowship, Catholic Student Association)
  - Performing arts groups (Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, Ballroom Dance team, a cappella)
  - Publications (Harvard Crimson)
  - Community service groups (Phillips Brooks Association)

- 400 university-recognized student clubs
- 20 men's athletic teams, 20 women's athletic teams
- Attractions in Boston and greater New England



# First Year Community

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All freshmen live together in Harvard Yard dormitories

Emphasis on academic and extracurricular exploration

Support system of academic and residential advisers

Host Family programme



# Years 2, 3 & 4: The House System



Twelve residential Houses for upperclassmen

Each contains its own dining facilities, library, staff of advisers, co-curricular opportunities

Housing guaranteed

Virtually all students (98%) live on campus

# Five myths about US colleges

1. To get into a top US college, you need to be either a genius or very rich.
2. It is not worth applying as there is such a huge competition for places.
3. I am from a state school: there is little chance of me being accepted as most places go to students from private schools.
4. Even if I get in, I won't be able to keep up with other students who will all be much brighter than me.
5. I won't like the highly competitive atmosphere on a US campus.

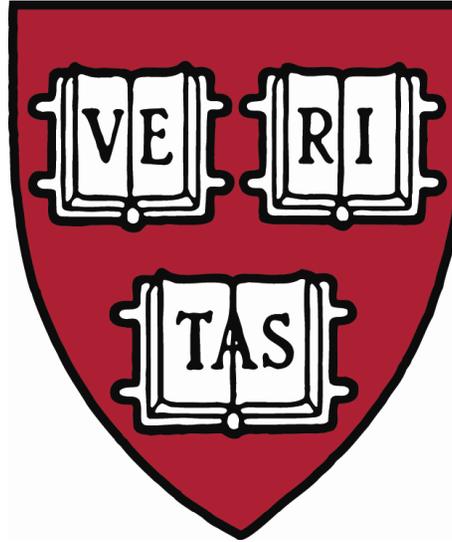
# Further information

- Information about applying to US universities: [www.fulbright.co.uk](http://www.fulbright.co.uk)
- Harvard College admissions and financial aid: <https://college.harvard.edu/admissions>
- Information and registration for the SATs: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- Information and registration for the ACTs: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)
- Information on the Common Application Form: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)
- Search engines for US universities: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)  
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

# Subscribe to our e-newsletter

(includes our *Guide to American College Applications*)





# Questions?

[s.gordon@post.harvard.edu](mailto:s.gordon@post.harvard.edu)