

College Planning

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10 Falsehoods Dispelled for International Students Applicants to the U.S.

The U.S. has the largest number of international students enrolled in its universities (more than 1,000,000). Over 5% of the students studying in the U.S. are foreign born students. Universities report that the number of international students keeps growing year after year.

Attending college in the U.S. is a goal for many international high school students. We are dispelling 10 myths about Studying Abroad in the U.S. This goal can be achieved; let us show you how.



1. I need to be rich to attend college in the U.S.

Yes, American universities can be expensive. However, “sticker price” does not always equal net price.

There are merit-based scholarships available to international students.

The cost of attendance varies greatly from private and public universities. It is often less expensive to attend a public university.

2. I do not qualify for financial aid.

International students do not qualify for federal aid.

They may, however, qualify for merit-based scholarships. Each university decides how to want to distribute its funds. They can offer international students institutional aid if they want to.

3. I am fluent in English; therefore, I do not need to take the TOEFL or IELTS.

There is no standard application process for U.S. universities. For this reason, students must check

each university’s criteria for the TOEFL/IELTS exam. Numerous universities require international students from a country where English is not the national language, to take a language exam.

Each university also sets its own passing score.

4. The TOEFL and IELTS are essentially the same.

The TOEFL and IELTS exams have numerous differences. For example, the TOEFL offers only academic English while the IELTS offers an academic option in addition to a general test.

Both the TOEFL and IELTS have wide acceptance in U.S. universities. However, some colleges do have their preferences. When deciding which test to take, make sure to check with the universities you are applying to see if both tests are accepted.

5. Applying to college in the U.S. is centralized.

Things would be simpler if this were true.

The college application process varies from college to college. Each college sets their own rules, criteria, and deadlines.

There is no one true “universal” application.

6. Since English is not my first language, colleges will not expect my essay to have perfect grammar.

Nowadays, colleges are more competitive than ever.

In order to study at a top-tier university, students must have a strong grasp of the English language and grammar.

7. The U.S. does not have very many international students enrolled in its universities.

For the 2015-2016 academic year, the number of international students at U.S. colleges exceeded 1 million, according to a recent report from the Institute

of International Education, a nonprofit that works to advance international education.

8. The steps involved in applying to U.S. colleges are completely different for international and domestic students.

The steps involved in applying to U.S. colleges are largely the same for international and domestic students. But, international students need to undertake a few additional steps to make up for the differences in the school curriculum, grading system, and language.

- The majority of the colleges in the U.S. require international students to obtain a minimum score on language tests, such as the TOEFL.
- As an international student, you will also need to supply the university with a certification of finances. The university wants to ensure you can afford the tuition and living expenses before you obtain a visa and move to the U.S.
- International students applying to U.S. colleges may also be required to have their transcripts and/or other educational credentials assessed by an official organization. This is because the grading system used by certain schools is different from the typical 4.0 scale utilized in the U.S.
- International Students have to determine the legal requirements associated with staying in the U.S. and apply for a student visa.

9. It is difficult to obtain a student visa.

Once a student is accepted to a university, the steps are fairly straightforward. The first step for international

students is to ensure that the university to which they are applying, is accredited by the U.S. government's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

Only SEVP-approved institutions can enroll students in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

After an international student has been accepted, the university will enroll them in the SEVIS system. SEVIS will provide the students with the necessary documents to apply for a U.S. student visa.

10. I must leave the U.S. as soon as I graduate.

Upon graduation, many international students hope to stay in the U.S. These students can apply for a twelve-month optional practical training (OPT). This allows them to work in fields related to their areas of study while building their skill-set.

The difficulty is that not just any job will do; the job must be specific to their field of study.

An additional option is to pursue an advanced degree. This will extend the student visa. After the advanced degree is obtained, the student can apply for an additional twelve-month period of OPT.

The process of finding long-term employment and receiving company sponsorship is not always easy, but it is certainly doable. The more specific and in-demand your major is, the easier the process becomes.

Studying abroad in the U.S. is a lifelong dream for many. That dream can be realized with proper planning and diligence.

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