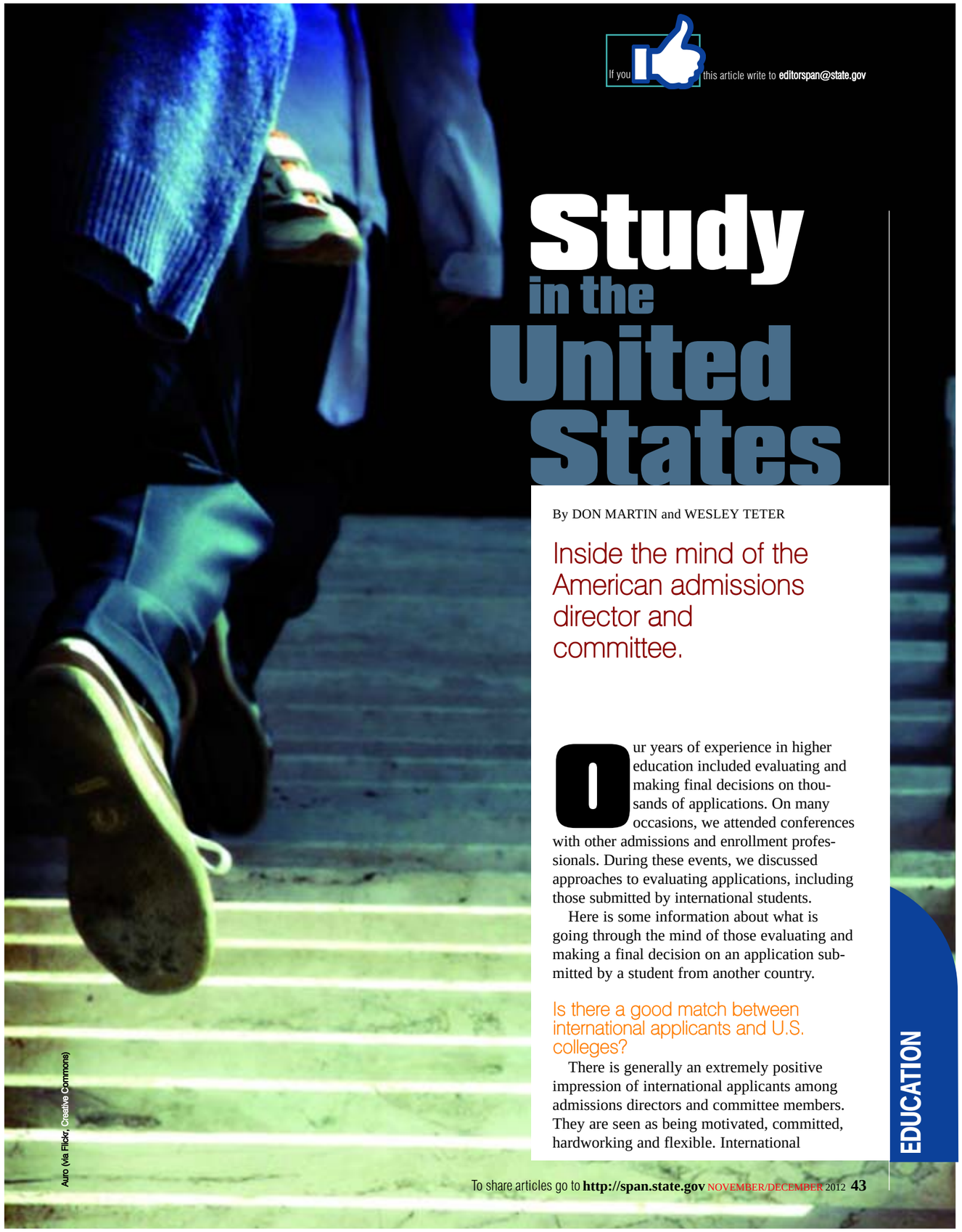

Auro (via Flickr, Creative Commons)

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Study in the United States

By DON MARTIN and WESLEY TETER

Inside the mind of the American admissions director and committee.

Our years of experience in higher education included evaluating and making final decisions on thousands of applications. On many occasions, we attended conferences with other admissions and enrollment professionals. During these events, we discussed approaches to evaluating applications, including those submitted by international students.

Here is some information about what is going through the mind of those evaluating and making a final decision on an application submitted by a student from another country.

Is there a good match between international applicants and U.S. colleges?

There is generally an extremely positive impression of international applicants among admissions directors and committee members. They are seen as being motivated, committed, hardworking and flexible. International

students consider studying abroad to be a privilege and are committed to making the most of that opportunity. This is certainly the case with both undergraduate and graduate students from India.

There is also a general impression that international students will make every effort to become part of the educational environment they join.

How many international students can be admitted?

Contrary to what many think, enrollment goals are generally not determined by the admissions director. They are most often set by the senior administration, and in some instances, the faculty. Many factors are considered in the determination of enrollment goals—the number of men and women, the number of U.S. minority and international students, average GPA, average score for standardized tests, and more. While the enrollment goals may not always seem understandable from a strictly objective point of view, there are usually sound reasons for each and every one of them.

There will almost always be an international student enrollment target provided

Pontus Eden :erg (via www.sxc.hu) and Joist (via Flickr), design by Vilmikata

Undergraduate Applicants

Distinguish yourself in a highly competitive applicant pool with:

* ultracareful selection of schools where you have a realistic chance for successful competition for admission with aid;
* distinguished academic record, excellent SAT/ACT and TOEFL/IELTS scores, if required;
* leadership and extracurricular interests;
* great essays;
* and a neat and complete application.

Your EducationUSA adviser can teach you how to select schools and research sources of financial aid.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

UNDERGRADUATE FINANCIAL AID

Edited by Wesley Teter and Nancy Keteku

Design by Vilimkata

facts

AVERAGE COST

$29,657
Public Four-Year Out-of-State
(College Board, 2011)

$38,589
Private Nonprofit Four-Year
(College Board, 2011)

More funding for undergraduate study is available from private institutions.

81%
of international undergraduate students relied primarily on personal and family funds
(Open Doors, 2011).

10%
relied primarily on funds from the U.S. college or university
(Open Doors, 2011).

$7,700,000,000
in financial assistance was offered to international students in 2010–11 *(NAFSA, 2011).*

FINANCIAL AID

More than
1,000
American colleges and universities award financial aid

above
$10,000
per international student,

or have a net cost below
$20,000
(Keteku, 2012).

Funding is also available for student athletes!
Over
1,000
U.S. colleges and universities offer athletic scholarships.
For example, the University of Michigan spends
$16,000,000
a year on scholarships for domestic and international student athletes *(USA Today, 2011).*

COMPETITIVENESS

College admission isn't as competitive as you might think.

75%
Close to 500 four-year colleges accept more than 75% of applicants says the College Board. If students and families can pay $20,000 or more per year, admission with PARTIAL AID is not difficult.

25%
Fewer than 100 colleges in the U.S. are highly selective, which means they accept less than 25% of applicants
(College Board, 2011).

Keep in mind: there are
20
TOP STUDENTS
from all over the world competing for each full scholarship, so you must distinguish yourself among a pool of outstanding students.

tips AND RESOURCES

THE KEYS TO FINANCIAL AID – RESEARCH AND ENHANCEMENT

- Success requires research, enhancement, confidence, and self-discipline.
- Reality check: The more funding you need, the greater the competition. The most competitive colleges and universities in the United States admit <5% of international students applying for financial aid.
- Each school has its own budget and policy for international financial aid. With the right amount of planning and research, study in the United States can be made affordable with high returns on your investment.
- Be prepared to spend hours, days, weeks on selection of schools. No shortcuts! The **College Board** has an excellent search engine to help you find your best fit.

ENHANCE YOUR APPLICATION

- Find the right college for YOU! To get started, explore **Your 5 Steps to U.S. Study** from EducationUSA.
- Remember: Go the extra mile. Don't accept, "Is this good enough?" Ask what else you can do to strengthen your application.
- Your statement of purpose should illustrate your personal and academic strengths, not restate your résumé.

REMEMBER: Demonstrate worth before financial need. How will you contribute to campus life?

to the director. Sometimes this number will be flexible but most of the time it is set in stone. Let's say, for instance, the enrollment goal for incoming international students at an institution is 20 percent, and the overall incoming class size goal is 450. That means the director will be responsible for the enrollment of 90 international students at the start of the academic year. If that number is 80 or lower, or 100 or higher, the administration will most likely not be happy.

Do international applicants follow directions?

In most cases, it is assumed that international students complete good applications, and that they are able to follow directions well. This is extremely important. In the mind of an admissions committee member or the admissions director, someone who cannot follow directions as an applicant will be less likely to follow directions as a student.

Is the evaluation process different at more selective institutions?

Obviously, institutions with a greater reputation tend to draw more applications. In addition, two-year colleges have seen an increase in applications due to the number of undergraduate applicants pursuing this option. The more applications there are, the smaller the acceptance percentage, and the greater the competition for admission. The evaluation of applicants is pretty much the same, regardless of the number of candidates being considered. But with more selective programs, many qualified applicants are denied, not because their applications are lacking in any way, but because there are so many outstanding applicants and not enough seats in the incoming class to accommodate all of them. It is important to keep in mind that there are literally hundreds of outstanding institutions in the United States. If you take your time, and do your homework, you will discover some excellent colleges or universities that may not have initially been on your "wish list," and whose reputation is quite high.

Carlos Paes, Lisbon (via sxc.hu)

> "English speaking and writing ability is critical."

What is the most critical part of an international student's application?

English speaking and writing ability is critical—this is evaluated quite seriously by the admissions committee because it is the foundation for a student's success in completing their undergraduate or graduate degree. Insufficient English proficiency results in challenges for the student, his or her classmates (especially with group projects) and faculty. Sometimes, international students view English requirements at various institutions as prohibitive or even punitive. This could not be further from the truth. It is actually a step taken to help guarantee their success. Admissions, student affairs and academic personnel are extremely concerned about creating an environment in which their students will thrive. After all, satisfied alumni give an institution its greatest level of credibility. The last thing anyone would want is for a student to come to the United States for graduate study and fail, especially if that can be prevented.

__Dr. Don Martin__ is a former admissions dean at Columbia, University of Chicago and Northwestern; and author of "Road Map for Graduate Study." __Wesley Teter__ is a former regional director for EducationUSA in New Delhi. He is also the editor of the multimedia outreach campaign, 10 Steps to Study in the United States.
EducationUSA's __Nancy Keteku__ contributed to this article.