

Guidance Bulletin 75, 21st October 2019

Year 13: University of California The application process for the nine campuses of the University of California opens for submissions on 01-Nov-19 and closes on 30-Nov-19. To register for the application process go to <https://apply.universityofcalifornia.edu/my-application/login>.

Year 13: References and Letters of Recommendation Some university applications must include a description by the school of the student, while others do not. For UK and a few European universities, therefore, a reference is required that sets out the academic capabilities of the applicant. US universities, by contrast, want to learn more about the character and personal style behind each applicant. It must be urgently stressed, however, that words cannot override grades. If a university demands 7 in HL Mathematics, and the final grade achieved is 6, then no amount of writing will sway the admissions office. Further details about these nuances can be found in Guidance Bulletin 32 and 52. The following two extracts, written by the guidance counsellor, describe the same student, but for a US and a UK application respectively.

Letter of recommendation With his nimble and curious mind, X sets a brisk and searching tone to any conversation. At guidance meetings we have ranged from the jazz of Django Reinhardt to the esoteric world of computer programming. For X is mature in his outlook and adult in his phrasing, his intellectual fire once kindled leaping in bright sparks and flashes. I have known X in my capacity as guidance counsellor since September 20XX. He has long been a figure to look out for academically. Summer time: not for him when the living is easy. Instead, six weeks of living in a dorm at Carnegie Mellon with other programming aficionados, the first project to recreate an arcade game, the second to devise a new game. It thrilled him to develop an idea through to fruition. Not for nothing did his team press him to take charge each time. He takes the initiative, comes up quickly with ideas and plays creatively with suggestions. The final week was devoted to a game about Japanese fly-fishing. To contrast with the hurly-burly of mainstream video games, a tranquil atmosphere was sought: through the headset the player encountered the darkly rippling water, the reflection of the moon, the splash of the fish and the soft recital of a traditional poem about fishing at night. The Gong-fu Society: now there is a name to catch the attention. On a road off Plainpalais, the large square in the centre of Geneva where Mary Shelley had her invented monster roam, stands Café Les Savoises. Here, once a week, professional programmers meet for coffee, wine and coding. They are deeply passionate about their skills, mostly in their thirties and forties, and exclusively francophone. Picture X, a seventeen-year-old, engaging with this society. However cordial, however welcoming they were from the start, he still had to overcome his adolescent nerves, to integrate himself and to talk computing in French. Starting at nine and finishing after eleven, they sit with their laptops, screens and minds aglow, sorting algorithms. What he has learnt from this group, X says, is invaluable. Outwardly, the minimal processing power for complex problems, hexadecimals, pure theory; inwardly, the precious skill of learning directly from others, to distil the essence of seemingly casual exchanges.

Reference X joined the Campus des Nations of the International School of Geneva in September 20XX as a student of Year X. As his form tutor notes, his positive nature lends him real enjoyment of both lessons and social life, his reports rarely garnering less than excellent for effort. To any conversation he brings a quizzical maturity. At Higher Level his teacher of ENGLISH A is overwhelmingly pleased by his performance. An entertaining and engaged student, he is a pleasure to teach. His intellect and curiosity about the world combine in his compelling oral presentations. Not only does he exhibit in his written work originality, insight and flair, but even under the exigencies of time he achieved a 7 in the internal Year 12 exam, testament to his firm grasp of the subject. In MATHEMATICS his enthusiasm and interest are palpable. Never at a loss when contributing in class, he shows his good level of understanding and high level of background knowledge. By looking to set out his answers in an ever more organised manner, he is ensuring that unnecessary errors are eradicated and working methods are clear.

Years 12 and 12: Notes from the visit by Salve Regina University (RI-USA) on 04-Oct-19 Based at a lovely campus next to Newport on Rhode Island, Salve Regina University is home to about 2,100 students. Sports range from surfing to equestrian events. The average class size numbers nineteen. Only full faculty members teach. Most students start as undecided and only choose their major after going through the first year. The personal essay (see Guidance Bulletin 26) is particularly important for the admissions process. It gives applicants the opportunity (see Guidance Bulletin 66) to express

themselves, whether about living in Geneva or getting to know their grandparents. The advice is to write clearly, connect ideas and avoid big words, unless of course an applicant usually uses them. Including everything, from tuition fees to board and lodging, the total cost is about \$58,000 per annum. To help with finances, scholarships are available. On the 7.0 scale, a GPA of about 4.5 is generally acceptable. SAT is optional. If it is taken, then a score of 1120-1140 is normally considered. The deadline for entry through the Common Application is 15-Feb. For more details go to <https://salve.edu/>.

Years 12 and 13: Notes from the visit by Santa Clara University (CA-USA) on 01-Oct-19 Santa Clara University continues to expand: a new hall of residence has just opened with a theme of physical and mental wellness. *US News and World Report* ranks Santa Clara University among the top fifteen per cent of higher education institutions in the USA. It is currently fifty-fourth in the Shanghai ranking. The aim is to continue increasing numbers, albeit gradually, up to 6,000 students. A new STEM facility will be ready in 2021. Testament to the intellectual prowess of the campus, some forty-five per cent of the student body completes a double major in four years. The curriculum is flexible: students can mix, for example, Engineering with Theatre. Psychology is among the more popular subjects. For the double major of Psychology and Neuroscience, research is being conducted among war veterans, in particular on the apparent feelings some experience in limbs that have been amputated. Research opportunities may attract remuneration. In the School of Engineering an oversized drone has been built to carry a refrigerator holding medical supplies, lightweight prosthetic limbs are being developed for use in India and a marine survey robot, which is undergoing tests on the ocean bed off Santa Cruz, has been constructed. Close by the campus is NASA headquarters, where students have the opportunity to work on satellite technology. For further details go to Guidance Bulletin 24 and <https://www.scu.edu/>.

Years 12 and 13: Notes from the visit by Carnegie Mellon University (PA-USA) on 16-Oct-19 Since students must apply to a particular college within the university, they need to think carefully beforehand where their undergraduate experience will begin. Half of the majors are related to STEM subjects, half to fine and liberal arts. Carnegie Mellon University has, from its inauguration, a reputation as a practical and vocational institution. The combination of the creative and the technical lends itself to problem solving and innovation. All the faculty are active researchers. This brings the cutting edge of technology to the undergraduate body. There are some interdisciplinary options, which affords the opportunity to take a series of concentrations, for example lighting design, games design, physical computing and intelligent workspaces. The largest of the colleges at Carnegie Mellon University is the College of Engineering. The College of Fine Arts is the oldest of its kind in the United States. The second largest of the colleges is the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, home to over sixty majors and minors in the liberal arts tradition. Within the liberal arts options appears a considerable amount science and mathematics. The School of Computer Science includes such specialisms as computational biology. Entry is assessed holistically and rigorously (average ACT score is 33 and middle fifty per cent SAT in mathematics is 780-800) through the Common Application with a special writing supplement. Applicants should relish academic discipline and ambition. For details go to <https://www.cmu.edu/>.

Years 11 and 12: Robotics Summer School The Robotics Summer Youth Experience (SYE) is a collaboration between INTO University Partnerships and Collaborative Robotics and Intelligent Systems (CoRIS) Institute at Oregon State University. The Robotics SYE combines a hands-on robotics experience with a US campus environment. There are three ten-day sessions available to students: 16 to 25-Jul-20, 30-Jul to 08-Aug-20 and 06-Aug to 15-Aug-20. The maximum number of participants is thirty students per session. The cost of \$3,495 covers food, accommodation, tuition and airport transfer. Any application or inquiry should be directed to intladmit@oregonstate.edu.

Years 10, 11 and 12: Oxbridge Academic The aim of Oxbridge Academic programmes is to connect students over the summer with subjects in ways that go beyond the school curricula. They afford students the opportunity to immerse themselves academically, experientially and imaginatively in subjects that fascinate them. With courses taking place in Oxford, Cambridge, New York and Los Angeles, students also get to know some great cultural centres. For more details go to <https://oxbridgeprograms.com>.

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