



Applying to universities abroad: myth busting for parents

Nahian Nawar

While parting with your kin never gets easier, the number of Bangladeshi parents encouraging their children to pursue higher studies overseas seems to be on the rise. But misconceptions amongst elders when it comes to foreign universities are abundant, resulting from a lack of proper knowledge and awareness. This can lead to contention at home, as the two generations have different opinions on applications. As application season draws near, I took it upon myself to debunk some of these most common myths.

The higher the rank the better

Sending your child abroad is quite costly. Therefore, when investing in their child's future, parents want them to have the best education they can provide. But sometimes, well-meaning parents have the wrong ideas about what world-class education should look like. They think not getting admitted into a top-ranking institution means you're doomed. This superficial obsession with a few big-name universities is illogical, since rankings hardly reflect reality due to judgement biases and even misinformation. The truth is, many universities across the globe provide exemplary facilities for students to flourish. Ultimately, applicants should choose institutions that align with their interests instead of being fixated on rankings.

ECAs don't matter

Bangladeshi public universities rely on admission tests as the only metric for judging applicants. This leads many parents to believe that getting accepted to a foreign university is solely determined by the number of A's on your report card, viewing ECA's to be a waste of time. However, most foreign universities look for students who have well-rounded profiles. Nearly 200,000 students graduate top of their class from American high schools annually but only 35 percent of Ivy League entrants are class toppers. While academic accomplishment is important, admissions officers want applicants who stand out from their peers and pursue passions outside of the classroom.

Top universities bear all costs for the most talented students

For funding, it's important to distinguish between scholarships and need-based aid. It must be noted that the criteria for funding eligibility is unique to each institution.

Scholarships are usually merit-based, awarded to applicants with the best profiles each year. However, not all universities offer scholarships. On the other hand, need-based aid is only provided to applicants whose annual family income is lower than the university's decided threshold. Even if you qualify for aid, the total amount you receive from your university will depend on your financial background. Unfortunately, international students aren't eligible for need-based aid in many institutions.

To further complicate matters, some universities follow a "Need Aware" policy. This means that colleges take into account whether an applicant can afford the costs of studying there when deciding whether to give them an acceptance offer. Granted, the application process isn't perfect or easy, but having support from your parents during this crucial time can make all the difference.

To everyone applying to universities this year, best of luck!

References

1. Forbes (November 1, 2020). 18 Rotten Lies About Ivy League Admissions That Could Kill Your Chances Of Getting In
2. The New York Times (September 17, 2016). Why College Rankings Are a Joke
3. Los Angeles Times (September 16, 2022). Are the U.S. News college rankings a joke?

Nahian is the friend that initiates group hugs. Find her at [**nahiannawardhk@gmail.com**](mailto:nahiannawardhk@gmail.com)