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Real experiences and lessons learned,
written by an international student.

THE BLUEPRINT

The Roadmap to Landing a Job as an International Student

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International Student at Arizona State University

The Blueprint: The Roadmap to Landing a Job as an International Student

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1. THE GREAT AMERICAN DREAM

"Too many of us are not living our dreams because we are living our fears." – Les Brown

I am so excited that you decided to join us. Studying in America is an incredibly worthwhile and exciting time as it will allow you to broaden your horizons and gain new life experiences possibly unavailable in your native country. Being an international student commands the attention of a global market and allows you to position yourself with some of the greatest minds in the world; it truly is unique.

I will be guiding you through the steps required to achieve success. I hope you enjoy hearing of some of the experiences I have gained during my own time of study. As someone who is in your shoes and walked your path, I hope that you will find comfort in my words. You will be interested in knowing that for all the challenges, studying abroad here in the United States was one of the most rewarding tasks I have ever completed which also helped me open my eyes to some great opportunities.

With globalization, studying abroad has become much more popular. For example, did you know the number of students choosing to study in America has gradually increased over the past ten years? While this shows growth in diversity, it means there are more competition and fewer

resources than ever before. In 2011, there were over 800,000 international students in the United States according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings ("Why go to," 2011). 228,000 of these students enrolled in universities, with many securing a job in their chosen field.

So now the question you should ask yourself is: How can I differentiate my talent from 800,000 other students? How am I a better candidate than a native student who does not require sponsorship? Without answers, employers will ignore your request, and you may find yourself headed back home.

The good news is I am determined to help you discover some of the answers to these difficult questions. Now is a perfect time to start taking notes on the advice in this book, as I want you to put them into action to establish yourself within your own educational community. Through hard work and persistence, we can distinguish our nationality from other students and learn how to find successful opportunities in America. How successful you become is all up to you.

I want to start by introducing you to the beginning of my journey. This may be somewhere you are currently, or this will help you look back on how you arrived in America. Either way, I hope that you will see how I got started and eventually be able to relate to similar experiences.

Good luck, and let us look back!

MY NEW LIFE AT MOUNT MICHAEL

In August 2006, I arrived off the plane from South Korea to enter an all-boys boarding school called Mount Michael Benedictine High School in Omaha, Nebraska. I was 15 years old, and terrified as I stepped out of the airport. I had never been away from my parents for more than a week previously. The thought of not seeing them for a whole year was unthinkable; leaving friends and family for the unknown is still a feeling that I will never forget.

A school van picked me up from the terminal, and as I rode through the vast cornfields that were so different from my homeland, it finally hit me. I was alone. I did not have a family member or friend to whom I could reach out to for help and it was up to me to make the next few years turn from an opportunity to a success. I knew instantly that my life was going to make a drastic turn, and it was up to me to prepare for the reality in which I faced.

Later that evening, as I unpacked in the dorms, I found a book that my mom must have slipped in to my belongings when I was not looking. *Shooting for Harvard* was the success story of twin Korean brothers who were Harvard University graduates. To reduce my nostalgia and gain some much-needed motivation, I would find myself turning to that for comfort many times.

The Harvard twins arrived in America as I did, for high school, and had worked their way into the most prestigious college in the nation. For an aspiring teenager just starting high school in a similar situation, they were excellent and

exciting role models. Determined from the lessons that I gained from their book, I used their ideas to help get the most out of my high school experience with a goal of attending an elite university.

From day one, I knew I had to become involved in as many activities as possible if I wanted to better my understanding of English and meet new friends. This enthusiasm presented many exciting and unexpected opportunities to excel, and I even tried out for our school's football team — an unfamiliar sport to me at the time, but I made up for my lack of experience through persistence and strong will; traits that would come to serve me well.

I was eventually selected captain for the team during my senior year, which was an incredible personal accomplishment. At that time, I also attended debate, orchestra, and student council. When our dean explained that the role of class president was opening, he advised the class to present a speech that night if we were planning on running for the position.

Amazingly, the response to my on the spot decision was positive, and to my utter surprise I was elected, an enormous responsibility and privilege that filled me with motivation and enthusiasm to succeed. From there, I worked my way through different positions and became school president. If I could start with any advice it would be this: do not be scared to take risks and put yourself out there. You never know what might happen.

Overall, thanks to such remarkable opportunities throughout my high school career, I graduated as valedictorian of

my class. As I was giving my graduation speech, I reflected back on the four years. I had an incredible opportunity to express my gratitude to the teachers, faculty members who had helped me along the way, and to my friends who had given me hope when I had little for myself.

As I looked back, I was also thankful to my parents who offered a tremendous gift in helping me relocate to America and for providing me with the moral support even when they could not be by my side. It was humbling to think how all their efforts and contributions had helped me become who I am today.

The challenges that I had overcome as a teenager taught me extraordinary life lessons that built the foundations of the next chapter of my life. Having experienced success, I was able to learn how responsibility, persistence, self-motivation and independence can help craft even someone living thousands of miles from home, and now I want to help teach you the same. These tales may sound victorious, and to me they are, but they were not without trial and error.

From the beginning, I had to focus on one single goal: getting into a prestigious university. After all the hard work, I did receive, among others, an acceptance letter from University of Southern California, my most preferred school. But before making the final decision of which school to attend, I had to think about many different circumstances. Before you choose your college, I want you to take the time to consider your current situations, what your life goals are, and begin to create milestones on how

you can begin to achieve them. Which career field interests you? What university do you want to attend? How is your financial situation? It is important to consider all the different situations before making a decision.

Sadly, due to several different reasons, I would not attend USC, but rather chose to enroll at Arizona State University. At first, I was hesitant to give up my top choice. I had selected a safer option, but that experience eventually taught me an invaluable life lesson.

No matter what school you plan on attending, or what major you are studying, strive to achieve your own level of success by believing in what you can accomplish. You should be prepared to make choices as they arrive, and understand that sometimes our plans do change. But the important part is to make the best out of what you commit to. This will help you stand out and be successful wherever you are. I want you to spend some time writing down some goals so that you have an aid to assist you in the techniques you will be learning.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN MOVING ONTO COLLEGE

In this next section, I will show you how to develop your plans so that you can avoid any hurdles and become fully prepared for college. Having faced different experiences of searching for the right jobs, trying to apply for those jobs, and then going through the necessary paperwork, I realized how complicated the process was for international

students. I want to help simplify this as best I know how by showing you the steps that I took.

When I arrived at Arizona State University, I felt lost. This is perfectly normal, and something you will be bound to feel. I had transferred from a small high school into a vast campus, which was overwhelming. It felt like everyone around me had already made friends, and I was out of the loop. Being shy, I quickly found there were too many people and too much stuff going on that I did not know where to start.

When speaking with other international students, I quickly found that the American culture can feel very foreign. Whether your first introduction is through college or you have transferred from high school, there is a new set of rules, etiquette, and social activities to learn. During this time, many international students seek out others from their own culture as a means to finding safety and security during the unknown.

When you feel lonely and lost in college as we all do, it is often easier to gravitate towards the people that share something in common with us. Whether you are Chinese, Indian, or Malaysian, it may seem more convenient to hang out and talk with those from your country than trying to connect with local students who might not understand where you are coming from. However, being able to overcome adversity is one of life lessons.

By only befriending those who provide you with comfort, you run the risk of being pigeonholed as an international student. I have seen how easily international

students are overlooked despite having exceptional grades because they limited their experiences to those that were safe. I am not saying you should not connect with others from your country, but you should make an invested effort to connect with different people of all backgrounds.

If you are worried about language, culture, or even social trends, then the only way to learn is to put yourself out there. Set small goals of only using English to improve language skills. This is also a terrific way to introduce yourself to others.

On that note, I want to start from the very beginning when we are choosing where to start our journey. I truly do want you to succeed, and if you are still in high school or are thinking about transferring, then the first question you will possibly have is how do I decide which college to attend?

DECIDING WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN COLLEGE

Society often dictates that getting into the best universities is the ultimate and only goal. Maybe the apparent importance of school branding has made it become this way. In reality, it is not that significant. It may be desirable, but it is not critical to success. Plenty of students who are in the top ranked schools equally face returning home after their studies as they are unable to find a job. There are no guarantees.

It can be frustrating to give up the opportunities and

decide to go to a different university if that best suits your budget and grades. Not everyone is going to benefit or be accepted into an Ivy League school. When I first decided on ASU, my mind was full of doubt. The only thing I knew about it was that it was one of the biggest party schools in the nation. However, after experiencing college, I learned that what you do during your college career is what really counts. No matter where you decide to go, find a way to make yourself stand out.

So what should you be doing to ensure that you are making the best decision? At the end of each chapter, I have enclosed some key takeaway sections that will benefit you with ideas on where to begin your research. Take the time to answer those sections before moving onto actionable steps listed below. This will ensure that you are making the right personal decision.

You can also reach out to advisors who can assist you in picking the right school for your needs and interests. Local bookstores also offer a wealth of inspirational books that can help. Make sure to look online if they do not have the exact book that you are looking for. You should never put your focus on any one line of resources, and asking for help can make an incredible difference.

At the end of the day, you should utilize your research to make the decision to go where you will make the most impact. Choose a college where you can study what you are passionate in and where you will find ample resources to pursue a career upon graduation. Once we get to college, things will move quickly and doing research ahead of time

will benefit you tremendously. Below are the key takeaway notes for this section, to help guide you into this process as we move into the next chapter that will teach you how to develop your journey of further education.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Consider alternative colleges that meet your financial, educational needs
- The school you attend is not as important as the reason why you attend
- Start to access information and resources now
- Wherever you attend, try to make an impact so that you can stand out