How should Seniors Choose and Apply for a College

By: Dian Tang

The United States is the most developed country in the world in terms of education. The educational system of higher education is mainly divided into two-years and four-years systems. The two-years schools are mostly technical college and community schools, and the four-year schools, mainly liberal arts colleges, independent professional colleges, and comprehensive universities, representing the highest level of research and education in the United States. American colleges, adopted an application system of independent enrollment, containing more than 4000 schools, thus met different needs of students.

Different from the national unified examination and admission, the admission criteria only exist in the students’ college entrance examination scores, the admission system of American colleges is mainly for the independent admission of schools and students’ free application. Many high school students take standardized tests like the SAT or ACT to improve their competitiveness. American colleges judge whether a student is excellent or not mainly in the following aspects: grade-point average, standardized test scores, class rankings, recognized student achievement, leadership certification, artistic talent, athletic ability, foreign living experience. Saying by Christine Cerny, a college planning counselor, “The thing colleges value more is the development of students’ synthetic ability.”

Although each school recruits students independently, according to different standards to choose students, its application process is not much different. Many American colleges use the Internet to apply, so to simplify the application process, many students use a common online application system. The online application system commonly used by American colleges include: Apply Yourself, Emark, Apply Web, Common Application, and Coalition Application. Some regions or schools have their application system, such as UC Application.



*Photo contributed by Fastweb.com.*

*“Important Aspects of College Application”.*

Students’ cultivation is reflected in letters of recommendation, and application essays. Suggesting by Anil Kurt, a college planning counselor, “Two or three letters of recommendation are enough, you can ask people who understand you study life to write, such as professional course teachers, and principles to write. If you have participated in any research activities, you can also ask someone with academic prestige.” For all applicants, the application essay topics are relatively open. Through the students’ statement and essay, the admission officers hope to see what are the comprehensive qualities, personality, hobbies, ways of treating things, expectations for the college education and campus, world view, values, and even imagination of a student.

The United States has a vast area, and living expenses vary from region to region due to different economic development levels. The consumption level in the location of universities will directly affect the living expenses of students. Explaining by Emily Thomas, a college planning counselor, “It will be much easier for seniors to decide where they want to go first and then choose appropriate colleges in that region. In addition to considering whether the school is a good fit for the field you want to study, financial factors are also worth considering.” According to USNews.com, American cities can be roughly divided into four levels according to the cost of living. The first level is dominated by megalopolises such as New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Boston, Miami, Hawaii, Chicago, and Washington, and living expenses in these regions range from 1200 to 1800 dollars a month. The second level is dominated by large cities such as San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Dallas, Atlanta, and Detroit. Living expenses in these regions range from 800 to 1300 dollars a month. The third level is in the southern, central, and southeastern states, including Texas, Wisconsin, Virginia, and North Carolina. Living expenses range from 600 to 800 dollars a month. The fourth level is mainly the state of Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina. Living expenses in these regions range from 450 to 600 dollars a month.

Students should not only focus on the field of study they are interested in, consider their conditions and select the schools that meet the admission requirements, but also master the methods of applying a college and plan for financial expenses.