

Remarks by U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam, Craig Allen
JIS Higher Education Evening
Arts Center, Jerudong International School
Tuesday, January 19th 2016 from 7:30pm – 8:00pm

Let me started out by saying that I am so happy to be here today for three reasons:

First, I and my wife Micheline are proud JIS parents; indeed, our son Christopher has just applied to ten American universities for next year and thus we have some very recent practical experience to share. But, JIS has a lot of great students and all of you are welcome to study in the United States.

Second, applying for university is one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. As a parent, we all want our kids to have the best educational experience possible – no matter what the cost. And, I am sure that in the U.S. you will find a competitive offering, if not the world's best.

Third, I am happy to be here because the U.S. is by far the market leader in international education. The United States has approximately two times as many foreign students as the U.K. It is nice to be the market leader. And, we are grateful that you are considering the U.S. as a possible destination to continue your education.

Since I arrived in Brunei Darussalam a year ago, I have often been asked what U.S. colleges and universities can offer to students from Brunei Darussalam. With approximately 4,000 globally accredited U.S. universities and colleges, it is not easy to give a simple answer to this is a very reasonable question. So tonight I will talk to you about what I consider to be some of the most important things to know for parents and students thinking about attending a U.S. university.

First, it is important to mention that America's colleges and universities, in addition to their excellence, boast a great diversity. Some are public, others private; some are located in urban settings, while others have smaller, idyllic rural campuses. The United States is renowned for its major research institutions that offer hundreds of specialized degrees at all levels, as well as for its smaller colleges and universities that focus on undergraduate education or serve the nation by providing vocational education.

All over the world, other universities, graduate education programs and research centers look to the U.S. for inspiration. Every single year, America welcomes more and more international students to her shores – a record 974,926 foreign students were studying in the United States in 2014/2015. We are the world's number one education destination.

This diversity is one of the great strengths of U.S. higher education. The best students and academics from all over the world study and teach in the United States. This is the secret of our success.

Since 2010, more than 200 students from Brunei Darussalam have gone to the United States to study, and that figure is continuing to increase. Just this past year the number of Bruneians studying in the USA increased by 22% over the previous year.

A qualification from a U.S. university or college gives you everything you need for success. I have been very happy to learn, in fact, that a number of Bruneians in high positions in government and industry, including ministers and former ministers, studied at U.S. universities.

A second great strength of the U.S. system of higher education is its flexibility. U.S. universities rank at the top of almost every international university ranking because they can offer what other university systems cannot.

Students at U.S. universities and colleges can choose from a vast number of academic specializations and courses. They have the option to move from one specialization, or even institution, to another. In my case, I was able to complete not just one but two majors for my bachelor's degree at the University of Michigan. I completed a B.A. in Political Science and Asian Studies in 1979 and a few years later received a Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

But all this diversity and flexibility can also make the U.S. system of education confusing for some international students. So how should you go about understanding the differences between the thousands available options?

Here are three pieces of advice that I hope will be helpful:

- 1. Prioritize.** Sit down with parents or teachers and figure out what is important. Location, cost, style of learning, prestige, and disciplines offered can all be key factors, but you should think about what is most important for you.
- 2. Read extensively.** U.S. universities publish mountains of information on their websites. Read as much as possible. Program curricula, university mission, cost and financial aid information—everything. When you stay up late reading about a professor's research, or your heart beats faster for a class offered, you know you've found a place you'll love.
- 3. Ask questions.** U.S. admissions officers will usually answer any questions they get from students. Make sure your question is clear and concise, but don't be afraid to ask it. You can also find current students through social networks, or set up an appointment with your school counselor or the U.S. Embassy's EducationUSA advisor

As a parent, and as a diplomat working outside my home country, I know well the fears that can accompany taking – or sending – our children to other countries to be educated. But I also know what children can gain from an overseas education. I see, for example, how my son and daughter benefit from their education in Brunei Darussalam.

With this information session, I hope that the parents in the audience will learn that U.S. universities are committed to welcoming and caring for your sons and daughters, while providing them with an education that is second to none.

And last, I hope that today you will come away with a better understanding of the U.S. educational system and with the realization that it can be a strong partner in your quest to help the next generation achieve the success that it deserves.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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