

特集：SS リーグ修了生便り

On Applying to American Universities

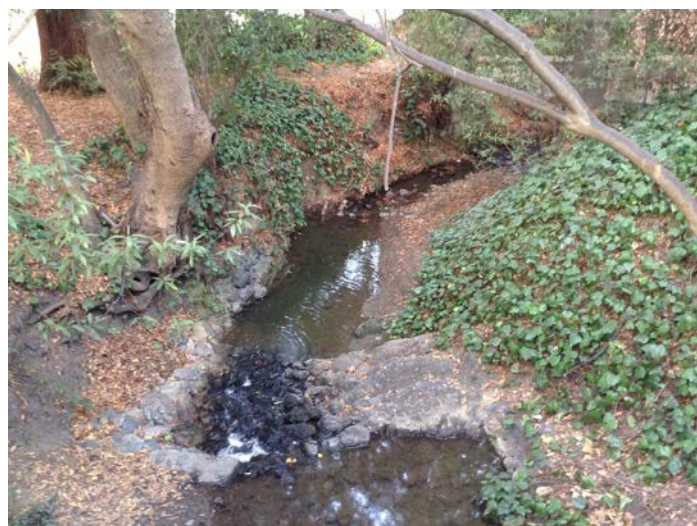
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I would like to express my gratitude for the great experience I had with the Super Science League at the University of Tsukuba. I have learned a great deal about the biological world and, perhaps more importantly, how to undertake a self-initiated investigation from start to finish, and how to go about tackling inquiries and mysteries along the way to find an answer to the initial question asked. This is a skill that will undoubtedly prove itself useful in the future regardless of what I end up doing, for it aids the rigorous pursuit of knowledge and helps cultivate the resilience needed to overcome difficulties and challenges. I raise this point because this is something seen as important in America as well, and it is a skill that the admissions offices certainly look for at many American colleges and universities.



My experience with SS League is definitely something I wrote about in my college admission essays, including the essay I submitted to UC Berkeley, where I will be enrolling this Fall. But before any of that, of course, I had to go through the infamous college application process. Modern technology has enabled us to apply to most American colleges online through an online application process, which has made the experience slightly less nerve-wracking. There are a few main components to a college application. In the application form, most schools ask for your high school transcript, your extracurricular activities, your personal statement (essay) and of course your SAT (Student Aptitude Test) scores. With these four main components you must show them who you are and what you are capable of doing! Some institutions allow you to submit “supplemental materials,”

if you feel that you have not shown your full worth with these four components. You should only opt to submit such materials if you think that they illustrate your exceptional achievement or talent. Video or audio recordings of live performances are good examples of the sort of material you could submit. It could also be an article or a written piece of work; virtually anything that is not covered in the four main components of the application.



Numbers are of course important to show your academic rigor, but most schools tend to try to see beyond the numbers and figure out what kind of a person you are and how your mind works. This is where the personal statement becomes very important. This section should be about your personality, and episodes in your life that illustrate who you are. You should generally avoid bragging about your

academic transcript, your extracurricular record or any other achievement just for the sake of mentioning it (unless you can develop upon that achievement and draw a more revealing point about yourself from it), because those will be covered in the other components of your application. It should be an expression of who you are, not a list of records of numbers and achievements. It is really about YOU as a person.



The SAT test is interesting. You can take it more than once and most institutions allow you to just send your best score. The test has three sections: Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing. Each section is worth 800 points. The test is designed to measure the student's aptitude for studying, rather than prior accumulation of knowledge, hence its name. Most of the top colleges require your SAT score. Doing well on the SAT test will obviously increase your chance of admittance. However, a good score does not guarantee entry, as it is only one of many facets of your application. This also means that it is not the end of the world if you do not do so well on the SAT. Honestly, my SAT scores were not sparkling, but I had other facets of my application that made me stand out. It really is not just about numbers. A lot of schools also conduct interviews all around the world as a part of the application process, to get to know who you are.

The extracurricular activities record should help to illustrate how you interact with the world, what your mind is

capable of doing, what you can achieve, and what sorts of challenges you can take on. The first rate universities are looking more at your capability for learning and accomplishing things, rather than your present knowledge. They want to see if you can cope with the workload and difficulty of the classes offered at their institution. Your current stock of acquired knowledge is secondary to them, as it is their job to give you the knowledge once you get in. More important is the "processor," or the mind that will acquire the knowledge, and what it will do with the knowledge. Potential is more important for the time being. It is more about having the skills needed to acquire knowledge.



And finally, to get into those top rate schools--well what can I say, just be yourself! Do not try to make up an inflated identity designed to impress; just show yourself as effectively and convincingly as you can. There's a universe in all of us! You should not stand on your toes and try to find devious ways to look impressive. They can usually tell if you're stretching reality or exaggerating. If you do not show yourself truthfully, even if you are the material they are looking for, they will see something else to make their judgment on instead. That would be a true waste. Just be yourself, and the right place for you will open its doors!

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