

7 things to consider before you start applying to foreign universities

With winter beginning to show its first signs, another season has slowly crept up: the college application season. As students in and out of school scramble to finish their applications, be careful to avoid some common mistakes and make the best use of your resources.

1. Make a budget

One of the biggest factors that should be taken into consideration whether you choose to study here or to apply overseas is affordability. Having a predetermined budget before you select universities will relieve you (and your family) from last minute headaches. Take enough time to sit down with your parents, or whoever is sponsoring your education, and discuss an annual or monthly financial plan. The plan should include your tuition fees, living costs (food, transport, utility bills), and medical/health fees.

2. Don't depend entirely on scholarships or aid

Choosing universities that you can afford only if you are able to secure a scholarship may leave you with very few options in the end. Although you should still apply to them as there's a good chance you might receive the scholarship, it'd be safer if you also apply to a university that you can afford even without a scholarship. Find out the amount of financial aid that you may be eligible for based on your family's income and your nationality. A quick Google search reveals plenty of online tools that help you calculate the percentage of aid you may receive.

3. Start well in advance before the deadline

Applying to a university is way more complex and lengthy than it seems, a lesson I learned the hard way. Each university you apply to will have its unique set of tasks that range from writing essays, collecting specific documents, getting them scanned or mailed, and in a lot of cases, filling out the dreaded financial aid applications, some of which require you to collect your parents' or sponsor's tax returns. There's a reason universities specify their deadline. It's so that you can plan ahead and save yourself from stressfully writing five essays in a day. It also gives your counselor and your teacher(s) ample time to write your recommendation letters. This brings us to our next point –

4. Inform your counselor, teachers or employer before starting on your application

Universities abroad almost always require that you submit reference letters. These help the admission officials to get to know you from an instructor's perspective and can be very helpful in making your application stand out. Your teachers may have already



ILLUSTRATION: AANILA KISHWAR TARANNUM

written recommendation letters for students before you, so they are well acquainted with the university's requirements. So they might even have some helpful tips for you.

5. Don't shy away from consulting study abroad organizations or facebook groups

Most of these organizations are comprised of professionals who excel at helping students get into universities of their choice and also help counsel those who are unsure about their major or which university they want to apply to. There are helpful Facebook groups such as Bangladeshi Beyond Border that are dedicated to discussions on studying abroad. Instead of stressing out by trying to solve everything on your own, reaching out to someone and asking for help makes things a lot simpler.

6. Your Essays Do Matter

I have seen a lot of my friends put off college essays until the very last and treat them

as secondary priorities. Your essays help the university to get a better insight on who you are as a person. An admission officer will almost always be able to tell an impersonal, rushed or plagiarized essay from a well thought out, structured and eloquent one. A lot of universities consider essays to be an essential part of their admission decision so it's a good idea to have enough time to write, revise and perfect your essay before the deadline. Also, never have someone else write your essay. Aside from the ethical dilemma that arises from this, colleges want to know you. You don't have to be the greatest writer in the world as long as you can express yourself fluently.

7. It's okay to take a gap year

Actually, it's sometimes better to take time to reevaluate your college decisions. If all of this seems too overwhelming for you and the thought of universities still seem a bit too foreign, it may be better for you take

time off and apply next year. A gap year often makes your chances of getting into a competitive school much better. You can take up an internship or an employment, master new skills and have enough time to think about what you want to study and where you want to do it. During this time, you might get the dreaded question from relatives and friends - "So, when are you going to a university?" it is still important to remind yourself that all of it will seem insignificant once you reach your end goal.

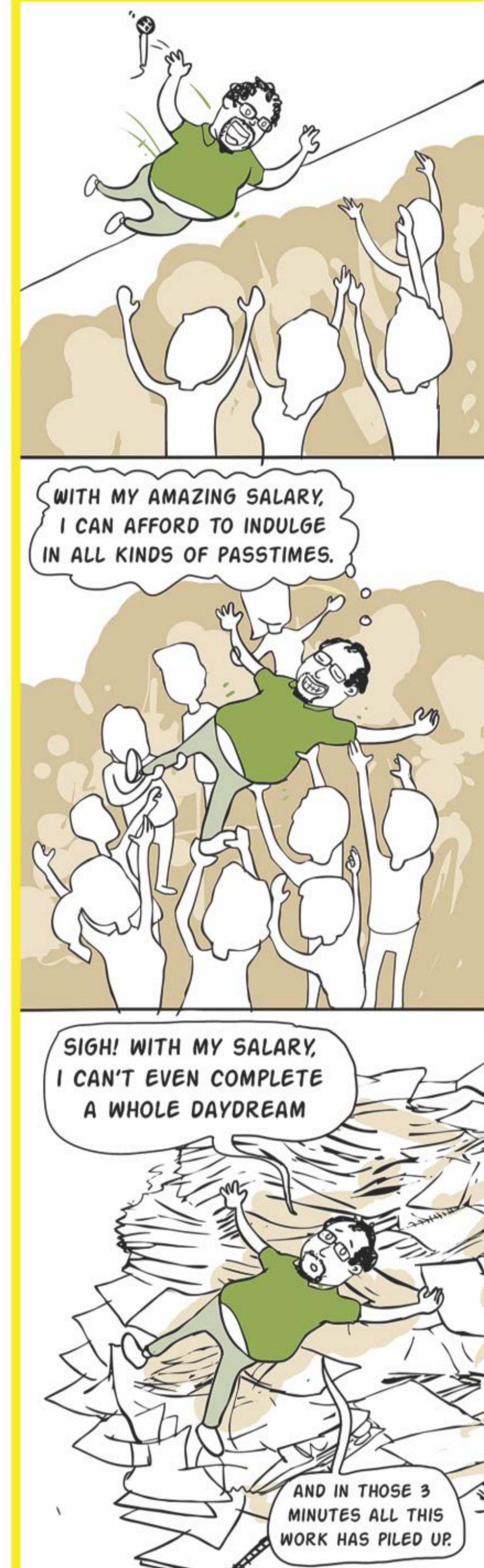
Remember that when you are applying to a university, your own requirements and needs matter first and foremost. A university might not be right for you despite being the alumnus of your relatives or peers/being affordably/ having a top ranking. So choose wisely, and do not get stressed out.

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THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



1. Tea

No one tells you that there's no real tea in foreign countries. They make tea using the abomination known as teabags. You would think that after centuries of colonising and torturing us, the British would've learned how to make proper tea, but nope.

2. Rickshaw

You have to do an excessive amount of walking whenever you're in an apparently developed country. How exactly they have the audacity to call themselves developed when they haven't even invented the rickshaw yet is beyond my understanding.

3. Weddings

You know those grand weddings of distant relatives that you hate dressing up for? The ones where they serve plain polao instead of kacchi? You will even miss those, because no other food will taste like Bangladeshi wedding food.

4. Haircuts

Among the list of bizarre things that cost an arm and a leg, haircuts are the first. You'll never again be as cool as you were in 2009 with your "emo" haircut.

If you're reconsidering your plans to go abroad after reading this, let me name something you won't miss: traffic jam. Travel safe!

4 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE



CLASS SIZE

You might easily fit in to a large classroom of 200-300 people, or you may fare better in a smaller class of 30-50 students. Teachers cannot give personal attention to everyone in larger classes, so keep that in mind. Also remember that you can't take naps in a small classroom.

EXTRACURRICULARS



If you're really passionate about a particular ECA, it would be best if the college of your choice has active clubs for it. Four years of undergraduate studies is difficult, and it's important that you keep doing the thing you're passionate about in this time; be it debate, writing, or sports.



LOCATION

Do you prefer big cities, or quiet suburbs? The location of a university affects its demographics, campus facilities, and the overall lifestyle of the students. Big cities tend to be more expensive, but many prefer the excitement of city life over boring suburbs.

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Many foreign universities have mandatory co-op programs at the end of each term. These jobs help students get a taste of the real world before they graduate. Opportunities like these are excellent for building your resume. If you're interested, choose a college that has this program.