

Your Child's Path to Top Universities: **AP SUCCESS, SCHOLARSHIPS & GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES**

EXPERT GUIDANCE FROM ISHCMC - AMERICAN ACADEMY



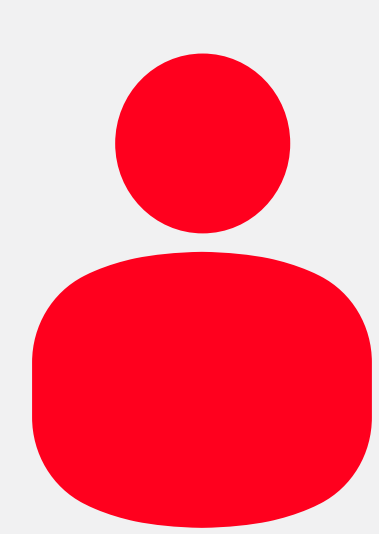
BOOK A FREE CONSULTATION NOW!

ABOUT ISHCMC - AMERICAN ACADEMY

We are a leading American-curriculum secondary school in Ho Chi Minh City, committed to academic excellence and student success. ISHCMC - American Academy is fully accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

What sets us apart is our exclusive distinction as the school in Vietnam offering the **Advanced Placement (AP) Diploma Program** since 2023. This program provides students with a competitive advantage, equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and credentials to excel in university and beyond.

OUR AP RESULT OF 2024



60

students took
AP exams



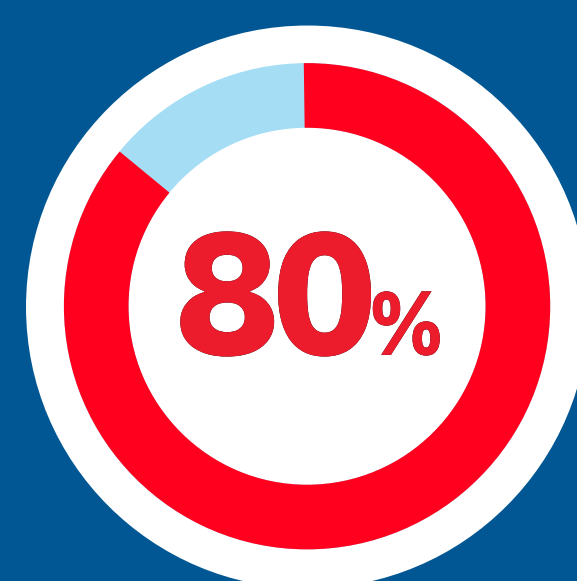
35

perfect
scores



Above world average

in AP Art, AP Geography,
AP Statistics, AP World
History



pass rate
(on all AP exams)



pass rate in

- AP Art
- AP Calculus
- AP Precalculus
- AP Microeconomics
- AP Music
- AP US Government
- AP World History



of students
achieved at least
one passing score
on AP exams

THE PASSING RATE IS HIGHER THAN THE WORLDWIDE AVERAGE IN ALL SUBJECT

UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE RESULT

OUR STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO



Ranked American Universities



Ranked Canadian Universities



Ranked Australia Universities

(Rankings according to the U.S. News and World Report)

INTRODUCTION

Preparing for college is an important step in a student's academic journey, requiring careful preparation. The process involves many essential elements, including academic performance, extracurricular activities,... For parents, understanding these key aspect will allow you to provide meaningful support throughout the process and secure the best opportunities for your child's future.

This handbook is designed to support high school students and parents in understanding and managing the college college application and scholarship process through each stage of admissions.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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CHAPTER 0: PRIORITIZING BEST FIT:

A NEW APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY SELECTION?

(Written by Nathan Swenson , Head of School, International School Ho Chi Minh City American Academy)

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PERSONALIZED APPROACH AND BEST FIT FOR EACH STUDENT

In today’s competitive academic landscape, the allure of high-ranking universities often dominates the conversation surrounding higher education. However, more students are recognizing that the concept of “best fit” for university is crucial in making informed decisions. Best fit goes beyond rankings and emphasizes personalized learning experiences tailored to individual interests, goals, and learning styles. By choosing a university that matches their preferences, students can enjoy a more enriching educational journey.

Moreover, best fit extends to factors beyond academics, including campus culture, extracurricular opportunities, and support services. A supportive and inclusive environment fosters greater student engagement and success.

HOW THIS PAVES THE WAY FOR SUCCESS

Prioritizing best fit can lead to long-term satisfaction and success, as students thrive academically, professionally, and personally. While high rankings may offer prestige, they don’t always guarantee the best outcomes for every student.

In conclusion, by prioritizing best fit over high rankings, students can make informed decisions that lead to greater satisfaction, success, and fulfillment in their academic journey.

HOW IS THIS RESEARCH APPLIED TO ISHCMC - AA?

Nathan Swenson, Head of School at ISHCMC - AA, reflects:

“I have been an educator for over 30 years and there is one topic that parents want to discuss more than any other topic... college. I have had discussions with parents of students as young as second grade about which colleges are the best ones to send their child to. If you are reading this article, I believe that you are at least thinking about this as well. Here are the top 3 things I share with parents:

• *Students can succeed at almost any college*

Choosing a college is akin to selecting a new car. Most colleges provide a solid education, much like how most new vehicles reliably transport you from point A to point B. While there are variations in styles and costs, students ultimately get out of college what they put into it.

• *Finding the right fit:*

It’s crucial to find a college that aligns with your child’s interests and abilities. Look for colleges that offer at least two majors your child is interested in, allowing for flexibility if they decide to change their course of study. Additionally, ensure the college is a suitable academic match to prevent unnecessary challenges.

• *Start building a resume for college early:*

While 9th grade is an optimal time to begin discussing college options, it’s never too early to start preparing. Encourage your child to explore extracurricular activities such as sports, music, volunteering, and internships. These experiences not only enrich their lives but also strengthen their college applications.

Putting this advice into action, our family guided our daughter through the college application process. We applied to a range of schools, including safety schools, strong academic matches, and a few “reach” schools. After careful consideration of each option’s pros and cons, we collectively decided on a college that provided the best fit. Today, we couldn’t be prouder of her accomplishments. She excelled academically, emerged as a leader on campus, and secured multiple job offers well before her graduation.

CHAPTER 1: GRADE 10

SEMESTER 1

Parents: Encourage your child to meet with the high school/college counselor often to get help with academic, career and college planning. High school/college counselors are great resources to help keep students on track in the process.



Take personalities / career assessment to explore potential careers and prepare for course selection for Grade 11.

Parents: Ask your child to share results of those assessments if possible and discuss career options together.



Start learning about studying abroad options by countries and their admissions process:

- Attend assemblies/ presentations organized by the college counseling department
- Meet with the high school/ college counselor to get more resources

Parents: Attend college planning parent seminars/workshops organized by the school to start collecting information about studying abroad.



Attend college & career fairs organized by the school and off-campus college events.

Parents: Whenever possible, parents should attend college fairs with your child.



Participate in school activities, ASAs or extra-curricular activities outside of schools.

Parents: Encourage your child to engage in extracurricular activities on and off-campus. Join them on some occasions if possible. There are activities that allow parents to join.



Stay on track with your classes at school:

- How well you do in your high school classes has an impact on your college applications
- Check in with the high school counselor if you need help

Parents:

- Help your child stay organized
- Monitor your child's progress at school (through PowerSchool, PTCs, communications with teachers)
- Provide comfortable learning environment at home
- Ensure your child has enough sleep, a healthy diet and help them balance school and life
- Offer support if needed

SEMESTER 2


Parents: Encourage your child to meet with the high school/college counselor often to get help with academic, career and college planning. High school/college counselors are great resources to help keep students on track in the process.



Academic Planning for Grade 11:

- Attend Course Selection workshop for students
- Ensure that your course schedule is suitable for you and challenging enough


Parents: Attend the course selection workshop at school for parents and discuss with your child about the course plan for next year.



Start doing some college research:
Meet with the high school/college counselor to learn about the tools and resources for college search.

Parents:


- Spend time with your child searching together for colleges that meet your family's need
- Discuss about financial plans for colleges



Get familiar with **the general aptitude** (PSAT/SAT) and **English proficiency** (TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo):


- Take mock exams
- Enroll in prep class (or during summer)

Parents: Encourage your child to learn about these exams and help them enroll in prep classes if needed.



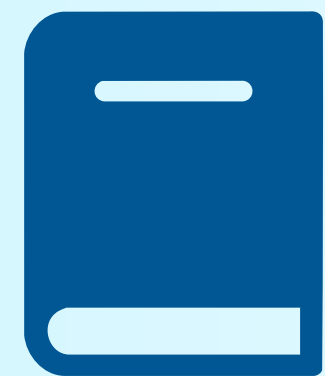
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- Offer support if needed

SUMMER INTO GRADE 11



Explore summer opportunities (summer classes, pre-college program at universities, summer jobs, volunteer opportunities): Your high school/ college counselor can also make some recommendations.


Parents: Help your child make summer plans



Tour college campuses:

- If your family has the opportunity to travel to other countries, plan to visit some local universities to develop some sense of college life.
- Visit their admissions office to learn about their admissions process.

Parents: Discuss summer travel plans with your child and the possibility of college visits during these trips.



Get familiar with **the general aptitude** (PSAT/SAT) and **English proficiency** (TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo):

- Take mock exams
- Enroll in prep class (or during summer)

Parents: Encourage your child to learn about these exams and help them enroll in prep classes if needed.

CHAPTER 2: GRADE 11

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



- Stay on track** with your classes at school:
- How well you do in your high school classes has an impact on your college applications
 - Check in with the high school counselor if you need help

- Parents:**
- Monitor your child's progress at school (through PowerSchool, PTCs, communications with teachers)
 - Provide comfortable learning environment at home
 - Ensure your child has enough sleep, a healthy diet and help them balance school and life
 - Offer support if needed
 - Encourage your child to meet with the high school/college counselor often to get help with academic, career and college planning. High school/college counselors are great resources to help keep students on track in the process.



- Participate in school activities**, ASAs or extra-curricular activities outside of schools.

- Parents:** Encourage your child to engage in extracurricular activities on and off-campus. Join them on some occasions if possible. There are activities that allow parents to join.

AUGUST - NOVEMBER



- Check with the high school/ college counselor to make sure your schedule is suitable and challenging enough to prepare you for college
- Sign up for AP classes and tests to strengthen your portfolio
- Retake personalities / career assessment
- Develop college criteria priorities (location, budget, weather preference)
- Continue to explore colleges through search engines, their websites, college fairs and Maia Learning
- Prepare for taking the PSAT
- Take SAT prep class if needed and sign up for the SAT test in the spring

- Parents:**
- Attend the college planning parent seminar organized by the school to know what to do in Grade 11 to prepare for college applications
 - Continue to have conversations with each other about college criteria priorities and explore colleges together
 - Attend college fairs with your child whenever possible

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY



- Take the digital SAT - tests typically offered March, May, June
- Prepare for the English proficiency tests (IELTS, TOEFL, Duolingo)
- Continue to attend college fairs and take advantage of college visits to connect with college admission counselors
- Develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges of interest to you
- Start putting together your portfolio and gather necessary information for financial aid and scholarships

- Parents:**
- Encourage your child to take SAT and English proficiency test in Grade 11 as Grade 12 can be very busy
 - Pay the exam fees and remind your child not to over-stress about those exams.

MARCH - JUNE



- Narrow down your college list- The school will support up to 10 applications for the most compatible schools.
- Research and determine the types of deadlines: Early Action (Non-Binding), Early Decision (Binding), and Regular Decision (Non-Binding), from your college list.



- Create a résumé
- Download applications - Go to the websites of each college to learn how to complete the application process. Check for application dates, some might have rolling admissions.



- Start asking teachers in advance for recommendation letters.
- Drafting essay: Begin thinking about the essay's outline, possible ideas and start writing drafts. Talk to your English teacher or the high school/college counselor to get help if needed.

Parents:

- Reach an agreement on list of colleges
- Discuss with your child about the deadlines and support them in designing a timeline to meet deadlines. From time to time, check in with them to help them on track or see if they need any support.

SUMMER INTO GRADE 12



Continue to **explore summer opportunities** (summer classes, pre-college program at universities, summer jobs, volunteer opportunities): Your high school/ college counselor can also make some recommendations

Parents: Help your child make summer plans



Tour college campuses:

- If your family has the opportunity to travel to other countries, plan to visit some local universities to develop some sense of college life.
- Visit their admissions office to learn about their admissions process.

Parents: Discuss summer travel plans with your child and the possibility of college visits during these trips.



- Take English proficiency tests (IELTS/TOEFL/Duolingo)
- Take the digital SAT one more time if needed
- Continue to work on your college essay and get help from your English teacher at the beginning of Grade 12 if needed.

Parents:

- Pay the exam fees and remind your child not to over-stress about those exams.
- Always make sure they sleep well and have a balanced diet.

CHAPTER 3: GRADE 12

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



- Meet with your high school/ college counselors if you need help organizing your process.
- Stay on track with your classes at school:
 - How well you do in your high school classes has an impact on your college applications. And your senior grades matter.
 - Check in with the high school counselor if you need help.
- Balance school work and life

Parents:

- Provide comfortable learning environment at home.
- Ensure your child has enough sleep, a healthy diet and help them balance school and life.
- Offer support if needed.
- Encourage your child to meet with the high school and college counselor often to get help with their college application process

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER



- Check your PowerSchool Grad Plan Progress to ensure your schedule is on track with high school graduation requirements.
- Finalize your college list. ISHCMC-AA will support no more than 10 applications for the most compatible schools.
- Have a list of application requirements for each college.
- Determine the application deadlines.
- Create a to-do list or calendar for applications.
- Start your applications (filling out information on MaiaLearning/UCAS/college's portals; collecting documents).
- Retake SAT if you need to (December is your last chance - for U.S./Canada).
- Continue to work on your college essays.

Parents:

- Help your child finalize their college list and support them with the decision of application deadlines.
- Help your child create the to-do list and organize their calendar.
- Understand the cost of each college on the list and start preparing financial documents.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER



- Ask your teachers and counselors for letters of recommendations - give at least 2 weeks advance notice.
- Polish your college essays (ask your English teacher or your counselor to read them).
- If you are applying for Early Decision, applications may be due as early as November 1st.
- Start asking for your transcript to be sent to colleges.
- Continue to work on your college applications.

Parents:

- Remind your child to request for letters of recommendations and transcript at least 2 weeks in advance (avoid last minute requests).
- From time to time, check in with your child to make sure they are on track with their applications.
- Provide your child with any documents they need for their applications.
- Always make sure they sleep well and have a balanced diet.

DECEMBER - JANUARY



- Be mindful of the Winter break when asking for letters of recommendations and transcripts - teachers may be unable to support you over breaks.
- Submit your complete college applications.

Parents:

- Remind your child of their approaching application deadlines and the school break in between.
- Ensure your child has enough sleep, a healthy diet and help them balance school and life. (This time of the year can be very stressful with semester exams and college application deadlines).

FEBRUARY - MAY



- Request mid-year transcripts after Semester 1 grades are final
- Submit any outstanding documents required by colleges
- Check your email regularly to not miss any important emails from colleges
- Once you receive offers from school, deliberate and decide where to enroll
- Inform every college of your acceptance or rejection
- Follow the instructions in the offer letters by the university to not miss any deadlines
- Apply for Visa (If study abroad) ASAP as summer is Visa peak season
- Request your FINAL transcript from your counselor

Parents:


- Help your child make decision of where to go and support their choice
- Learn about the Visa application process with your child and prepare for it together
- Check in with your child to make sure they do not miss any deadlines



CHAPTER 4:

TEST OVERVIEW

4.1 COMPARISON

					
Requirements	They are required by English-speaking countries for admissions or Visa Interview			They may be required by US, Australia, Canada, and parts of Europe	
English Proficiency	<p>Tests student’s ability to read, write, and speak English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NOT a primary admissions criterion, as only a passing score is achieved (varies by destination/university).• Admissions requirements may be waived if English proficiency is demonstrated in other ways.• May be required for visa purposes.				
College Readiness				<p>Tests student’s knowledge and reasoning ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required (or recommended) by many colleges and universities.• Used as predictors of college success.• Higher scores make students more attractive candidates for admissions, scholarships, etc.• SAT/ACT scores are important, but only a part of holistic admissions in which total grades are critical	
Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English proficiency test accepted worldwide.• 4 test sections: Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking.• Scoring: 0-9.• Administered approximately every two weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English proficiency test primarily used in the U.S. and Canada.• 4 test sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing.• Scoring: 0-120.• Administered approximately every two weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English proficiency test accepted by some institutions• Test sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing.• Scoring: 10-160.• Can be completed online, results available in 2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test accepted by many U.S. colleges and universities.• Tests knowledge in Reading, Writing, Math.• Scoring: 400-1600.• Administered 5 times per year in Vietnam (Digital SAT).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test accepted similarly to SAT by U.S. colleges and universities.• Tests English, Math, Reading, Science, and an optional Writing section.• Scoring: 1-36.• Administered 5 times per year in Vietnam
When Should Students Take These Tests?	Ideally taken during the summer before Grade 12 (NOT earlier)			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students should plan to take the test two times:• Once in Grade 11.• Once in Grade 12 (to improve their score if needed).• Colleges consider only the highest score.• Many schools allow students to combine their highest SAT subscores from multiple tests (i.e., “superscore”)	

4.2 WHAT IS A “GOOD” SCORE?

- Typical minimum scores: IELTS (6.5 & up); TOEFL (79 & up); Duolingo (105 & up)
- For SAT/ACT, the answer depends on where the student applies for college

Selectivity	SAT	ACT	Universities
Elite	1500	32	Harvard, Princeton, MIT, Stanford, UChicago, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, UPenn, UC Berkeley
Most Competitive	1400	30	Michigan, UCLA, Virginia, Tufts, USC, NYU, Boston College, Georgia Tech, UC San Diego
Highly Competitive	1300	27	Penn State, Washington, BU, Texas, George Washington, Ohio State, UC Davis, UC Irvine
Very Competitive	1200	25	Arizona, UMass, Oregon, Fordham, Syracuse, Rutgers, Drexel, UC Santa Cruz, Baylor
Competitive	1100	22	Cincinnati, LSU, Arizona State, UC Riverside, Houston, George Mason, Central Florida
Less Competitive	1000	19	San Jose State, Cal State system, San Francisco State, Florida Atlantic, HULT

4.3 DO WE NEED TO TAKE THE SAT OR ACT?

This depends on the country and program

Maybe	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• United States• Canada• Australia• Some European countries• For Scholarships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UK• US Community Colleges• US Test-Optional Schools

NOTE: WHAT ABOUT TOEFL/IELTS/DUOLINGO?

- Students are recommended to take this test regardless of their situation.
- IELTS is more universally accepted.



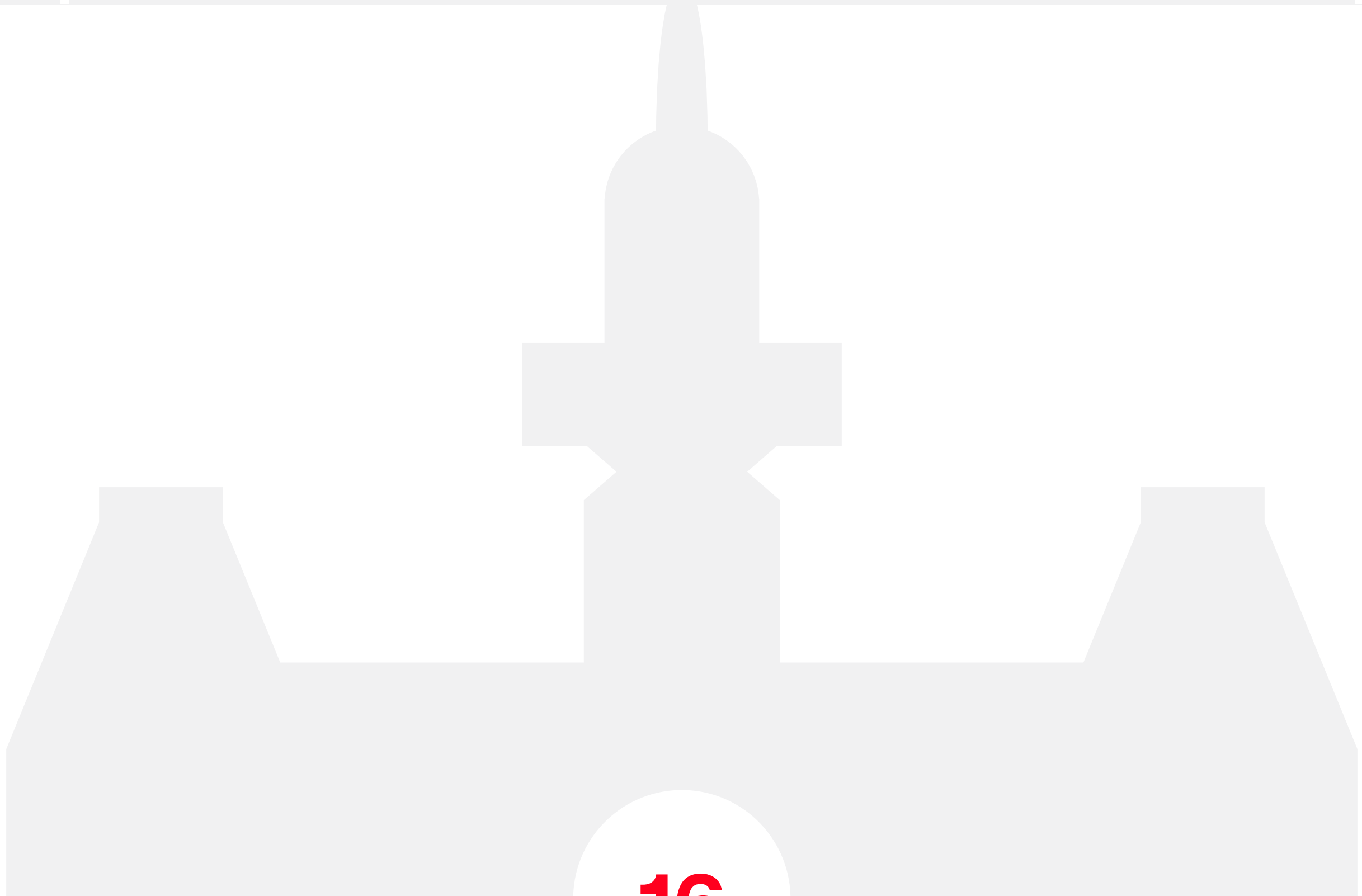
CHAPTER 5: COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

5.1 WHAT TO ASK AN EDUCATIONAL AGENT?

Questions		Expectations	
01	What is your background and professional experience?	◀	Has many years of experience and/or relevant education and training.
02	Can I see a list of your university partners?	◀	Provides verifiable evidence that they represent regionally accredited and recognized universities.
03	How do you choose your university partners?	◀	Have clear criteria and procedure in selecting university partnerships.
04	Do you use rankings to help me identify potential universities?	◀	May consider rankings as only one factor in the university research and selection process.
05	What if I want to use your services but I plan to apply to a university that is not your partner?	◀	If clearly stipulated in your contract, advisement fees can be charged. Or, you may be referred to another agent that partners with that particular university.
06	Do you guarantee admission to a university with which you work?	◀	NO. Explains that universities are responsible for making admission decisions, and the agent cannot guarantee you will be admitted to a particular institution.
07	How do you support students in completing university applications?	◀	Helps you understand what is expected of you throughout the application process; assists you in compiling the required materials; provides editing guidance with essays and personal statements.
08	How will you help me select the university I will attend?	◀	Helps you identify the best fit for you, even if that means attending a university that is not one of their partners or changing schools once you arrive in your destination country.
09	Can you help me apply for my student visa?	◀	Provides proper advice on immigration matters or can refer you to appropriate and authorized sources of accurate information.
10	Can you help connect me with students who have attended universities that I will be applying to?	◀	YES.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFF-CAMPUS
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Organization	What students can do	Contact Information
Thảo Đàn Loving Home (Mái Ấm Thảo Đàn)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Volunteer to teach EnglishParticipate in their activities	thaodan.org.vn/ 177 Trần Nãi, District 2
Diệu Giác Pagoda (or any pagoda with orphanage homes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teach English/other subjectsParticipate in their activities	quybongsen.org/du-an/quan-com-nxa-loi-ong-cu-quoc-1/
Nụ Cười Community Food Shop (Quán cơm Nụ Cười)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Serve foodHelp prep the food & cleaning	facebook.com/1sharese20/ 28 Trần Nãi, An Phú, District 2
Share Sài Gòn Community Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Volunteer for their community projects	seivietnam.com 514B Huỳnh Tấn Phát, D7 Phone: +84 283 773 0513 Website: saigones.vn
Saigon Sports Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Great for students who want to enhance their basketball and football skills	rusticpathways.com/why-rustic-pathways
Saigon Sports Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Boxing, Muay Thai, Crossfit, Jiu Jitsu	
Rustic Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student travel experiences that prioritize meaningful community engagement and summer programs	
iVolunteer Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Search engine for volunteering opportunities for high school/college students	ivolunteervietnam.com

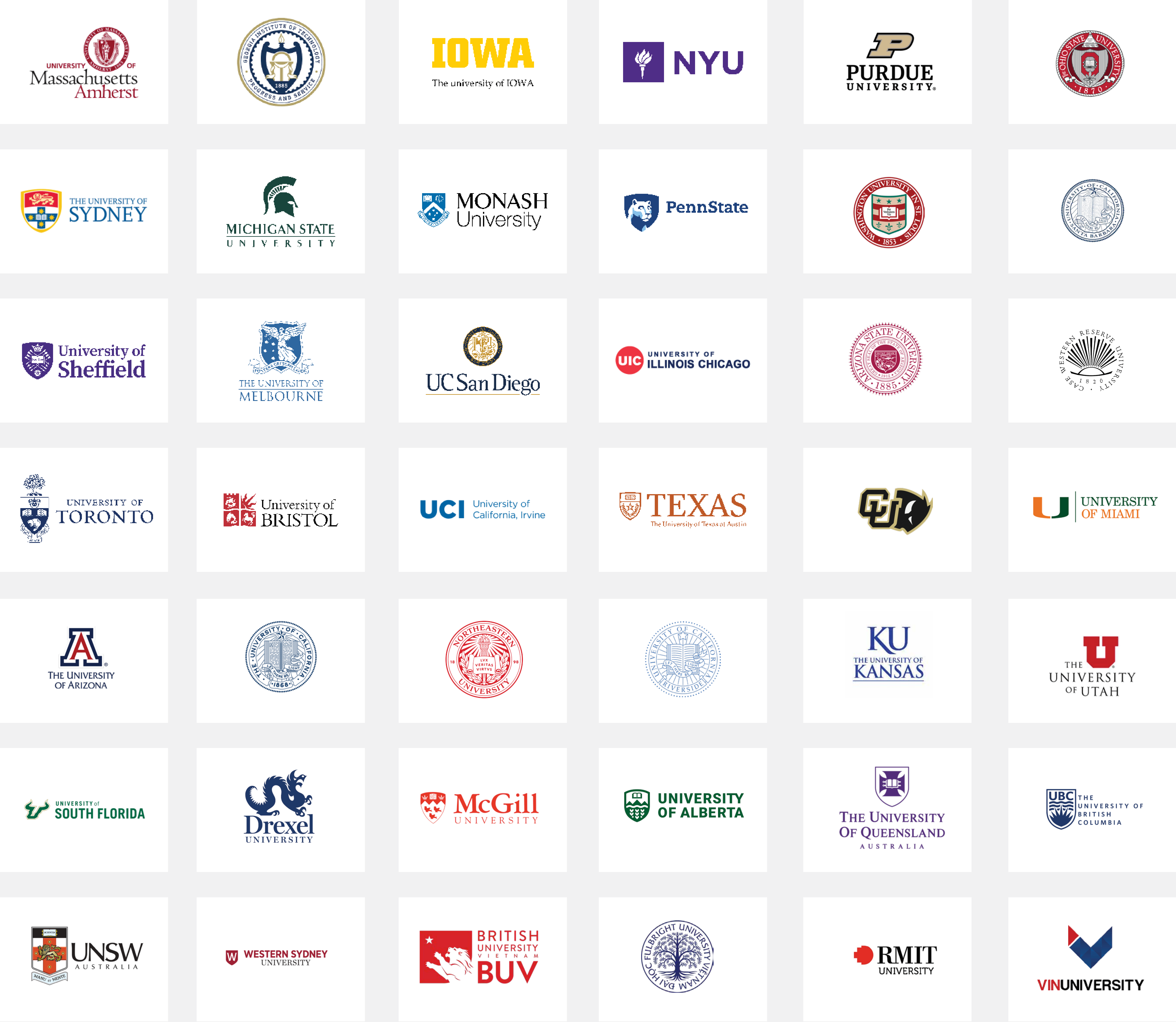


CHAPTER 6: SURVEY OF COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY SELECTION

How important are the following factors to you in selecting a college/university?
Parents and students will each fill out a copy of this, and then compare their responses.

Criteria	Details	Not at all important	Slightly important	Very important	No opinion
Location	Specific location:				
Tuition and fees - Budget	Amount:				
Class Size	Large Lecture Hall vs Small Classroom				
Number of students enrolled	Under 2,000 students				
	2,000-10,000 students				
	More than 10,000 students				
Program of studies	Specific Major:				
Wide choice in Program of Study	Minor options, or ability to change major				
School Reputation	Ranking				
Campus Setting	Urban Near a city Far from a city				
Proximity to Family, Friends, or a Vietnamese community	Examples: Must live with or near family or friends Must live near a Vietnamese community Can live anywhere				
Extra Support for International Students	Examples Language support Type of learning accommodations				

CHAPTER 7: UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE



\$14,000,000+ USD

total scholarships awarded
for the Class of 2024
(updated by August 2024)



100%

of our students get into
at least one of their
top 3 schools of choice

OUR COGNITA FAMILY



100+ Schools
12 Academic Curricula
90,000 Students
16 Countries in **5** Continents

 16 Vo Truong Toan, An Phu Ward, Thu Duc City (District 2), HCMC
 (028) 3898 9098  admissions@aavn.edu.vn  www.aavn.edu.vn



A COGNITA SCHOOL