

Applying to universities abroad: myth busting for parents

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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.



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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:

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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?*

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How to deal with unsolicited flirting at work

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Unwanted attention can make life awkward, especially if it is in the form of unsolicited flirting at your workplace. Moreover, if you are a woman then the odds are already tilted against you. Here's a quick guide on how you can survive this apart from hiding your face in a paper bag at work.

Talk to them clearly

At the first couple of instances where you feel that a colleague might be making advances towards you, the best mode of action is to address the situation and communicate with them openly about your interests (or lack thereof). It will most certainly be a little awkward, but it will save you from a lot of other, possibly more awkward, situations in the long run.

The problem, however, will arise if the person does not seem to respect your wishes or decides that they will be persistent in their pursuits.

Being the classic angry-faced colleague
Picture Detective Rosa Diaz from *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, remember that face? That is



what you need to imitate. Maybe even try to practice having permanently furrowed eyebrows in front of the mirror.

The benefits of this include having to speak with less people against your will, and avoiding painful pleasantries at all times. While your behaviour is in no way responsible for unwanted attention, you could help steer the attention away with a cold shoulder and a deadpan face.

Creating a make-belief authoritative figure

Let it be known that you are not interested

in any other relationship dynamic beyond what the jobs asks of you. However, that may not be a message received as easily since most people tend to ignore a woman's wishes unless it involves another authority figure.

As problematic and unfortunate as that may sound, if you are really looking to avoid a clearly uncomfortable situation without any further confrontation, this might be a good solution for you. The best part is that this the "authority figure" in question can quite literally be anyone, rang-

ing from a parent to a guardian.

Being a self-acknowledged whistle-blower

Letting everyone know of your work ethic and how vocal you are about your opinions related to them may help. You should also be expressive, and make known that you communicate your thoughts freely. Meaning, that if anyone were trying to act weird, they would be forced to think of the repercussions of everyone finding out.

If push comes to shove and the person still decides to pursue you in a manner that makes you uncomfortable, share it with people instead of keeping it to yourself and suffering in silence.

For individuals in such a position, I hope and pray that things get easier on you. However, if things get too bad and the person just doesn't catch a hint, it is in your best interests to seek assistance from authorities and HR executives. After all, that is what they are there for.

Till then, I'm rooting for you.

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