

IVY Verbal Review:

Preparing an Uncommon Application For Columbia

By Tom Mathew

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www.beatthetest.com

First Edition

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Introduction

Few students are aware that most universities today are unregulated investment partnerships whose primary purpose is the tax-free growth of their endowment. Many endowments are operated like hedge funds, maximizing returns through leveraged buy outs and risk arbitrage. The endowment can only grow if students can afford to stay for four years with limited financial or pedagogical assistance.

The key critical aspects of the application based on my sixteen years of preparing applications from college bound students are as follows:

- A) your ability to pay,
- B) your race,
- C) your sex,
- D) your zip code,
- E) your parent's occupation, and
- F) and your grade distribution.

You may notice that the list above is in stark contrast to the propaganda that is printed in other college guide books. Almost all of them indicate that you have to study hard and get high standardized test scores. Based on my sixteen years of private test prep and college application experience, this is not true at all.

A) Your Ability to Pay

Many administrators of top universities today take home salaries in excess of \$1,000,000. The President of the United States, in comparison, does not even get paid that much. Thus, universities today are not taxed or regulated. They are multinational juggernauts that cater to the children of the global aristocracy. Otherwise their goal would not be to maintain their high level of profitability and the ridiculously high salaries of their nabob

managers.

The vast majority of Americans do not make over \$100,000 per annum. So how can these families afford \$18,000 plus a year for dormitory expenses? Colleges do not discriminate against the poor, as much as they cater to the rich. To maintain the illusion that they are need blind, prominent colleges, typically those with multi-billion dollar endowments, will routinely send mass emails and post cards to naive ghetto scholars to encourage their applications. Moreover, many colleges talk to guidance counselors and advise them to steer needy students elsewhere.

Top schools generally do not give enough financial aid for a student to matriculate. This is especially true for the students who belong to the large group of applicants (over 90%) whose families do not earn over \$42,000 per annum.

How can I state this? I used to be a ratings analyst for Moody's Investors Service and I have an expert knowledge of how universities operate and fund themselves. In reviewing the private undisclosed financial statements of hundreds of colleges in the United States and several student loan lenders, I can unequivocally state that all private colleges are not need-blind.

Moreover, private colleges have vast college dormitories which are secured by a mortgage guaranteed by a state dormitory authority. State universities have dormitory expenses that exceed the annual cost of tuition. College administrators must repay their lenders so they have to accept students who can afford to pay for dormitory living. By utilizing complex circumlocution, colleges advise customers of IVY Verbal Review that they are need blind. Yeah, to tuition needs, but not to dormitory needs.

Dormitory mortgages are rarely secured by the endowment of a university. Thus, dormitories are always secured by the cash flows generated by the

students who stay in them. Most top universities favor students who will pay and stay in their dormitories.

B) Your Race

Based on my experience helping thousands of students gain admission into top colleges, I can state that top colleges overwhelmingly do not practice any form of affirmative action for minority male applicants. This is especially true in top programs.

Many students often tell me that they see so many Asians and Indians on campus. I advise them that most of them are from overseas and usually pay full tuition. This is especially true for Indian males as the vast majority of Indian students on campus are the great grandson of some pasha, industrialist or diplomatic stooge.

Also, few students understand how many poor Chinese there are on campus. American Chinese on campus typically have incomes below the poverty line and usually receive abundant scholarships and federal grants. These forms of aid are typically given to individuals whose families make less than \$18,000 per year.

C) Your Sex

Hard to believe but the sex of the student matters a lot for admission. Female undergraduates today dominate coeducational campuses. I often advise parents that if you deduct foreign males (those who have student visas) from the total male population, you will then see that females are in the majority at all campuses.

This is why we are still around after 16 years because our competitors understate how competitive it is for middle class boys to get into top schools. This is also why we rarely accept boys during their senior years for high school or college for our IVY Verbal Review products.

The reality in 2015 is that top programs across the board overwhelmingly favor girls. Many institutions such as the University of Mississippi and Princeton University that were almost 100% male in the 1980's are now predominantly female.

D) Your Zip Code

Your zip code encompasses a census tract called a metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Every aspect of that MSA's inhabitants from average house value, average indebtedness, unemployment, educational achievement and even medical expenses for psychotropic medication can be arrived at from this number. A savvy university admissions department can correlate your academic ability to the historical pattern of college dropouts from your particular zip code. Colleges compare their historical level of dropouts to the actual zip codes that dropouts come from. If you come from a neighborhood or a high school with a lot of university drop outs and transfers, there is a high probability that you will be rejected.

Colleges can correlate your zip code with housing charts and come up with a proxy measure for a family's net worth. Your zip code can also tell the school with a high level of confidence what race you are categorized for Department of Education classification purposes.

Colleges routinely portray that early admissions candidates are accepted on a need blind basis because they do not ask for income information. This is misleading. Using a student's zip code and modern data services enables them to get far more information than a student can imagine.

E) Your Parent's Occupation

Many schools practice overt nepotism when it comes to accepting high school students for competitive majors. They obfuscate the fact that it is pretty hard to get into certain professions even if you have a top college degree. For example, it is impossible to just walk up to Goldman Sachs in Manhattan and get a job there. The labyrinth of future psychological

batteries that a student has to overcome to obtain success can be circumvented if one has a relative that works in a top field as well.

Thus, many universities will accept you if you already have a parent in a lucrative profession. Moreover, colleges bend over backwards to take students whose fathers work as politicians, diplomats, physicians, lawyers and bankers. I have also seen that more and more graduate schools require prior entry into a lucrative profession by the parent as the basis for admission.

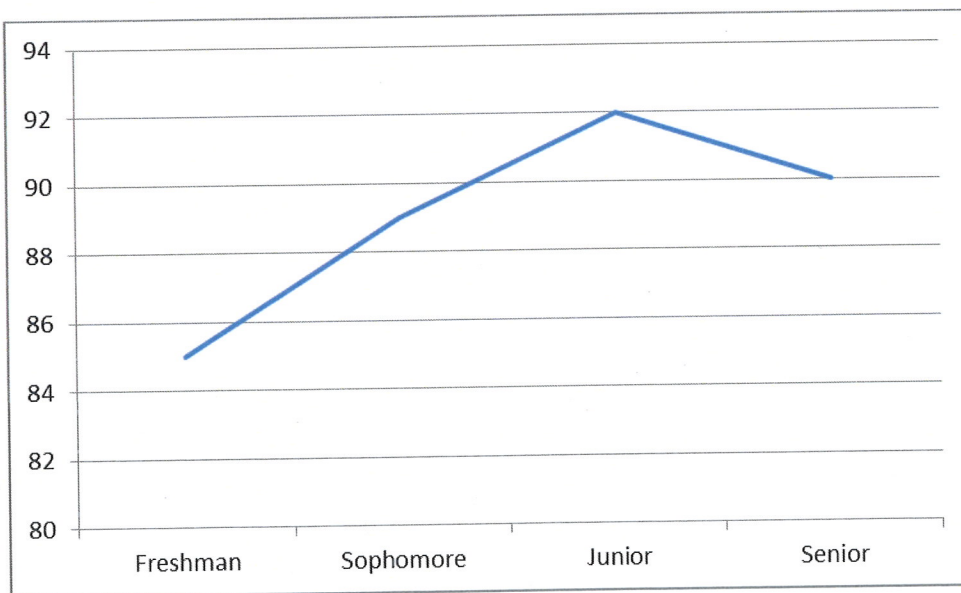
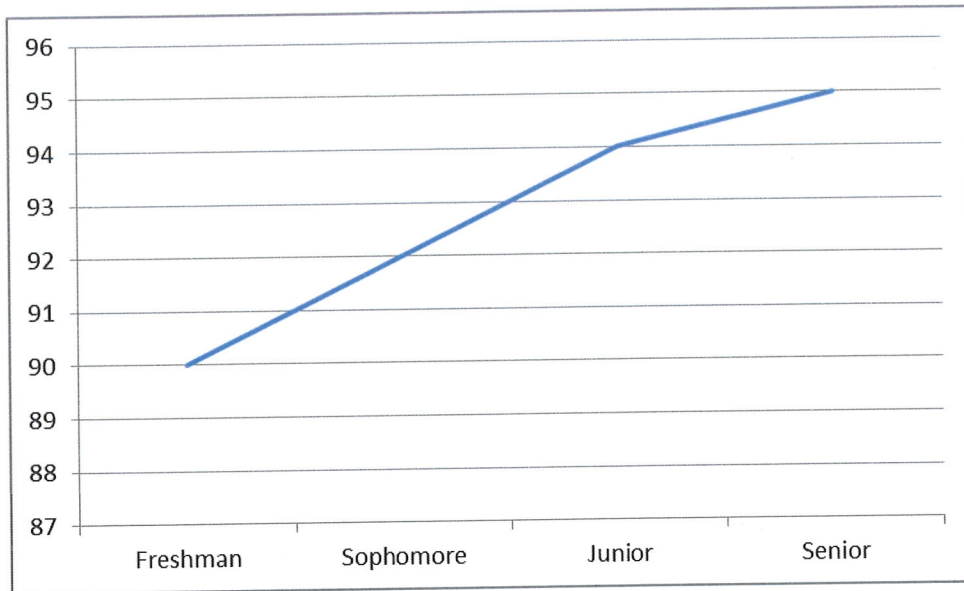
F) Your Grade Distribution

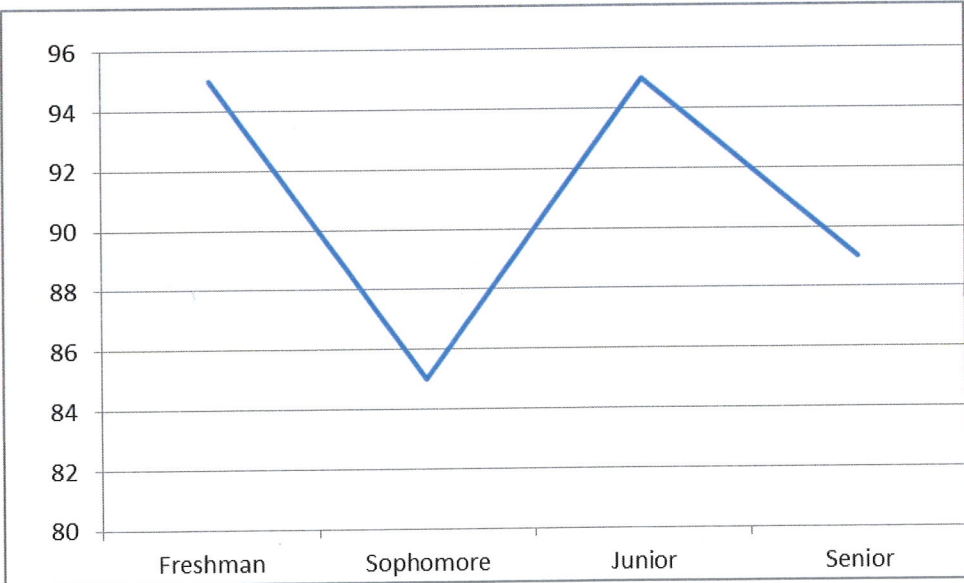
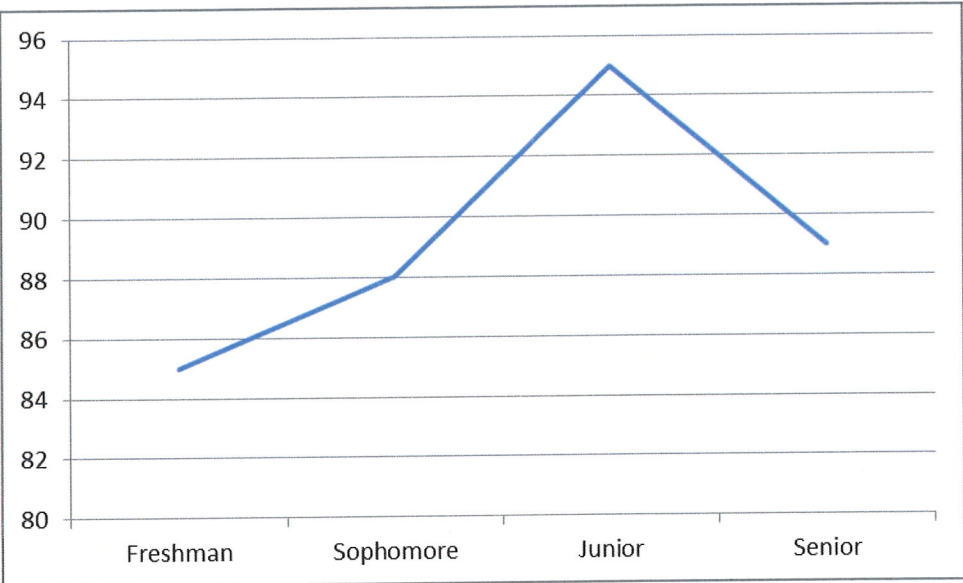
Students do not need to be brilliant in my opinion to get into a top school. We are the only test prep in the United States that states this fact, as we are not in the business of enrolling students in endless test prep! So do not worry if your child has low grades or has some type of cognitive disability. There is a good probability that your child will get in.

This is the trickiest part about college acceptance. But it is not the most important part. As colleges today are really unregulated investment partnerships, they're far more concerned about your ability to pay, as opposed to your child's overall aptitude.

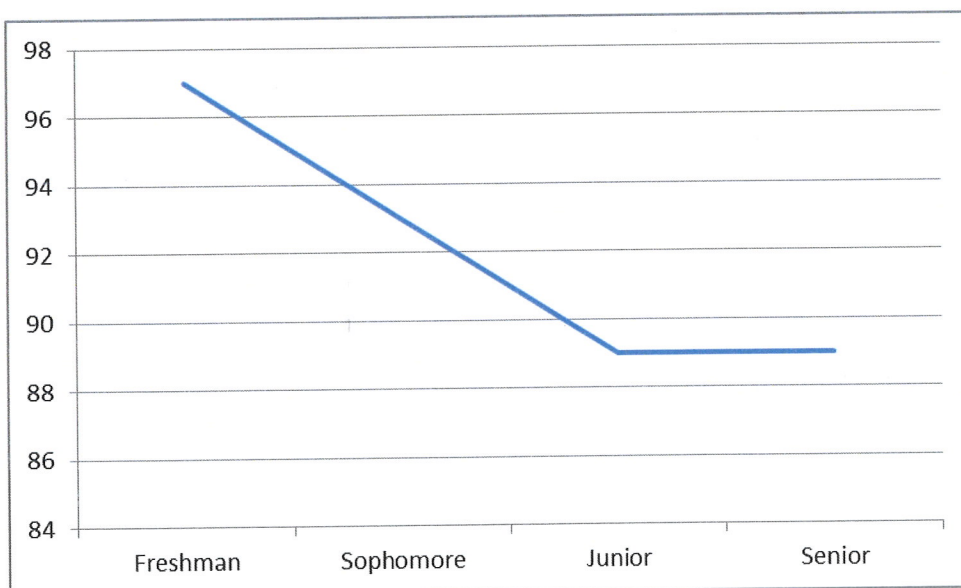
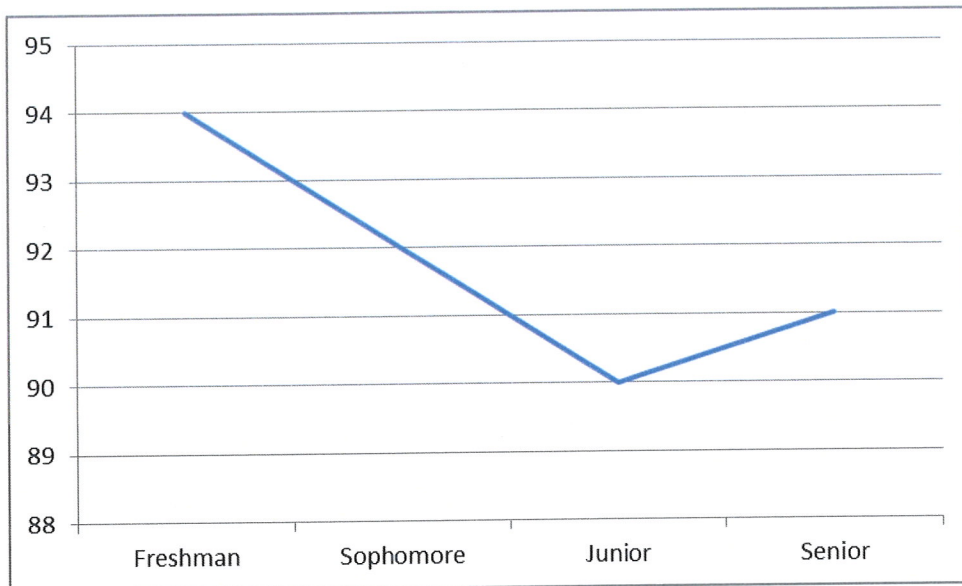
IVY Verbal Review was the first test prep to get a 1600 for a mentally handicapped child utilizing our Boolean Grid Methodology. If you are worried about your score, utilize our IVY Verbal Review products. Visit us at www.ivyverbalreview.com

The following pages show distributions that are acceptable to top schools.





These last two charts explain why most kids get rejected.



Each year's overall cumulative average and the overall trend in grades are important. The overall average is not as important as is the trend in grades. This is why kids with high averages routinely get rejected! The overall average is not as important as is the trend in grades. This is why kids with high averages routinely get rejected! Many students with high averages have stellar grades only in their freshman year. Rarely do kids have their highest grade point in their junior year, the most arduous year in high school. Thus, students should not be overly worried if their overall average is low with respect to their peers.

High school is an important time in your child's life. This short phase precedes the rights of citizenship. I often tell students to spend time learning and focusing on how to better our nation (for example join an ROTC program) as opposed to kissing up to teachers for grades. You will not regret it!

Financial Aid

Some schools give a lot of financial aid. But this aid is a paper adjustment, similar to a coupon. If you shop in outlet stores, for example, many small stores raise their prices the month before their Christmas sales. They then advertise that they have lowered their prices 25%. This is similar to the charade that many schools play with their tuition bases. Few schools provide free housing, food and textbooks as part of their financial aid packages.

Schools advertise a high tuition rate, which is not necessary for the limited property, plant and faculty they have. When you couple in student loans and personal family loans, the tuition at most universities are artificially set high to give the illusion of generous financial aid. For example, Columbia University charges over \$55,000 a year for tuition, board, books and fees. Similarly, Williams College and Lehigh University charge almost the same. But colleges like Williams and Lehigh are located in less expensive rural

hamlets. The latter two colleges also give students significant aid averaging several thousands of dollars.

How should you evaluate a school and its financial aid awards? The same way you would evaluate any large purchase that you make: by looking at the cash flows of the purchase. At IVY Verbal Review, we utilize a discounted cash flow methodology to evaluate a tuition plan. You need to look at the actual cost of the college years and compare them to the after tax cash flow of the post college years. Why after tax? Because most parents have paid the college tuition based on actual cash savings from their after tax incomes.

Most colleges exaggerate the salaries of their graduates. Realize that nearly 67% of students pursue graduate degrees. Universities routinely exclude the wages of part-time students from these averages. Thus, the salaries that are advertised by schools are the average salaries of the remaining students who actually have full-time jobs. This number is much smaller than you are led to believe. The average salary per graduate should be the total compensation of students divided by the total student body who graduated. Therefore, this number would be significantly lower than the statistic that is advertised.

Congress has exempted our colleges and universities from the same truth in advertising laws that other multi-billion dollar enterprises in our country have to adhere to. Many colleges and universities operate much like the feudal estates of the Dark Ages. They have powerful vassals and a round table. They have a private security force. Entrance can occur at any time if you pay the king. Most private universities are exempt from all laws of the US Constitution. So you have to be careful when they state their results. Use your own judgment.

Many top schools have enrollments that exceed twelve hundred students per class. A smart parent would be skeptical if a car dealer sold twelve

hundred cars in one year that had no defects. Parents and students often suspend their intelligence when applying to colleges. You need to ask which majors are actually getting jobs. Where are graduates getting jobs? What cities are they getting jobs in? What industries are they being employed? Logic would tell you that only the top students get jobs. Did they get the job through career placement, or through nepotism? The key is to go to a university where kids actually get jobs through the school.

So what is the average salary of students from a particular school? Typically, a student's salary rarely exceeds the demographic mean produced annually by our federal Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce's Census Bureau for the region that graduate will be employed in. All private sector jobs are based at employment at will, meaning a student may have a high starting salary, but a year later she will be fired from her job. Subsequently, she will not get a similar salary.

Many parents need help in understanding how to evaluate the offers presented by schools. The key is to look at the after tax cash flows generated by the future profession. You need to compare that to the costs of tuition out of pocket. Many professions do not generate the incomes that students think. For example, teaching salaries are subject to annual property tax increases. So if you are in a neighborhood that has limited property tax increases, there is less likelihood that your pay will skyrocket.

So it is important to know what salaries are actually garnered by a college's graduates. Go to the college and ask them for whatever information they can give you. Interview alumni. Look at publication produced by the Government Printing Office as a rubric. Understand that each city has different corporations residing there. Many mid-western and southern states just do not have the high salaried jobs that the colleges are advertising.

In addition, colleges rarely mention that minority students have a very

difficult time getting high paying jobs. Colleges never break out salaries based on race. The numbers would startle you. Few Chinese or African Americans make the high salaries that are touted by private colleges as their norms.

Many of my customers are afraid that minorities will take their jobs. How? Few corporations even interview minorities from top colleges. Fewer corporations will hire minorities that are not subject to affirmative action guidelines. So stop being paranoid about the Asian students in your high school, and realize that nearly all schools will cater to your employment and educational needs. The key is to attend an institution that will provide you the necessary financial aid to pursue the profession you wish to enter.

The chart below presents an accurate depiction of a student's after tax tuition costs and actual after tax earnings from a top school. The chart shows that when you analyze the after tax cash flows of a profession and compare that to the cost of tuition, that it takes approximately 17 years for the student to make a positive return on the initial investment.

What were the assumptions that I used for the above analysis? I utilized \$45,000 for the annual costs of a university. I also assumed a student would average \$28,000 in gross salary per annum in her twenties. And \$42,000 per annum in her thirties, and \$55,000 per annum in her final forty years of employment. These numbers would have to be adjusted lower for minorities as they typically make over 60% of the above earnings. I used a blended tax rate of 35% and that assumes a federal tax rate of 28% and a 7% rate to take into account all the sales and state income taxes a student will pay.



Now obviously, we can adjust these numbers upwards for the graduate tuition and promotions, but the reality is that everyone cannot attend a top medical school (the annual enrollment is limited to 60 or less) or law school (the annual enrollment is limited to 200 or less). Nor can every student become a banker (there are not that many bankers within a bank to begin with).

Few students are aware that there are limits to promotions. Many students do not realize that top professions are saturated and that many professionals in America are just entering their mid-forties, meaning they have at least twenty years ahead of them before their mental faculties deteriorate. So please be wary of the high salaries that are promoted by colleges; the statistics are specious.

Tuition and college education are a significant tax on the savings of middle class Americans. By keeping trillions of dollars overseas in Liechtenstein and Swiss bank accounts, the wealthy have aided in dramatic rises in college tuition. Colleges even charge for computers when computing is now cloud based. No one likes to pay taxes, especially when they are excessive.

IVY Verbal Review highly recommends students to not shoot for pie in the sky and evaluate their career objectives prudently before they enter college. Recall you are attending college for the after tax cash flows the institution can deliver upon graduation. You would never buy a new car and hope it runs the next day or buy a television and pray that it works when you get home. There are no laws to protect you from bogus claims expounded by universities with respect to merchantability. Thus, college is a serious financial endeavor. Evaluate the schools you are choosing with deliberate care. If you would like assistance, call us at IVY Verbal Review.

How To Pick A Major

Few parents are aware of the key statistic that is utilized to make sure colleges work. The most important statistic for any college is how many students stay after the first year which is called its freshmen retention rate. Few parents are aware how important this statistic is for the Department of Education, student loan lenders, and for state higher education authorities. If this statistic gets too low, the college may be closed. This statistic is impossible for parents to coax out of a university, as it is a clear indicator of how the college accepts students. If you do not see the number in writing on the university's letterhead signed by the provost of the institution, then the statistic provided by the university representative is likely to be misleading.

The higher the statistic, the more likely that the college cares what your

major is. For example, some colleges have a retention rate that is over 90%. This means that few students actually were admitted without declaring a major. Those students who have researched the college and know where it's placed in the competitive funnel system of America's higher educational system will rarely transfer to another college because the major is not what they expected it to be. In addition, these students are also more likely to have paid full tuition. Thus, their parents are less likely to permit them to transfer to another school and pay an additional year of tuition.

Many top undergraduate business colleges rarely accept students who have undecided majors as these students may not like the linearity of a business curriculum. More importantly, colleges that have very high tuition costs are less likely to take minority students, as that student may not be able to afford the tuition when their parents are routinely laid off.

The lower the statistic, the less likely that the school cares what your major is. Many colleges that cater to agriculture and manufacturing have low retention rates. These schools tend to have subsidized tuitions. Many students go to these agricultural and mechanical colleges because of their subsidized tuition. Unfortunately, they quickly realize that agriculture is not the specialty for them and transfer out. Few agricultural colleges have the breadth of liberal arts curricula that many students want. Thus, the low retention rate reflects the reality that future dropouts never researched the college's curriculum prior to matriculation.

Although over 90% of American families make under \$42,000 per year, colleges tend to compete for the other 8% of families. The competition is really heated for students who come from the 2% of incomes that earn well above \$110,000 per annum. As I mentioned earlier, most colleges today give limited financial aid.

The university is not a temple or a church. Therefore, it has no moral or legal obligation to accept students who cannot afford its fees. Most

universities do not reveal the incomes of each student receiving scholarships. If they did, parents would see that the majority of scholarship recipients are from affluent families and really do not need the money. Few schools give housing assistance.

The overwhelming majority of top colleges today accept far more girls than they do boys. Top schools overwhelmingly reject boys who have higher grades and test scores. I can prove it! Thus, in my opinion it is nearly impossible for a boy who needs financial aid to matriculate into a top school with an undecided major. This is especially true for Asian males.

Students need to pick majors that are in line with their academic and activity profile. If you are good in science, I recommend that you take a science major. If you are good in English, I recommend that you take an English major. If you are a top athlete with horrible grades, please do not major in biochemistry!

All students really should focus on writing a great essay and also a great writing sample on their standardized exam. These two sets of essays are the keys to admission and academic success. Even if you are a science major, college work consists of nearly 90% written expression (i.e., essay writing, library research, and formal composition). In addition, many lecture halls exceed 150 students. Thus, the professor does not even know if you are ever there. She is busy writing up research papers and applying for grants. She has limited time to teach you. The only way she knows you are alive is through your typed papers and lab books.

The admissions process at many top schools is not based on merit. Nor is it need blind. All you have to do is look at the hundreds of males that are rejected every year from top schools who have high SAT® scores, high averages, and low family incomes.

Most college administrators that visit schools act as if they are bishops from

some powerful church or a vice president from some major multinational corporation. They rarely advise parents that they are gatekeepers to a multi-billion dollar fortune that does not have to pay income taxes and that is exempt from the laws of the United States. They work for multinational corporations (many universities have campuses throughout the world) that can essentially run themselves. This empire needs tuition to make sure those students who get in need little human support.

This is why so many colleges ask for advanced courses. Not because they are necessary for admission (I based this on the fact that all pre-med students must repeat nearly all of the AP® credits they had taken in high school), but because they do not want to pay salaries to graduate students who will provide the human contact necessary to help undergraduates actually learn.

Many college administrators are unwilling to tell parents that there are huge hereditary endowments that specifically support the heirs of our vast hydrocarbon aristocracy. Just like Saudi Arabia, the Rockefellers, Gettys, and Mellons have thousands of heirs that also want to go to top universities. These restricted endowments prevent many admissions departments from accepting the vast majority of white male applicants. Top colleges also reject talented white males if they are a competitive threat to these hereditary lines. High school guidance counselors often say that "affirmative action" was the cause, as opposed to positive discrimination for wealthy applicants.

Few of us can recall that most top colleges (except New York University) were exclusively male prior to the Viet Nam War. Specific heirs of specific families can only utilize these endowments. Most restricted endowments from the 19th century favor males as opposed to female heirs. Thus, if you are not a male descendant from these families, you will have a hard time getting in. This is also why so many top colleges accept so many minority girls.

These endowments serve as a bulwark to prevent Asian and African-American males from getting into their institutions. The majority of the minority males that you see at a top university campus are from overseas; they are not Americans. They are the sons of a pasha, an industrialist, a narco-trafficker or a CIA stooge in a banana republic.

Many Indian males on campus are actually Indian citizens as opposed to American citizens. Many black males are from the Caribbean and from Africa. Most of these students may have had their applications supported by our State Department, as few are American citizens.

Students should realize that schools do have race quotas but that these quotas only apply to Asian and African-American males. Private American colleges, as opposed to state universities, are exempted from following the precepts of the U.S. Constitution. How do I know this? I used to be a ratings analyst at Moody's Investors Service. Private colleges must show how they can pay bond interest and repay the principal to mortgagees and bondholders who finance their dormitories. If they cannot, they will not obtain bond insurance or state guarantees. I have reviewed hundreds of university financial statements and I can unequivocally opine that the admissions policies of every private university in the United States does not have to be in compliance with the articles and amendments of the Constitution. The Department of Education and our Congress have exempted large institutions like Yale University and Harvard University from the laws that apply to other profitable businesses.

I am also stating this because many students often tell me that they are worried that an African-American male student in their high school who has low grades will get in because of affirmative action. I routinely advise them that the policy should be called "affirmative inaction." I often assure them that it is nearly impossible for African-American and Asian males to get into most private universities today.

There are few middle class African-Americans who can afford the \$45,000+ tuition at top colleges. Sure, many kids get accepted, but they are not given the necessary financial aid, paid internships, or housing that will enable them to matriculate at private colleges.

College offices in many private high schools routinely state that colleges favor African-American males through affirmative action policies. This is not true at all, especially when you look at top co-educational campuses which are dominated by females. By the time that kids realize that they cannot get in (the first semester of their senior year in high school), it is too late to change the admissions trajectories that they are on. This is why I recommend boys to come and see me in their freshmen year.

What do I suggest students should do when it comes to selecting a major? I suggest that they pick one that the aristocracy will not pick. So, a middle-class male should pick English, History, or Math as his major, as opposed to Political Science, International Relations, or Economics. Obviously, if you are wealthy, pick Undecided.

Universities today have broad license to accept whomever they please and to reject the vast majority of Asian males that apply for any reason. The key to gaining admission is to prepare the application essays with care. Moreover, these essays must match the psychometric subscores from the SAT® subject test essay. At IVY Verbal Review, students take our IVY Composition course prior to taking their SAT®. We instruct them how to write the essay better using our proven MC123 technique. Visit www.ivyverbalreview.com for free lesson plans and notes.

Preparing The Activity List Section And Essay

Colleges are loathe to admit that the activity list is a critical part of the application process. It is essentially a proxy test for them to see how well

adjusted you are. More importantly, the biggest mistake students make is to think a lot of activities are what a college is looking for.

This is absolutely not the case. High schools continue to perpetuate the myth that students need to pursue activities to make themselves more acceptable to higher education. Colleges also perpetuate myths to create jobs for their unemployable physical education majors and athletes. For example, thousands of men and women graduate in the state of Pennsylvania with physical education majors.

High school students are told to take so many AP® courses and pursue so many activities. This creates a cycle of paranoia and neurosis that lasts for decades preventing the teenager from psychosexually adjusting to marriage in adulthood. They are not told that nearly two thirds of male students at top universities and colleges get in through hereditary endowments (scholarships designed just for the descendants of their families). Few students have little time to rest and relax and actually question the admissions process. Racial mythologies are expounded to minority groups to encourage application to endless AP® courses.

Students are unaware that their personalities develop during the ages of 14 - 17. By retarding this development with endless physical activities and superfluous pedagogical pursuits, many students are unable to adjust to the rigors of university study nor gain the necessary maturity to handle the vicissitudes of adult married life. Parents and young adults must comprehend that adolescence is a finite stage that must end; it should not be extended into a child's third decade of life! Thus, the college admissions process actually harms children by cajoling them to pursue so many expensive extracurricular activities, even though they have no critical role in admissions.

Top universities graduate so many members of the global aristocracy that categorically do not want to do any form of remunerative labor. Many

majors will be permanently unemployed. So universities need to convince naive high school students to take up endless private lessons for an improved shot at admissions. Private training by failed athletes and musicians requires you to hire one of the legions of unemployable imbeciles that graduate from top schools.

Here are the activities that the student in this book pursued (we are not kidding):

Clubs and Activities

Asian Pacific American Youth Alliance	2 hrs/week	40 weeks
Bias Awareness Planning Committee	1hr/week	26 weeks
Asian Cultural Understanding	2 hrs/week	30 weeks
Students Against Latin Stereotypes Alliance	One day a year	
Women's Action Network	2 hrs/week	30 weeks

Performing Arts

Piano	2 hrs/week	16 years
Glee Club	3 hrs/week	15 weeks
Choir	4 hrs/week	30 weeks
Dance Company	5 hrs/week	20 weeks

Community Service

School Nurse	2 hrs/week	40 weeks
Babysitting	75 hrs/week	6 weeks

Work History

Italy Overseas Program	N/A	6 weeks
Asian Studies Program Internship	8 hrs/week	12 weeks

This is some list. We did not know if she was the daughter of Prometheus or Apollo! Clearly, this list is too long. She pursued so many activities that we quickly realized that this woman lived for school. She had little time for friends and social interaction unless it was on a competitive level. If she put the above list into her college application to a top school, she would get

rejected outright.

Thus the list was culled down to four activities:

Piano	2 hrs/week	16 years
Choir	4 hrs/week	30 weeks
Dance Company	5 hrs/week	20 weeks
Babysitting	75 hrs/week	6 weeks

Of course, this was upsetting for her as she would not have done all the other activities if they were not important. Thus, the few activities you have in high school, the more likely you will develop more lasting friendships that will enable you to become a wholesome mature human being. The hardest thing that this student could not realize due to her youth was that her shorter activity list made her look more mature than her pedantic contemporaries.

Answering The Activity Essay

The Activity Essay is a critical aspect of the application process. The biggest mistake students make is to write about an activity that will impress the college admissions committee. Admissions officers are looking for diversity of interests and utilize this essay to make sure the student is well adjusted for university life.

This essay should be written in less than fifty words as that signifies that it is a fun activity. If the essay is written in 200 words or more, it is viewed as an academic activity.

We agreed that she would write an essay about singing, as it would be in sharp contrast to her high academic grade point. Finally, we agreed that she would write about a favorite song and how it made her feel singing in a group. The overall essay was quickly written, as she actually liked to sing.

Here it is:

I sang solo for the Christmas Pageant this year. When I sing, I feel very peaceful. I really enjoy singing, and performing is very exhilarating.

I am serious. That is how long it was. The biggest mistake students make is to write lengthy activity essays. Unfortunately, admissions officers do not want to read a lengthy essay for an activity that is not fun. The longer the essay, the more likely the committee will think you are a pedantic student.

Top colleges are forced to accept incompetent students from the aristocracy due to restrictive hereditary endowments. The few students that they accept through open admissions must be interesting and fun. If you ever have met an interesting and fun person, you could easily describe them in less than fifty words. Why would such a succinct description not also apply to an interesting activity?

Answering the Main Essay

Personal Statement

1. Relate a significant event in your life.
2. Detail how someone has influenced you.
3. Discuss a matter that is of importance to you.
4. Detail how a fictional or historical character has transformed you.
5. Choose your own topic.

Each of these essays can to be answered similarly. In addition, the answers to your question must match your background, your grades, your zip code, your sex and the psychometric subscores of your SAT® subject essay. This overall coherence must be achieved in less than 525 words.

The best question to answer is the first topic as experiences define us and will define us throughout our college life. What type of experience should you use? The key is to look at a series of events and see how they actually relate to your personality. Recall from the earlier discussion that the college application is a psychological battery. You are essentially adding data for your future success or destroying your chances of getting in.

Students mistakenly answer the question that is asked literally by the application. This is a surefire way to get rejected. Few students have notable experiences that by itself would get them past the acceptance hurdle. The key issue is to highlight a particular experience and its relevance to you and to your future. Experiential knowledge is real and is predictive of future ability.

We recommend that students pick the experience topic as it really highlights what colleges are looking for.

Do not be scared. Please understand that most of us have never had anything amazing happen to us when we were young. The essay is not looking for your meetings with the President. However, the essay is asking

you to relate the valuable lessons from a particular experience to an adult audience. This book will focus on the answer to this question.

Even though each topic has a different thesis, the answer to each must contain the answers to the following three questions: (a) tell us about yourself, (b) tell us why you want to attend our college, and (c) tell us what you want to major in.

The critical issue is to write three essays first. Each one should be at least 500 words in length. This way you make the mistake of putting in superfluous data into your draft and not into your final essay.

Here are the initial draft essays that a student wrote for the common essay to several schools focusing on an experience. It is a copy from our actual files.

I never watched Saturday morning cartoons.

I missed countless birthday parties, sleepovers, and late-night prank calls. Beginning at age 5, waking up every Saturday morning was just another reminder that I was being pulled away from the typical American girlhood experience. Instead, I would be sucked into a yellow cheese bus headed for Queens, miles away from my friends, who were painting their toenails into a rainbow of color. There I would sit, every Saturday, for six hours, wondering why my parents were sending me to Japanese Weekend School. I was intent on speaking as much English there as possible, despite warnings from teachers. Speaking English became my form of rebellion; I clung to it because I felt that it was my unbreakable link to the outside world. Speaking English would lift me out of the dingy public school where Japanese School took place and allow me to daydream about my connection with the outer world. It was almost cruel to know that outer world was so close -the building itself was rented from the City of New York, just one borough away from my home. Yet this place was utterly foreign and hardly seemed real. No matter how much Japanese was spoken in class, my eyes would fall upon posters, projects, and etchings in the desks scribbled in clumsy English letters. During classes, I became a voyeur of another first grade class. I could sense that we Japanese students did not belong and wanted to turn my back and escape into familiarity. Yet weeks quickly became months, and I soon found diplomas falling into my hands, despite my desire to escape. Something inside urged me to remain in the school of outsiders.

Despite my reluctance to accept my Japanese identity through Japanese School, I accumulated a fair grasp of the language. Casual conversation came to me naturally, so it would frustrate me immensely whenever I found myself struggling to accurately portray a complex idea. I knew what I intended to say, but these ideas would only stretch into form with English.

Recently, the Introduction to Poetry course at my "American School" posed a new problem. Matsuo Basho's haiku, "Leaving the House of a Friend" appeared in our poetry packet. Although it lay before me in plain English, I was utterly confused, since I felt that I could imagine the moment that the translator was trying to capture, but a language, different from its origin, was an inadequate in portraying the significance of such a scene. The simplicity of traditional Japanese haiku was lost in a stream of English

Angelina Ballerina, Japanese grammar constructions found in haiku may be a throwback to the 17 syllable poem. Since the subject belongs at the end of Japanese phrase, it usually appears in the end of a haiku. This structure allows for a beautiful scene to be depicted, but without substance till the subject appears and the depth of the poem arrives. Having the grammar reversed in English wouldn't lead to the reader experiencing an epiphany, but may instead make the artist sound illiterate.

The reason why I am bashing the translation of haiku is that I'm simply not sure if it can be done. I also don't mean to discourage anyone who isn't fluent in Japanese from appreciating haiku as art, but it is necessary to acknowledge that translation of this type of poem is almost impossible. Moreover, translation of the haiku is no longer the work of the artist. By denouncing translated haiku in this manner, I do not mean to bash the reader of haiku. It is of no fault of the reader's that there is such thing as an esoteric art form. The main barrier blocking the understanding of haiku is no different from any type of obstacle of communication: there is simply a lack of words. Japanese haiku averts English translation in that readers cannot absorb the meanings and subtle nuances of foreign words, and Japanese language cannot provide them in any other form.

Thus began my quest for the best translation, that I, a bilingual person, could construct. My responsibility as a speaker of English was to capture Basho's genius, and my responsibility as a speaker of Japanese was to stretch the legacy of Basho's genius to those even he would haven't expected to understand his work. So:

□□□□□□□□□□

□*Natsu-kusa ya Tsuhamono domo ga yume no ato*□

Summer grass, you have become the fate of warrior's dreams.

Summer grass in Japan is different considered to be from spring grass. It is at its height of growth, and any mention of this *kigo* suggests an image of long, thin grass that billows with the wind under the warm sun. Basho contrasts a very ordinary type of beauty with the weight of a past battlefield. It would be difficult to imagine that this pleasant spot was one a place of mass bloodshed, but perhaps having the knowledge of the violent past makes the summer grass appear greener.

The process of translating this haiku led me to realized that being bilingual was far from being a curse, as I had once believed on those tedious Saturday mornings of my

words and the specific emotion that this haiku was meant to evoke was no longer clear. Not only did the translation frustrate me, but it was even more frustrating to think that I could understand what Matsuo Basho had originally intended for the haiku, and yet I was still was not able to explain the brilliance of haiku in English, my preferred language. Though an argument has been made for the possibility of "good" translations of poetry, I cannot help thinking that anything translated into another language no longer belongs to the artist, but represents the translator's version.

I recalled one assignment at Japanese School that had been particularly difficult: translating an English children's book into Japanese. At the time, it seemed like a somewhat challenging assignment, but I was confident that I could do both languages justice by writing an accurate and compelling version of Angelina Ballerina. As I began the translation process, however, I realized the immense responsibility of accurately portraying not only the plot, but the personalities of the characters, the intent and significance of the dialogue, and most importantly, accurately evoking the same emotion as the original. I had envisioned translation to be just like switching rails on one train of thought; both tracks would be moving in the same direction, parallel to one another. And I, normally able to casually switch back and forth between the two, felt that this assignment would be simple.

With this thought I return to the haiku from the poetry class. The translator struggled with the translation process as I struggled to translate Angelina Ballerina. One of the many differences between our experiences, however, is that haiku draws heavily upon *kigo*, or seasonal words. *Kigo* are an example of the Japanese reverence for nature, stressed in both Zen Buddhism and Shinto. Thus, seasonal symbols represent an intuitive understanding of nature in the greater Japanese culture. Trying to explain *kigo* to a non-Japanese would be difficult because Joe Schmoe of New York wouldn't necessarily know that dragonflies are an obvious reference to late summer/early fall and would feel no nostalgia for the warmth of late summer sunsets. Joe Schmoe probably doesn't even stop to think that the Japanese wilderness is vastly different from Riverside Drive; his images of "nature" would then collide with Matsuo Basho's.

Further complicating the translation process is the way Japanese grammar functions in the reverse order of English grammar. Although not a major issue for

childhood. Knowing that I have the potential to recreate Basho's genius eliminates memories of teachers who could never pronounce my name of the first day of American school. I can now appreciate that I am a part of a highly unique group of people: I have grown up with two languages rattling inside my head. I have been brought up in two strikingly different cultures, provided for me by my two schools. All my life I had been living with so many "two's" that it took seventeen years to realize that these polar opposites coexist as one, within me.

Notice its sheer length. Her counselor advised her incorrectly that the essay length did not matter. I disagreed with the advice completely as the student was not intimately familiar with the admissions process of top schools. The essay was just too long. Moreover, her flow of writing mirrored her pedantic personality.

Colleges hate pedantic personalities. Such a personality trait is great for high school where you can memorize your way to an **A**, but irrelevant for higher studies that require critical thinking. The overt character trait would guarantee her rejection.

Her counselor also advised her parents repeatedly that she had the best chance at applying to second tier colleges. I disagreed, as I knew what her competition was like in over thirty different high schools in the Northeastern United States. Her grades reflected one of the patterns indicated earlier in the book. What she needed to write was a better essay. To correct the essay, the first thing I did was interview her methodically to determine what her actual interests were.

I quickly learned through several hours of interviews that she survived a bitter divorce between her parents. What kept her sane through her ordeal was her love of paintings. So I asked her why she didn't write about a painting as opposed to poetry. She said that she felt poetry was more sophisticated. I told her the essay had to be about her, not what others thought would be sophisticated.

Our discussions revealed that she had actually been to Florence, Italy and that she had seen many Renaissance art works. More importantly she worked in the summer to save the money to go on the trip. So I asked her to write about one piece that intrigued her. She advised that she liked Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. Why not write about it as if you were standing in front of it?

Then I told her to incorporate her summer work experience into the essay. I asked her what observation meant and what cognition was. She advised that she did not know. So I asked her to go to the library and do some research.

She started researching psychology textbooks. After two days, she repeated the standard rhetoric of psychologists that makes it sound as if we all see things and hear things similarly. So I asked her what sources she thought other kids would utilize. Wouldn't they utilize the same Freudian nonsense to describe the behaviors of humans?

So I asked her to look East. I asked her to read a philosopher named Krishnamurti and see what he said about the concept of observation. She had never heard about Krishnamurti and was certain that nobody else in America had heard about him either. I asked her to delete most of her essay, as it was garbage. The essay needed to be more concrete so a lot of it had to be bowdlerized.

A few days later she came back with the following rewrite.

She was effervescent, beautiful! Her timeless femininity leaped out at me from behind the glass casing. Here stood Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, unlike any photograph or postcard I'd ever seen of it. Completely taken aback, I could not distinguish whether my disbelief was provoked by the immense beauty of the painting, or for my thinking so. Until that moment of confrontation, I had always dismissed it as just another painting and my change in attitude demanded that I study the piece from a number of distances. From far away I would be inundated by its ethereal luminescence; (then, standing from a distance where I was dangerously close to the laser alarm, I relived Botticelli's enchanting brushstrokes) Her incandescent body stood uncontested while other masterpieces orbited around her. This was the goddess that I had envisioned, completely unlike the woman I saw lying lifelessly in postcards. I lost myself inside Botticelli's vision, for his painting had opened a window to an enchanted garden. *(The fake version will say: The more i looked at he painting before me, the more i felt in love with it.)

Suddenly, the thought struck me that ~~art~~^{beauty} can only be fully appreciated in its original form, for only the original captures an ephemeral message. This thought lay in conjunction with my previous attempt at translating one of Matsuo Basho's haikus. I had envisioned translation to be just like switching rails on one train of thought; both tracks would be moving in the same direction, parallel to one another. Instead, my version was:

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Summer grass, you have become the fate of warrior's dreams.

In Japan, summer grass is considered different from spring grass: it is at its height of growth, and the word itself suggests an image of long, thin grass billowing with the wind under the warm sun. Basho contrasts a very ordinary type of beauty with the weight of a past battlefield, suggesting that perhaps having the knowledge of the violent past makes the summer grass appear greener. I soon realized that no English versions were adequate in portraying the simple epiphany that is haiku; thus it became necessary for me to add a lengthy explanation at the end of the translation, and I became dismayed at the idea that translation does not exist.

With this thought, Krishnamurti's wisdom came rushing back to me, in particular, his belief that, "when there is space between you and the object that you are observing you will know there is no love". The space, which, in my case, was the translation and the photographs of Venus, prevented me from directly connecting to the art and precluded deeper insight. Without a direct connection to the original works, I, both as an observer and a translator, was handling mirages of artwork; these were external substitutes. It is no wonder that I was then unable to connect with Botticelli's brilliance through a postcard, or portray Basho's genius in another language. In fact, I had synthesized "replacement art" by translating the haiku. I began to think, aren't these substitutes just allegories that hinder observers from embracing the artist's true vision?

As I pondered in the Uffizi Museum to Debussy's Preludes, I remembered how I came to Florence in the first place. The summer before last I worked as a live-in babysitter for twin three year olds in Brooklin, Maine. I spent long, twelve hour days chasing after those two, despite being the one person of color in what felt like the entire state without contact with anyone remotely my age. Yet I rarely felt lonely; the Atlantic would greet me every morning from my bedroom window and the stars lulled me to sleep. The wind would turn pages as I read, and spider webs put my summer math packet to shame. I only felt sorry that my mother could not experience the delight of discovering wild berries along the driveway through the postcard I had sent her. At sixteen, I caught

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(A)

(C)

(B)

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my first glimpse at nature's staggering beauty. The calculated pictures I took there were futile attempts at capturing the vibrancy of life. I could not contain the phenomenon of natural beauty, but after three weeks without miso soup I returned home with everlasting memories, and money to pursue my dream of studying art history in Italy.

So as I encountered masterpieces and recalled my own crude attempts at art, I began to understand that artists, like Botticelli, Basho, and even myself, all grapple with the impossible: capturing life in a non-living form. In so doing, artists extend the horizon of human capability and deliberately trample hindrances of human creation. With every new piece I analyze, I become more certain that the artist is society's observer, philosopher, and teacher. The artist ushers spectators into his/her vision of the ideal world, and never do the observers leave unchanged. Each piece of art is a new beginning for the spectator, and I, as a lover of art, want to constantly be evolving, thinking, and beginning. I want to study at Harvard so that I may immerse myself in a diversity of thought, study new forms of art, and discover the infinitude of enchanted windows that will only open with knowledge and opportunity.

(E)

experiencing

student

that offer a vista full of

This is the actual mark up from our files showing what to remove and questions for her. Small things had to be fixed up here. All of it had to do with style, as opposed to pure content. In addition, I did not want to circumvent the guidance process at her high school and impressed on her the need to show it to her teachers and guidance counselors.

She was not aware that top colleges have moles and spies in high schools that they utilize to get private information about students. Thus, there was a need for others to see her essay and be convinced that she thought it up, wrote it, and more importantly that they all had a hand in editing it. Consequently, she went to guidance, her English teacher, her Art teacher, and also to some teachers from earlier grades.

At IVY Verbal Review, we never interfere with the sacrosanct relationship between teachers and students. We do not pay nor have we ever paid guidance counselors to lead students to us. We never represent schools or colleges. Our primary job is to provide information and stimulus to students to write a better application that focuses on their talents.

I asked her to reorder the paragraphs and put it into the A, B, C, D, and E format that I indicated. **Here is the following rewrite. Again this is a copy from our actual files.**

She was effervescent, beautiful! Her timeless femininity leaped out at me from behind the glass casing. Here stood Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, unlike any photograph or postcard I'd ever seen of it. Completely taken aback, I could not distinguish whether my disbelief was provoked by the immense beauty of the painting, or for my thinking so. Until that moment of confrontation, I had always dismissed it as just another painting and my change in attitude demanded that I study the piece from a number of distances. From far away I would be inundated by its ethereal luminescence; then, standing from a distance where I was dangerously close to the laser alarm, I relived Botticelli's enchanting brushstrokes. Her incandescent body stood uncontested while other masterpieces orbited around her. This was the goddess that I had envisioned, completely unlike the woman I saw lying lifelessly in postcards. ~~I lost myself inside Botticelli's vision, for his painting had opened a window to an enchanted garden.~~

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Can a photo capture the phenomenon of natural beauty? Suddenly, the thought struck me that art can only be fully appreciated in its original form, for only the original captures an ephemeral message. This thought lay in conjunction with my previous attempt at translating one of Matsuo Basho's haikus. I had envisioned translation to be just like switching rails on one train of thought; both tracks would be moving in the same direction, parallel to one another. Instead, my version was:

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I soon realized that no English versions were adequate in portraying the simple epiphany that is haiku; ~~thus it became necessary for me to add a lengthy explanation at the end of~~

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So as I encountered masterpieces and recalled my own crude attempts at art, I began to understand that artists, like Botticelli, Basho, and even myself, all grapple with

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the impossible: capturing life in a non-living form. In so doing, artists extend the horizon of human capability and deliberately trample hindrances of human creation. With every new piece I analyze I become more certain that the artist is society's observer, philosopher, and teacher. The artist ushers spectators into his/her vision of the ideal world, and never do the observers leave unchanged. Each piece of art is a new beginning for the spectator, and I, as a lover of art, want to constantly be evolving, thinking, and beginning. I want to study at Harvard so that I may immerse myself in a diversity of thought, study new forms of art, and discover the infinitude of enchanted windows that will only open with knowledge and opportunity.

She incorporated her teachers' valuable comments and this is the final product.

She was effervescent, beautiful! Her timeless femininity leaped out at me from behind the glass casing. Here stood Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, unlike any photograph or postcard I'd ever seen of it. Completely taken aback, I could not distinguish whether my astonishment was provoked by the immense beauty of the painting, or for my thinking so. Until that moment of confrontation, I had always dismissed it as just another painting and my change in attitude demanded that I study the piece from a number of distances. From far away I would be inundated by its ethereal luminescence; then, standing from a distance where I was dangerously close to the laser alarm, I relived Botticelli's enchanting brushstrokes. Her incandescent body stood uncontested while other masterpieces orbited around her. This was the goddess that I had envisioned, completely unlike the woman I saw lying lifelessly in art books. That afternoon, Venus gazed at me as if she was looking out a window to an enchanted garden.

Can a photo capture the phenomenon of natural beauty? Suddenly, the thought struck me that art can only be fully appreciated in its original form, for only the original can capture ephemeral beauty. This thought lay in conjunction with my previous attempt at translating Matsuo Basho's haikus. I had envisioned translation to be just like switching rails on one train of thought: both tracks would be moving in the same direction, parallel to one another. Instead my version was:

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dreams

I soon realized that no English versions were adequate in portraying the simple epiphany that is haiku; English just cannot capture the nuances of Japanese.

Maybe Krishnamurti's wisdom is true? His view that "when there is space between you and the object that you are observing, you will know that there is no love" seems poignant to me now. The space, which, in my case, was the photographs of Venus and the translation of Basho, prevented me from directly connecting to the art and precluded deeper insight. Without a direct connection to the original works, I both as an observer and a translator was handling mirages of artwork; these were external substitutes. It is no wonder that I was then unable to connect with Botticelli's brilliance through postcard, or portray Basho's genius in another language.

I recalled my own crude attempts at art and soon I began to understand that artists, like Botticelli and Basho, all grapple with the impossible: capturing life in a non-living form. In so doing, artists extend the horizon of human capability and deliberately trample hindrances of human creation. With every new piece I analyze I became more certain that the artist is society's observer, philosopher and teacher. The artist ushers spectators into his vision of the ideal world, and never do the observers leave unchanged. Each piece of art is a new beginning for the spectator, and I as a student of art, want to be constantly evolving and learning. Furthermore, New York University beckons me to discover the openings of enchanted windows to vistas of knowledge.

Notice the succinct, cogent and idiomatic speech. Notice how she has effortlessly hidden her pedantic nature. Notice the actual beauty of the final language. Now compare it to the original. **Wow, what a difference IVY Verbal Review made!**

Students take our IVY Verbal Review product line to help them improve their chances for admission. We are the only service that helps students edit their essays. The price of that service is included in our test prep fees.

Epilogue:

The student now has a great relationship with her parents. Her father is so proud his daughter got into the Ivy League and has showered her with admiration. Her mother is so proud of her daughter's acceptance into so many top colleges. I told them that they and her high school teachers did the hard work. I had only spent a couple of days with her. After all it was they who had raised and educated such a beautiful child. And I thanked them for the opportunity to serve them.