

## **Wading through the US Undergraduate Admission Process**

Middle Eastern students, like students anywhere in the world, face the challenge of selecting appropriate American institutions to further their education. With more than 3,000 higher education institutions in the United States to choose from it is no wonder that many students find it extremely difficult to make an informed decision.

To simplify the decision-making process I recommend that students from the Middle East carefully consider four variables when choosing a US institution: academic reputation, location, support services, and cost.

Academic Reputation. While each American institution has its own overall reputation, academic program reputations are discipline specific. For instance, Purdue University has an overall reputation of graduating students who are noted for being industrious and well trained, but each program within our ten academic colleges/schools have their own individual reputation. For instance, in November 2004, The Times of London in a new survey ranking universities from all over the world ranked Purdue University 59<sup>th</sup> overall, and ninth among American public universities. Purdue University's Krannert School of Management executive MBA degree program placed 18th worldwide in rankings released in October 2005 by Business Week. In August 2005 U.S. News and World Report ranked Purdue's undergraduate engineering programs eighth nationally and its Krannert School of Management undergraduate program No. 12. Other universities are ranked in similar ways by various entities.

Location. Location is generally important if an international student is concerned about climate and cultural/social opportunities. The United States is a large country and weather varies significantly from region to region. The World Wide Web makes research on this topic very easy. In the Midwest area of the United States where Purdue University is located, we have four very distinct seasons – spring, summer, fall and winter. Despite this seasonal difference with the Middle East we still enroll more than 200 students from the Gulf Region.

Support Services. Prospective students should research what kinds of services are available for international students on university campuses. Discovering the reputation of the quality of service is also important. At Purdue University we are well known for offering friendly and efficient service despite our large student population. With approximately 5,000 international students from nearly 130 countries, the Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) is a “home away from home” for the students from abroad. We provide services in the areas of admission, immigration, and educational/cultural programming. Other support units such as our Office of the Registrar, Office of the Bursar, Office of the Dean of Students, and academic advising offices pride themselves in helping students to the greatest extent possible.

Cost. The cost of one's education will be a concern if financial resources are limited. Tuition and fees alone at many American schools exceed \$20,000 with the total cost (room and board and miscellaneous expenses included) easily exceeding \$30,000 per year. Scholarship opportunities vary from school to school. At Purdue University, total costs approximate \$30,000 per year.

In addition to these four variables I encourage students to submit their application for admission as early as possible. Follow directions carefully and be certain to submit original or true certified transcripts as well as financial support documents. Students who are interested in beginning their academic career in August or September should ideally apply for admission sometime between the months December through February. By applying early students will be able to deal with any problems or issues that arise during the admission process as well as the visa application process.

Best wishes in your future educational pursuits!

Sincerely,

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