



# BIS Future Ready Newsletter

## **Issue 5: Passion and Vision**

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## 1. What does a typical Ivy League student look like?



When it comes to higher education, Ivy League universities are known for their high academic and social prestige. Many students and parents are curious about their enrollments and that potential applicants want data when considering selective universities. To answer that question, University of Pennsylvania revealed some of the academic characteristics that represent students in their incoming class – a class of 2,400 outstanding students out of 55,000 applicants.

- Nearly one-third of the admitted students engaged in academic research during their time in high school, many earning national and international accolades for research that is already pushing the boundaries of academic discovery. Admitted students worked alongside leading faculty and researchers in their fields of interest, co-authored publications included in leading journals, and displayed their ingenuity in making connections across complex and varied disciplines.
- Further, one of the central tenets of a Penn education is translating knowledge into social-minded action. Over 80% of the admitted students are living out this tradition by engaging in community service activities that have already made a significant impact locally, nationally, and globally.
- Penn saw an uptick in interests in sustainability and environmental studies among applicants last year, who channeled their passion into tangible action. Students organized efforts to adopt more sustainable practices and policies, both at a local and national level. Students worked at the cutting-edge of sustainability and energy research and pursued and advocated for environmental equity to address one of the most challenging issues of our time. Penn look forward to the contributions these young scholars will make to their ongoing efforts to prioritize sustainability efforts and to promote environmentally conscious policies.

- Finally, almost 40% of students worked during their time in high school, earning money to support themselves and their families. Admitted students showed up for shifts as essential and frontline workers, members of service industries, helped parents to reimagine or pivot family businesses in the face of grave economic uncertainty, and gained wide-ranging professional experiences in fields of their current interests. Additionally, many students took on significant responsibility at home with younger siblings, caring for grandparents or elderly neighbors, and taking on household responsibilities.

Ivies or not, there are thousands of universities that have a reputation for academic excellence and educating brilliant minds that positively impact the world. With the information provided by UPenn, we hope our students can take actionable steps to ensure your applications are in the best shape when it's time for submission, and make sure the universities you choose may align best with your passions and interests.

## 2. TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR PASSION



**By: Kathleen Bellon Pizarro Class of '24, Harvard College**

Hello! My name is Kathleen, and I'm a junior concentrating in Molecular and Cellular Biology on the pre-med track. I'm currently living in Mather House (the best house!), but growing up I lived in both the beautiful states of Montana and Texas.

<https://college.harvard.edu/student-life/student-stories/tips-finding-your-passion>

**You hear it often during the college application process: Be passionate.**

**But what does "passionate" mean?**

Passion has to do with much more than applying to college or logging your volunteer hours on the Common App — it requires some tough self-exploration and discovery. While it may feel like you should already be certain of your passions, the truth is that most of your peers are still figuring them out. And that's okay! You're not expected to have your whole life figured out before you graduate high school.

Here are some tips for honing your interests in high school and beyond!

**1. Take your interests to the next level.**

Growing up, I was known as the avid cat-lover. I would dress up as a cat every Halloween and (to my parents' chagrin) adopted every stray cat that I found on the street. Sooner than later, my adoration for cats evolved into a care for animals. I convinced my mother to buy me a book on animal emergency room stories at a fair, and that is when I firmly decided that I would be a veterinarian one day. I ended up volunteering at my local animal hospital. It wasn't a big job or anything: I was just a ten-year-old filing away pet information into folders and feeding the diaper-clad office cat. If I never became obsessed with cats and shadowed a surgery at the animal hospital, I never would have eventually discovered my passion for practicing medicine on humans. So, pursue that interest you have in whatever manner you like. You don't know where it'll take you!

## **2. Don't neglect your "dislikes."**

If you can't find something you're interested in pursuing, try focusing on something you don't like. People tend to know more easily what they don't like than what they do. For me, that is math. (Especially Calculus.) As a STEM concentrator, I found that you (sadly) can't avoid math entirely. So I applied to a summer camp where I had to take Calculus and Physics classes the summer before my senior year of high school, and that was the best decision of my life! I ended up meeting the best people in the world, and now I'm taking a class where I use math to understand Biology, my favorite subject.

Don't like Physics? Talk to someone who does. Or, try reading *Calculating the Cosmos* by Ian Stewart. Still don't like it? That's fine — I don't consider myself a math junkie either, but I learned to appreciate what math can do. I urge you to look more deeply into the things you don't like, and try to find treasure in them.

## **3. Ignore the haters.**

There are going to be people that will aim to dampen your passions. They may think that the path to an acceptance letter is formulaic: a numbered list filled with a set amount of certain activities.

But you are not a resume, you are a human being.

I know firsthand how intimidating it can be to enter a field dominated by people who don't look like you. And when certain people aggravate those differences instead of celebrating them, you can certainly feel like your passion is unattainable. What helps me in situations like these is to think of how small I am. (Weird, right?) I think of our galaxy, the billions of years that our universe has existed, and how our lives are so infinitesimally small in the grand scope of things. If our lives are so small and unique to us, why not use the time to do what you want? Your passion is yours alone — don't forget that!

## **In conclusion...**

Let me end on this: You're not going to solve the mystery of your passion in just four years of high school, or even four years of college. What you can do is never stop trying to find it. You do that by joining that club you've been itching to be in, trying out that sport that you've never played, or baking that mug cake you saw on TikTok — anything that satisfies your curiosity and makes you happy. Go and be passionate!

### 3. Big Changes to UK applications and No Personal Statement from 2024!



University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the application system for all UK universities, has recently published their own report on current applications, claiming to make several changes to its admissions process.

- Personal statements have always been an essential part of the university application process. However, UCAS has decided to scrap personal statements in their traditional form and they will now be replaced by a new six-question structure. Current key areas under discussion are:

**Motivation for course:** Why do you want to study the course?

**Preparedness for course:** How has your learning thus far helped you to be prepared for your course?

**Preparation through other experiences:** What else have you done to help yourself prepare and how and why are these experiences so useful?

**Extenuating circumstances:** Is there anything about you the university needs to be aware of?

**Preparedness for study:** What have you done to prepare yourself for student life?

**Preferred learning styles:** Which learning, and assessment styles suit you best?

- Teacher references are changing to allow teachers to make more objective comments regarding students by answering three structured questions. In these questions, teachers will include a general statement about the student's school or college, any extenuating circumstances that could affect the student's exam performances and any other circumstances the teacher feels the university should be aware of.
- Several university admissions exams, including BMAT (medicine), ENGAA (engineering), NSAA (natural sciences) and TMUA (mathematical skills) tests, will be discontinued as they

were operationally unsustainable and “to deliver them affordably to students and higher education institutions.”

Regardless of the changes, we can see that universities are looking for greater personalization out of the applications submitted by applicants. What works for UK universities works for universities across the world. They want students who are passionate about their intended majors and are ready to make the best of the conducive learning environment. As a G9-11 student, are you ready to answer those structured questions? If not, now is the time to start thinking. Take a look at your course selections, see if you are actively involved in academic/extracurricular activities, and talk to your college counselors.

#### 4. Important Events



- **March 11th – First Digital SAT**

Register for the test by February 10th (Late registration is available until February 24th with a late fee). Unlike the paper tests that students are quite familiar with, College Board has developed a new testing app. The [Bluebook practice testing app](#) is now available with four practice SATs. Khan Academy has also released an [initial set of practice materials](#).

Please download the app in advance, prepare for the testing format to maximize your performance. Detailed explanation of the digital SAT and testing app can be found in this [Bluebook™ demo and official practice webinar](#). Passcode: gmv3+o\$.VG

- **May 3rd 14:00 to 16:30 China Standard Time – CIS University Exploration Day**

Registration will be open later in February, please refer to the following tentative program.

1. **14:00 – 14:30: Student Alumni Panel** – in this session, university students who attended international schools in China and Hong Kong will answer questions about their experiences preparing for and moving to university, the application process, making decisions about

where to study, adjusting to life at university, navigating different cultural contexts and more!

2. **14:30 to 16:30: Students to Explore University Booths**
3. **15:00 – 15:30 (recorded for students who want to watch on-demand)** Session A: Trends in applications and admissions: in this session, students will hear about the latest developments in admission and immigration requirements in different regions, including an overview of 'test optional' policy changes in the US, and relevant political and immigration developments in the UK and the Netherlands. Session B: Strategies for applying to university: in this session university representatives will provide strategies for students on essay writing and completing applications, and will discuss their academic integrity policies, explaining how recent developments in AI are being addressed in this context.
4. **16:00 – 16:30 Parent Panel Helping your Child to Apply to and Thrive at University** – engage with top university representatives in a Question and Answer panel discussion on financial support and scholarship opportunities for your child, requirements and predicted grades, selecting programs and majors and securing employment post-graduation. The session will be held primarily in English, with simultaneous translation into Chinese

## 5. Summer Programs and Internships

### Zeal Labs 2023 Summer Program call for application



Zeal Labs is a non-profit and selective science research program for high school students. In three weeks, students will join top-notch research groups affiliated to China's top universities and research institutions. Students will shadow scientists in action and explore the unknown at the frontier of human knowledge base.

Students are expected to overcome intellectual challenges by undertaking rigorous academic exercises under the guidance of Zeal Labs staff. They will experience all components of science research, ranging from literature reading, performing wet or dry experiments, to delivering conference-style presentations. Zeal Labs is designed to be a challenging program. Admitted students will need to step out of their comfort zone, to absorb as much knowledge as possible in a short period of time, and to learn to approach a research question to which no established answer exists.

- **Application cycle:** Rolling from Jan 3 to May 31, 2023.
- **Evaluation:** Applicants have to complete an online application. Selected candidates will receive invitations to video interviews via email. Video interviews will last 30min long, consisting of a Mandarin session and an English session. The admissions decision will be made within two weeks after the interview.

- **Location:** Zeal Labs has six campuses, of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou-Shenzhen, Nanjing, Chengdu, and Xi'an respectively. Applicants can apply to any of these six campuses per personal circumstance. Please note that available fields of research will vary across campuses.
- **Program set-ups :** At Zeal Labs, there does not exist a single fixed schedule for all participating students. Students are obliged to follow working schedules of labs to which they are assigned.
- **Awards:** The Organizing Board of Zeal Labs will evaluate the quality of 1) research participation, 2) academic poster, and 3) final presentation of every Zeal Labs participant. Students who score top 30% of their cohort will be awarded "Outstanding Award" and top 10% will be awarded "Grand Prize". In addition, award-winning alumni will be invited to join the Organizing Board to run future programs.
- **Dates and Tuition:** Session I: July 3-23    Session II: August 7-27  
Program tuition: 28490 RMB (boarding and transportation costs not included)

Please refer to the link for detailed information and application: <http://www.zeallabs.org/index.php>

## The Dreaming Spires Global Essay Competition (DSGEC) invites BIS students



DSGEC is an essay competition for high school students from all over the world to showcase their academic research and writing capabilities. Taking part in the competition would encourage our students to challenge themselves and explore different writing styles to ultimately strengthen their writing skills, which is essential in college life. Students are invited to write research essays in any of the 5 subject fields:

- Science & Technology
- Social Sciences & Psychology
- Humanities & History
- Economics & Business
- Medicine & Health

### Competition Timeline



**30 November 2022:** Registration starts

**30 April 2023:** Essay Submission deadline

**Mid-May 2023:** Short-listed candidates notified

**End of May 2023:** Final Presentation & Defense and Winner Announcement

**July/August:** Awards Ceremony and Dinner

Shortlisted candidates will attend an online Final Presentation & Defense judged by academics from the University of Oxford and Cambridge. They will also be granted an opportunity to publish their papers and travel to Oxford for an Awards Ceremony and Dinner. The winner will be offered a free spot to attend one of the Oxbridge Academic Programs in summer 2023.

Please visit the website: <https://globalessay.org/> for more details and registrations.

Some good resources for you to explore...

The word "Boston" is written in a large, red, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a stylized globe with red and white curved lines, representing latitude and longitude.

[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

[www.collegeessayguy.com](http://www.collegeessayguy.com)

[www.niche.com](http://www.niche.com)

[www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com)

## 6. Connect with us



You can connect with us through several platforms- click this card...

**Virtually:** Counselors are available for one-on-one virtual meetings via teams. Please connect with your SCL to determine when works best!

**Walk-ins:** Counselors are available during student's morning/lunch break for quick questions and immediate assistance. Otherwise, feel free to schedule an appointment with us through any of the above-mentioned methods. We are happy to meet with you!