

This Issue:

Strategic Undergraduate Admissions Practices: Advice from U.S. Admissions Officers

Note from the Editor:

I am delighted to present this first issue of the newly redesigned Connections journal featuring strategic undergraduate admissions practices. This issue presents articles written by U.S. admissions officers specializing in international applicants, who are your counterparts in advising.

In this issue, you will find advice to pass on to your students about how to best research a university without visiting, avoid common application pitfalls and approach letters of recommendation. IIE's research experts, Rajika Bhandari and Hey-Kyung Koh, share strategic practices on how to best use *Open Doors* data and Locator Reports to advise your students. Though mainly focusing on undergraduate admission, the issue includes some advice for graduate students, including Bram Caplan's Field of Study article on graduate programs in Political Science and International Relations.

You will also find a new column entitled "Arm Chair Tour" which will present strategic administrative and logistical practices, featuring a different EducationUSA Center each issue. This issue's interviews with Zarene Malik, an adviser based in Islamabad, Pakistan, and advisee Javed Rezayee, are the first of many to share thoughts on how advising centers are run and how unique regional challenges affect administration.

I also invite you to contact me with any suggestions for future articles or feedback on this first issue.

— Shannon Bishop, Managing Editor, *Connections*
Program Manager, Institute of International Education

Features

2 Researching Colleges from Afar

What international students can do to find the perfect U.S. institution for them.

By Thomas Rock, NAGAP

3 How do American Institutions Decide

The art of the admissions process: an insider's perspective on what admissions counselors at highly selective campuses look for in an international applicant.

By Michael Elgarico, Stanford University

4 Dissecting the Applications: DOs and DON'Ts

How to help your students avoid common mistakes on their application.

By Monica Esser, Fordham University

5 Ten Tips for Recommendation Letters

While some students think they have no control over their recommendation letters, students' recommendation etiquette can, in fact, impact the quality of the recommendation.

By Alice Huang, Columbia University

Departments

6 Research

Using Locator Reports to Advise Students

Highlights strategic practices for using the newly released Open Doors 2005/2006 data.

By Rajika Bhandari & Hey-Kyung Koh, IIE

7 News/Updates

The End of Early Admission?

9 Arm Chair Tour

Featured Center: Islamabad, Pakistan

Interview with adviser Zarene Malik & student Javed Rezayee

13 Field of Study Focus

Political Science & International Relations

By Bram Caplan, co-REAC Russia/Eurasia

Researching Colleges from Afar

By Thomas Rock

Feature

While campus visits are valuable and have become a routine part of the college application process for many American students, they are not essential to finding the right institutional fit. By teaching your advisees how to strategically use college guides, regional resources, the Internet and the EducationUSA advising centers effectively, you can help students get a feel for an institution, without visiting in person.

College Guidebooks

Guidebooks provide many of the same tips admissions counselors offer during campus visits. Besides college profiles, many guidebooks have extensive introductions which provide helpful background information on the U.S. college application process. Encourage students to look up the same school in different resources, as each will present the institution in a different light. Impress upon advisees the importance of comparing schools to one another. Some guidebooks helpfully list crossover schools, suggesting that if you like this school, you might also like X, Y, and Z. Once students have done preliminary research, ask questions that make them go back and research more thoroughly. You can help by giving students a worksheet of questions to consider during their investigations.

While College Rankings such as those published by *U.S. News & World Report* may be a good place for students to start assessing the value of an institution, they are not the only resource students should rely on. An institution's overall ranking should not deter a student from applying to a program which is a 'perfect fit'. Furthermore, rankings change from year to year. For graduate students especially, it is crucial to carefully research an institution's faculty and their areas of expertise.

Regional Resources

When students visit college campuses, they often have an opportunity to meet current students and alumni. This can be done effectively off campus as well. Encourage students to contact the Office of Admission and the Alumni Office to find out if any graduates live in their country. Many graduate schools utilize alumni to assist in the recruitment process around the world. Your student may have the opportunity to meet with alumni who could be part of the screening process, though you may or may not know this when they meet. Even if an alum's role is for informational purposes only, he or she will still serve as a valuable resource.



Students researching colleges at Islamabad Advising Center, see page 9.

Strategic Use of the Internet

Though institutions' websites provide valuable information (sometimes even including a virtual campus tour), they should not control your students' entire search. For one thing, websites do not provide the interpersonal interaction crucial to the admissions process. The staff and personnel in the Office of Admission want to know your advisee as an individual. This is where email and telephone calls are valuable in the process. Encourage students to find out whether their school of interest has any special admissions programs such as online chat sessions with students and admissions staff. Some schools have interactive blogs or offer email addresses of current students who can answer questions from the student perspective.

A word of caution about joining online chat sessions, blogging or emailing: Warn advisees to be appropriate and professional. Students often use unique screen names or email addresses when communicating with institution officials. Remind them that they make an impression with every correspondence. Tell them to choose their screen names carefully, and to frame questions appropriately. Additionally, though perspectives gained from reading personal blogs of currently enrolled students, or visiting websites such as Facebook.com and Myspace.com, can help international students gain an impression of an institution, these websites may represent narrow points of view. Make sure advisees keep an open mind and look for a range of resources.

Thomas Rock, Ph.D. is President of National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals & Director of Admissions, Teachers College, Columbia University.

How Do American Institutions Decide: The Case of Highly Selective Campuses

By Michael Elgarico

Feature

“**W**hat are you really looking for in an applicant that will get them admitted?” This is a common question asked of admission officers throughout the United States and has no easy answer. Though admissions counselors at each college or university may answer differently, most would agree the process is more of an art than a science.

The Process

Integral to admissions philosophy is a commitment to giving every applicant a holistic and comprehensive review. Generally speaking, admissions officers make admissions decisions using a committee system. Before the committee meeting, each application is normally read several times, sometimes by different readers. International student applications are usually grouped by geographic region and read by admissions officers with comprehensive knowledge of the specific region and its educational culture. When presenting applicants to other admissions counselors at committee meetings, officers use their regional expertise to best support the students' applications.

What Characteristics Matter?

Academics are the primary focal point of assessment, with an emphasis placed on students' previous academic achievements and the academic rigor of their prior studies. In addition to considering standardized test results, admissions officers look favorably upon strong letters of recommendation (see article on p.5), significant involvement in extra-curricular activities and engaging essay responses. Diversity is also highly valued within the admission process. Whether geographical, political, cultural or socioeconomic in nature, diversity, when partnered with a passion for learning, creates an engaging and vibrant learning environment. Admissions officers additionally consider an applicant within their academic and personal context and bear in mind how surrounding factors, both implicit and explicit, impacted their experiences and interests. This is especially important when reviewing international students' applications.



College Fair at Pakistan's Lahore Grammar School

The Ideal Applicant

All too often, students assume there are minimum requirements or specific attributes that ensure admission. In actuality, admissions officers aim to admit unique individuals, not students who fit some standardized template. Another misconception is that only “well-rounded” students who participate in every club, organization and sport available get admitted. Though every admissions counselor aims to attract students who will be active in their campus communities,

they do not necessarily favor students who have the most activities listed on their application. Academically talented students who are invested and passionate in one particular interest or activity are also valued. Whether their strengths are academic or extracurricular, students from both sides of the spectrum are welcomed. This underscores a core admissions objective of admitting a well-rounded class that exemplifies both depth and breadth of experiences and backgrounds as opposed to a class of well-rounded students.

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Michael Elgarico is Associate Director of Admission at Stanford University.

Dissecting the Undergraduate Application

By Monica Esser

Feature

As Associate Director for International Admission at Fordham University, I have read thousands of undergraduate applications from international students around the world. Though I look forward to reading the accomplishments of your bright international students in this fall's batch of applications, I guarantee some of them will make the same mistakes as past applicants.

When advising students, I hope you'll pass along these DOs and DON'Ts.

Application DOs and DON'Ts

Correspondence:

- **Do** submit application materials by the deadlines!
- **Don't** contact the university without using your full name. An email with just a first name, a nickname or no name does not allow a university to check your records and find out if your application has arrived.
- **Don't** ask for basic information easily found on a school's website.

Personal/Educational Data:

- **Do** make sure the data provided on all university forms is identical. When names and addresses are translated into Roman letters, make sure they are spelled the same way consistently. Students should always use their full name and all information should match that given when taking standardized tests.
- **Do** get foreign language documents translated into English and certified. Submit both the original document and the certified English translation with your application.

Extracurricular Activities:

- **Do** include all your activities – sports, clubs, volunteer opportunities, employment, etc.
- **Do** briefly explain any award that is not intuitive. How is an admissions counselor supposed to know what "Recipient of the EFA Award" means?
- **Don't** send copies of every award or certificate you have received. Your accomplishments should be noted in the application. A list of awards is better than many sheets of paper.

Short/Personal Essays:

- **Don't** spell the institution's name wrong. Is it College or University? If adapting the same essay to different schools, don't forget to change the name of the institution each time.
- **Don't** plagiarize or use someone else's language. It is easy to tell when the feel of the one essay varies from the others. Do, however, have an English teacher/counselor review your applications essay(s) for grammatical errors.
- **Don't** write what you think we want to hear. Do choose a personal subject and write passionately and honestly. Consider writing about your failures as well as your successes. Be concise.
- **Don't** repeat information included in other parts of the application. Use the essay to tell us something we do not already know about you. Don't use the essay as a second resume.

Financial Aid:

- **Do** find out when the universities you are applying to require you to submit financial documents and Affidavit of Support – so they can send you an I-20 in a timely manner to schedule your F-1 student visa application at the U.S. consulate.
- **Don't** assume you qualify for scholarships from every school. Each university in the U.S. has different policies regarding scholarships for international applicants. Find out the policy of a school before you apply so you know what you might be eligible for.

Monica Esser is Associate Director for International Admission at Fordham University

Ten Tips for Recommendation Letters

By Alice Huang

Feature

Recommendation letters are more important in the college admissions process than many students realize. Now in my seventh year on the undergraduate admissions committee at Columbia University, I have learned that amidst all the information one can garner from reading a candidate's secondary school transcript, short responses, application essay, and list of achievements and activities, what often ultimately pulls the entire picture together are letters from counselors and teachers. This is because, at the end of the day, the letters provide evidence that a student's achievements make an impact upon the outside world.

While some students think they have no control over their recommendation letters, students' recommendation etiquette can, in fact, impact the quality of the recommendation they receive. My suggestions to pass along to your students are:

1. Give recommenders plenty of time to write your letters. At least two months before your applications are due, make appointments to speak briefly to the people who will be writing your recommendation letters.
2. Choose teachers who can vouch for your character, as well as your intellectual abilities.
3. Consider choosing teachers who have taught you in subjects you found challenging but nonetheless worked extremely hard in.
4. Consider choosing teachers who have taught you in the areas of study you would like to pursue in college.
5. Prepare an information sheet to give to recommenders when you want to meet with them with the following information:
 - The schools you are applying to, with descriptions of why you have chosen to apply to each school.
 - Your most meaningful and long-term commitments, with reasons you've chosen these activities.
 - The honors and achievements of which you are most proud, with a description of why they are important in general, and specifically to you.
 - Any personal issues (long commutes, after school jobs, family problems) that may have affected you over your secondary school years.
6. You will likely have little choice regarding who will write the "Counselor" recommendation, but put a good deal of thought behind what teachers will write your "Teacher" recommendations. Thus, choose teachers:
 - with whom you have been able to communicate comfortably;
 - who are not overwhelmed with hundreds of other letters to write;
 - who know you more than as a grade on a paper;
 - who may not have given you your best grade, but who recognize and appreciate your tenacity, hard work, discipline, willingness to take risks, genuine love of learning, collaborative spirit, and so forth;
 - who genuinely like you.

7. Show your teachers your true personality.
8. Share with teachers relevant aspects of your personal life.
9. Share with teachers a paper, project or exam that demonstrates your best work in their class or similar classes.
10. Although gifts are not necessary, remember to send thank you notes to recommenders.

My experience in reading international applications, as well as in speaking to many students abroad, has taught me that the American approach to letters of recommendation can be quite different from that of other countries. Good luck!

Alice Huang is Senior Assistant Director of Admission and Director of Engineering Recruitment at Columbia University.

Online Resources for Students Applying to U.S. Institutions

The College Board:

<http://www.collegeboard.com>

Offers information for students, parents and educators regarding taking standardized tests, planning for college, finding a college, applying to college and paying for college.

The Common Application:

<http://www.commonapp.org>

Home of the Common Application, the website also provides answers to commonly asked questions.

EducationUSA:

<http://educationusa.state.gov>

Guide to U.S. higher education and practical information for living in the United States.

Funding US Study:

<http://www.fundingusstudy.org>

IIE's free online resource, searchable by field of study, geographic area and nationality, filled with scholarship opportunities for international students seeking to study in the United States.

National Association for College Admission Counseling:

<http://www.nacacnet.org>

Professional membership group for admissions professionals. The website includes great student resources including a whole section dedicated to international students:

<http://www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/ForStudents/IntnlResources>

National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals:

<http://www.nagap.org>

Professional organization devoted exclusively to the concerns of individuals working in the graduate admissions and recruitment environment. Includes pdfs of their *Perspectives* magazine.

The Princeton Review:

<http://www.princetonreview.com>

Provides rankings, video college campus tours, interactive tools to help students choose a major and admissions expertise. To access information you must be a member, but creating a membership account is free.

Making Effective Use of Locator Reports

By Rajika Bhandari, Ph.D. and Hey-Kyung Koh

Research

A thorough understanding of the distribution of students from your country will enhance your ability to advise students and set future targets.

To kick off International Education week, the Institute of International Education, along with the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, released the *Open Doors 2006 Report on International Educational Exchange*. The data reveals that the total number of international students studying in the United States has remained essentially the same as the previous year and the number of new international students increased by 8%, suggesting that total international enrollment has stabilized and is poised to rebound. The possibility of an increase in future international student enrollment is reinforced by a U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs report which reveals a strong rise in the number of student visas issued in the year ending September 2006. Equally encouraging, 52% of U.S. campuses reported increases in new enrollments for Fall 2006 in an on-line survey conducted jointly last month by IIE and seven other national higher education associations.

Locator Reports

As overseas advisers, you have access via the REACs to Locator Reports, containing a list of colleges and universities that reported enrollments of students from a particular place of origin. IIE produces these reports from the data collected from the International Student Census component of the *Open Doors* survey. The data contained in the Locator Reports do not appear in the *Open Doors* publication or on the website. Because the reports contain detailed institutional data, they are considered confidential and should not be posted or published, distributed electronically, or shared widely or in detail (especially the academic level and overall totals per institution). Institutions provide this data to us with the understanding that the information will not be widely shared outside of the REACs and EducationUSA Advising Centers. Despite their restricted use, the Locator Reports remain an empowering advising tool.

A thorough understanding of the distribution of students from your country will enhance your ability to advise students and set future targets. What part of the United States do students from your country tend to study in? At which universities are students from your region well-represented? Additionally, compare this year's report to

prior years and assess the trends. Do you notice any shifts or changes? Has the number of students at X university increased or decreased? What are the trends for your region as a whole?

Once you have interpreted the data, you can use it to guide your students. Kristen Cammarata, REAC for the Middle East, North Africa and Southern Europe, suggests discussing Locator Report data with students once they decide which institutions they are interested in and especially when they start researching scholarship opportunities. "We tell them to look for places that might want someone from their country," says Cammarata. In addition to helping students apply strategically, Cammarata notes that sharing general information from the Locator Report with students can help give them a feel for the environment they will live and study in. "If they see there is no one from their country or even their region, we tell them to think a bit more about how they might feel in this situation," she says.

Locator Reports should also serve as key public relations resources, and summaries of the data "come in handy whenever a new ambassador or PAO wants a briefing, or when we're making presentations at conferences," says Nancy Keteku, REAC based in Ghana. To avoid breaching the data's confidentiality, she suggests using a sentence like: "Students from X country are studying in 340 institutions in 38 states. Of the 63% who are undergraduates, nearly half (47%) are enrolled in community colleges. Minnesota and Oklahoma are the most popular states, with X number of students enrolled."

For basic data tables from *Open Doors*, as well as analyses that do not appear in the *Open Doors* printed report, and additional resources such as country sheets, press coverage, and data on International Scholars, Intensive English Programs, and U.S. study abroad data, please refer to: www.openddoors.iienetwork.org.

Rajika Bhandari, Ph.D., is Director of Research and Evaluation and **Hey-Kyung Koh** is Senior Program Officer, Research and Evaluation at the Institute of International Education.

The End of Early Admission?

By Shannon Bishop

News/Updates

This fall, Harvard, Princeton and the University of Virginia all announced the decision to eliminate their early admission programs. This change will go into effect for students applying in the fall of 2007.

Originally created to provide students with the benefit of early notification, early decision policies have since been criticized for advantaging affluent students. Students with access to more resources often apply early to increase their chances of admission. Without the help of college counselors and admissions-savvy parents, less affluent students may not be aware of the advantages of applying

early. They may also have difficulties distinguishing between types of early admission programs, listed in the table below.

Unlike Early Action, the binding clause of Early Decision requires students to enroll if accepted and does not permit them the opportunity to compare financial aid packages, a key aspect of the admissions process for students from lesser means. Admissions data confirms this notion that early application programs ultimately serve those of higher economic status. At the University of Virginia, for example, only 20 of the 948 students accepted under the Early Decision plan last December applied for financial aid.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

DEFINITIONS OF ADMISSION OPTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



STUDENTS: WHICH COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS BEST SUITS YOU?

Non-Restrictive Application Plans

Regular Decision	Rolling Admission	Early Action (EA)
DEFINITION: Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.	DEFINITION: Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admission decisions throughout the admission cycle.	DEFINITION: Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.
COMMITMENT: NON-BINDING	COMMITMENT: NON-BINDING	COMMITMENT: NON-BINDING

Restrictive Application Plans

Early Decision (ED)	Restrictive Early Action (REA)
DEFINITION: Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early.	DEFINITION: Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, they have until May 1 to confirm.
COMMITMENT: BINDING	COMMITMENT: NON-BINDING

Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

Students are responsible for determining and following restrictions.

For a copy of this flyer, please visit www.nacacnet.org

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All three schools also cited efforts to simplify the college admission process and to dispel the intense pressure early admissions policies place on high school seniors as other motivators for their decisions to instate one admission round. Princeton President Shirley M. Tilghman stated, “We believe that elimination of early admission programs can reduce some of the frenzy, complexity and inequality in a process that even under the best of circumstances is inevitably stressful for students and their families.” Similarly, Derek Bok, Harvard interim President notes, “The college admissions process has become too pressured, too complex, and too vulnerable to public cynicism. We hope that doing away with early admission will improve the process and make it simpler and fairer.”

Though Harvard, Princeton and the University of Virginia hope other institutions will eliminate early admissions programs, no additional schools have announced admissions changes. For one thing, early admission programs help admissions officers gauge the incoming class population. If officers admit 50 students under a binding Early Decision agreement, they know those 50 students will definitely accept. Schools using one application cycle, on the other hand, have no guarantee that accepted students will enroll.

This concern is not so grave for elite institutions, like Harvard, Princeton and the University of Virginia, which receive high enrollment percentages from the students they accept. As Peter E. Carusa, Associate Director of Admission at Boston College and chairman of the National Association for College Admission Counseling’s Admission Practices Committee observes, “Any college that

considered eliminating early admission would have to weigh practical concerns including how such a move might affect the delicate logistics of the evaluation process.” Some admission experts also argue that the elimination of early admissions programs would make students more, not less, frenzied in the spring, as they will have to wait longer for admission decisions and receive notification they have been waitlisted. Therefore, at this point, it seems likely that early admission programs will continue at many institutions.

For more information on early admission programs, including deadlines and decision notification dates, visit:

www.nacac.com/earlyadmission.html.

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News/Updates

More Colleges Are Recruiting Overseas: University Presidents Visit Asia

The recent Fall 2006 Snapshot Survey on international student enrollments, conducted by IIE in cooperation with seven of the U.S. higher education associations in October 2006, reveals campuses are taking proactive steps to increase international student enrollments. Fifty-eight percent (525) of all responding institutions have taken special steps to ensure that the number of international students on their campuses does not decline. These steps included new international programs or collaborations (cited by 30%), followed by new staff or additional staff time devoted to international recruitment (28%), new funding for international recruitment trips (24%), and new funding for marketing and promotion of programs (12%). Institutions that have devoted more resources for international student recruitment trips seem to have concentrated mainly on Asia, with China, Korea, Japan and India as most popular recruitment destinations.

The delegation of 12 university presidents that recently visited China, Japan and Korea, led by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Din Habib Powell, further highlights the commitment U.S. educational leaders and the U.S. government have to international education. For more information go to: http://exchanges.state.gov/delegation_asia.html.

Featured Advising Center: Islamabad, Pakistan

Arm Chair Tour

A Look at the Administrative Practices: An Interview with an Education USA Advisor



EducationUSA Advisor: Zarene Malik

Advising Centers in Pakistan: 3

Number of Staff Members: Total Employees: 31 Advisers: 5

Years of Operation: USEFP established 1951; formal advising began in 2005

Level of study that advisees pursue: 1/3 Undergraduate students, 2/3 Graduate students

Average number of students that visit per day: We see very few visitors face to face on a daily basis as we focus largely on outreach and email advising.

1. Please describe your Education USA office.

The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan is a bi-national commission located in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Advising center is part of the larger organization which also houses the Fulbright and Humphrey programs. USEFP also offers standardized testing.

The Advising department consists of two senior advisers, and three junior advisers. There is also a librarian, a marketing assistant and an administrative assistant for the advising department. Other administrative and support staff is shared with the rest of the office.

2. How do you assign students to advisers?

Our advisees are allocated to advisers alphabetically. However, since we all have different areas of expertise, we often ask fellow advisers to step in and share relevant information with students they have not been assigned. We also meet as a group to discuss how best to advise which generates lots of valuable ideas.

3. Does your Advising Center have any annually scheduled programming?

From September to February each year we dedicate two days to general presentations – one for an overview of undergraduate studies and one for graduate studies. Students book their places in advance. Scheduling one day to give a general overview prevents us from answering the same questions over and over again. One shortcoming is that this system really only benefits students who live in Islamabad or the cities we visit.

4. Do you have an electronic database with all your students' files? How do you use this?

Our database is our pride and joy! We designed it specifically for advising. Each electronic student file contains a copy of the initial email sent to the student and the adviser enters any verbal correspondences in the notes section. It has been designed so that ANY adviser can advise ANY student if the allocated adviser is not present.

We use the database for individual emails, bulk emails, promotions, etc. The information can be sorted by any number of fields which proves very helpful for targeted emails. The database also has a section for adviser statistics. Each adviser enters her/his statistics on a daily basis enabling us to generate reports whenever needed.

Since students are registered in the database before any advising begins, they continue to get our monthly newsletter and all scholarship information that we receive from time to time. If we 'lose' a student, they often reappear when they receive notice of an upcoming event of interest.

We are happy to share our database technology with other advising centers. The Abu Dhabi and Nepal Centers have both shown an interest and are currently purchasing the required software.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

5. In addition to serving as EducationUSA advisers, do any of the advisers in your centers have additional responsibilities (ie: Fulbright advisers etc)?

Our advisers do not have responsibility for the Fulbright Program or other U.S. Government programs, but we ensure all advisers are familiar with them. For example, we include Fulbright presentations in our outreach program when appropriate.

In addition, all USEFP staff help each other during busy times. Program and Testing staff help us during educational fairs, etc. and we help them during peak application and testing seasons. Assisting one another builds an integrated team and keeps us all up to date on what is going on.

6. How do students generally find out about your office? Do you do any outreach to advertise your center? If so, what outreach activities have you found to be most successful?

As a security precaution, our address is neither advertised nor published on our promotion material. We give out our street address to a student once she/he is registered with us and has an appointment. Therefore, outreach is the most active part of our work.

We visit schools and colleges and make presentations to students. We also offer workshops to school advisers and teachers on “Letters of Recommendation” and to students on “Personal Statements” and “Financial Aid” packages. Additionally, we offer mock visa interviews and bring visa officers to come and speak to the students and advisers. We try to constantly improve our material so schools invite us back. Already, schools contact us and ask for our services instead of us reaching out to them.

Additionally, we participate in Education Fairs in Pakistan and even sponsor an Educational Olympiad which is attended by over 100 schools from the entire country. Other advising networks have also proved to be very helpful in the implementation of our goals. We cooperate closely with EducationUSA advisers in Lahore and Karachi.

Challenge	Solution
Covering the Entire Country With Only 5 Advisers!	In an attempt to counterbalance our huge workload, we have begun to open Outreach Centers in different parts of the country. Though these Outreach Centers are located within universities and schools, they are open to students of other institutions in the area. We hold functions in these centers which gives them legitimacy in the eyes of the community in which they operate.
Security Concerns	Due to local security concerns, visitors are not allowed to just walk into the premises. All advising takes place by prior appointment and there is a strict security at the gate and students sign in at the time of entering the premises. The name of a student is given to the gate prior to the appointment time. As these strict security measures decrease the openness of our center, we use every opportunity to invite students in. During International Education Week, for example, we organized an Education Jamboree. Over 1,200 students visited us in just 4 days. We also organize group sessions on selected topics regarding higher education.
Keeping Track of Advisees	There is no system in place to let us know whether our advisees actually go to study in the U.S. We have not developed a mechanism that automatically informs us of advisees’ plans. Currently, we have to rely on the students’ good will to keep us posted on their study plans. The pre-departure orientation helps slightly but the number of outgoing students are far greater than the number who attend the PDO.

An Interview with a Student Advised by USEFP

Name:	Javed Rezayee
Home Country:	Afghanistan
EducationUSA Advising Center:	Islamabad, Pakistan
American Institution:	Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts
Year/Major:	Freshman / Political Science
Age:	30
Education USA Advising Services found most helpful:	Consulting, essay/application editing, "Education in U.S." workshop, waived test fees, visa information

How did you find out about the EducationUSA Center?

A family friend, who is an American journalist and now my sponsor, told me about the U.S. Education Foundation at Islamabad (USEFP). I was in Islamabad at that time living with my refugee family.

About how many times did you visit the EducationUSA Center from start to finish during your admissions process?

I was in frequent contact with USEFP from August 2005 through August 2006 and visited around 12 times throughout the year. My family friend took me and my brother to USEFP for my initial visit and I went four times for pre-admission tests such as TOEFL, SAT-I, SAT-II (I took TOEFL twice). I visited a couple more times to seek guidance on applications and essays and attended a few workshops such as "Education in the USA" and "Pre-departure orientation." I also communicated regularly through emails and phone calls. The concerned staff at USEFP was so cooperative and responsive.

What additional information would have been helpful to know before coming to study in the United States?

A workshop to prepare departing students explaining what a day in American college life would be like, describing courseloads and stressing the importance of time-management and balance. Also, a workshop on visa issues early on would have been helpful.



Javed Rezayee joins the class of 2010 at Tufts University in the U.S.

Did You Know?

In addition to the advising center in Islamabad, there are EducationUSA advising centers in Karachi and Lahore. According to *Open Doors 2006*, there were 5,759 students from Pakistan studying in the United States in academic year 2005/06 (down 8.5% from the previous year). Pakistan is the twentieth-leading place of origin for students coming to the United States, following Nepal (6,061). The majority of students from Pakistan study at the undergraduate level.

Prospective students face a wide variety of choices for graduate study, and will need to decide which degree program, department and university will best fit their career goals.

Aristotle wrote that politics is the “master science.” Put another way, politics is one of the most interdisciplinary fields including anthropology, economics, history, law, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. As such, prospective students face a wide variety of choices for graduate study, and will need to decide which degree program, department, and university best fit their career goals (indeed, one of the first challenges is sorting out all the various programs that fall under the heading “international”). Good general starting points are *Petersen’s Guide to Graduate Programs in the Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences* and *Getting What You Came For* (a general guide to graduate education written by Robert Peters). What follows is some specific advice for political science/international affairs students.

Selecting the Right Degree

When deciding what degree to pursue, students must consider their career goals. Do students want to work at a university or at a research institute/think tank? Do they want to work as a diplomat or as a civil servant? Would they prefer to work for a political party or for the private sector? The answers to these questions will guide students toward the right program. Some may find themselves in a political science department or at a school of international affairs. Others may find themselves studying public policy or something else entirely (an increasing number of business schools offer specializations in international business or the international MBA).

Political Science Master’s and Ph.D. Programs

If prospective students want to pursue a career in research and teaching, they should investigate Ph.D. programs in political science departments which emphasize theory and research

methods. The website of the American Political Science Association at <http://www.apsanet.org> provides a great introduction to the academic side of political science. Another resource to consider is an article by Simon Hix from the Department of Government at the London School of Economics entitled “A Global Ranking of Political Science Programs” found at: <http://www.politicalstudies.org/pdf/psr/hix.pdf>, though students should be wary of using rankings as their sole criterion.

In the United States, political science departments are typically divided into four subfields: political theory (sometimes called political philosophy), American politics, comparative politics, and international relations. Some departments offer additional subfields, like political economy or methodology. Students are usually expected to specialize in one of these subfields and minor in another. Their course of study will depend on their specialization. Additionally, opportunities for dual degrees are widespread, and a good number of universities do not require that students have an MA before beginning doctoral studies.

Master’s graduates often go into government service, serve as analysts in the private sector or work as foreign affairs specialists. Doctoral students are trained to conduct research (and, increasingly, to be effective professors in the classroom). On average, it takes more than 6 years for doctoral students in political science to complete their Ph.D. Students who want to pursue a Ph.D. should be highly dedicated to political science. It is very important that prospective doctoral students seek out potential faculty members whose research interests match their own before they apply. Some schools are stronger in particular subfields of political science than others and students will need to do a lot of research about departments. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 13**

Professional MA at a School of International Affairs/Public Policy

For specialized professional training – as opposed to academic study – students are advised to look at schools of international affairs or public policy/administration. These interdisciplinary programs train professionals for careers in international politics or national/local government.

Schools of international affairs prepare students for careers in diplomacy and related areas of foreign affairs, although many graduates also pursue work in the private and non-profit sectors. The curricula of these schools focus on international relations theory and practice, international trade/economics, diplomacy, security studies, political economy, and foreign languages. For detailed information, visit the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs at <http://www.apsia.org>. APSIA organizes several education forums for international students in cities throughout the world (typically in Europe or Latin America).

Schools of public policy and public administration train students for careers in the government and non-profit sectors. Good starting points for this career path include the websites of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (<http://www.appam.org>) and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (<http://www.naspaa.org>).

Area Studies

Students seeking deep knowledge (politics, economics, and culture) of a particular region of the world might also wish to consider “area studies” programs. Common specializations include Europe, eastern Europe/former Soviet Union, Latin America, Middle East, Asia, and so on. Graduates of area studies programs usually find careers in government, the private sector, or the non-profit sector.

Preparation for Admission

Students who have a bachelor’s degree in political science, economics, area studies, history, or foreign languages would be well prepared to begin graduate study in any of the fields above. All applicants should present a strong undergraduate academic background, excellent admission exam test scores (GRE, TOEFL), insightful letters of recommendation, and a clear statement of purpose that outlines the applicants’ motivations, interests, and goals. Admissions committees will also value relevant internship or volunteer work; travel, study, or work experience at an international organization; or undergraduate research on an international theme.

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