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# RISE

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**Overcoming & Thriving: Students University Journey Abroad**

**Decoding the College Admissions Celebrity: Viral Doshi's Impact**

**Connecting Minds: The Power of Education Networks**

**Quality Education Starts Here: The Community College Way**



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# FROM DREAMS TO REALITY: MY RISE GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIP JOURNEY

RISE to the Future: A Scholarship that Changed My Life

By  
Joy Agrawal  
RISE Global Winner 2023



**Joy Agrawal**

As a RISE Global Winner, I am grateful to have a lifetime of benefits that include a full ride scholarship to attend college anywhere in the world, opportunity to network with amazing people at the 3-week fully funded RISE residential summit and having access to the entrepreneurship and social enterprise funding.

I am so happy to have been surfing on twitter that day and to have found RISE. Initially it seemed like an opportunity too good to be true but turned out to be something that would definitely give me mileage. I started my RISE project, the application for vision correction. I conceptualised this project while learning about ophthalmic eye care camps that Rotary Club organises. As the project took shape, it also good recognised. My project, an ANN based single platform multilingual software for refractive error prescription has been trained on a dataset of close to 200 people and verified on 400 people at science fairs. I sat at an eye hospital for almost a week during the holidays. It got recommended by Dr Vikas Mahatme, a Padma Shri awarded eye specialist and former member of the upper house of India and also got acknowledged by Dr Prakash Amte, a Padma Shri & Ramon Magsaysay doctor and social worker. I verified the findings at the Indian Science Congress where the project was socially applauded and included in the official teaser of the ISC. Through a peer review of the project and a subsequent expert review, 500 students are chosen as RISE Global finalists. Peer reviewing just 5 other project gave me a sense of how much impact 14000 applicants combined created in a 3 month application to RISE.

The RISE global finalists were interviewed in groups of nearly 50 subdivided into smaller groups on finalist days in 5 hour interviews. The finalist day consisted of a group presentation on the RISE projects and everyone appreciated and critiqued each other's RISE projects. Next was a group activity that judged participants ability to work together. Finally, it was the individual interview. This gruesome yet reflective process truly makes you value collective benefit, team work, working together and having a vision in life. Following verification of all documents and achievements, it was time for the RISE finalist benefit course. I took a course on AI for Social Benefit. Through this course, I learned a lot about datafication, biases, removing biases and noise.

Finally,100 global winners were chosen after almost a year of intense competition, excitement, anxiety and adrenaline rush. In the week leading upto the announcement, I had a lot of anxiety and panic attacks. I would wake up in the middle of the nights in cold sweats, wondering what the verdict would be. In the end, opening that email was like unwrapping a gift that truly means a lot to me and my family.



## **About Rise Scholarships**

Rise is a program that finds promising young people and provides opportunities for life as they work to serve others. The program starts at ages 15–17 and encourages a lifetime of service and learning by providing support that includes need-based scholarships, mentorship, networking, access to career development opportunities, and the potential for additional funding as Rise Global Winners work toward solving humanity's most pressing problems.

## **About The Founders**

In 2019, Schmidt Futures co-founders Eric and Wendy Schmidt made a \$1 billion philanthropic commitment across their philanthropic organizations and initiatives to identify and support global talent. Rise, an initiative of Schmidt Futures and the Rhodes Trust, is the anchor program of that commitment. Rise builds on an existing partnership between Schmidt Futures and the Rhodes Trust, including the creation of the Schmidt Science Fellows program. Founded by Eric and Wendy Schmidt, Schmidt Futures is a philanthropic initiative that finds and connects talented people across fields, generations, and geographies to harness their collective skills for public benefit. The Rhodes Trust, based at the University of Oxford, brings together and develops exceptional people from all over the world, and in all fields of study, who are impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act.

## **Benefits of a Rise Scholarship**

One - One fully funded in-person residential summit with other members of the Rise Global Winner cohort. Two - A four-year, post-secondary education scholarship, including tuition and a living stipend, based on need and where not already covered by financial aid. Three - Opportunity to apply for funding to experiment with innovative ideas to address major problems in local communities or around the world—ranging, for example, from seed money to start a social enterprise to a grant for a non-profit. Four - Access to a network of other Global Winners, community members, and partner organizations, as well as career development programming. Five - A technology package.



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# BRIDGING THE GAP: YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS

"Unlocking The Power of The Gap Year

By  
Julia Rogers  
Founder, Enroute Consulting

#EXPLORETHEGAPYEAR

## How A Gap Year Prepares Young Adults for College & Adulthood



**Julia Rogers**

In a rapidly modernizing world, the concept of a gap year has emerged over the past decade in the United States as a transformative bridge that empowers young adults to navigate the challenging terrain of both college and adulthood with resilience, purpose, and wisdom. Traditionally, a gap year has been seen as a fun-loving rite of passage for British and European youth, but Americans are reimagining this concept as a serious, intentional endeavor that can direct their personal and professional life in impactful ways. Indian youth could also benefit from adopting the American gap year concept as they transition to higher education and career.

### The Gap Year Defined

As defined by the US-based nonprofit Gap Year Association, a gap year is an intentional period of time devoted to personal growth and exploration through experiential learning opportunities. Young adults typically use this opportunity to build skills, develop their personal identity and explore career paths.

A gap year in the Indian subcontinent can encompass a variety of experiences, including volunteering, experiential courses, interning, skill-building, travel, and cultural immersion. It's about using this time to explore one's interests, contribute to one's community, and develop essential life skills.

### Gap Years Increase the ROI of College and University

In circles that greatly value higher education, there may be a stigma attached to taking time off after high school. The prevailing belief is that one should proceed directly to college to build towards a promising future. But those who challenge this outdated notion are discovering that students who take thoughtfully planned gap time perform better academically in college, consider themselves more employable and report better life satisfaction later in life. (These statistics and more can be found [here](#)). A gap year, when approached intentionally, can align perfectly with the values of personal growth, family, and community.

Here are some qualities gap year students possess after their year:



### **They Have a Strong Sense of Purpose**

Students who choose to take a gap year typically do so because they want to gain a deeper understanding of their interests and goals before committing to a college major or career path. This means that they are likely to have a stronger sense of purpose and direction, which can translate into a greater level of motivation and engagement on the job.

### **They Have Developed Strong Soft Skills**

Soft skills, such as creative problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and adaptability, are highly valued in the modern workforce. Students who take a gap year are likely to have honed these skills through their experiences, whether they were working in a team on a community service project or navigating a foreign culture while traveling. These skills can be difficult to teach in a traditional classroom setting, making gap year students potentially more prepared to succeed at college and career than a student with a traditional educational experience.

### **They Are More Mature and Independent**

Gap year students have had the opportunity to live and work independently, often in challenging environments. This means that they are likely to be more mature, self-directed, and responsible than their peers who went straight from high school to college or the workforce. They are also likely to have a greater level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

### **Conclusion: Navigating the Path to Adulthood**

In conclusion, the gap year is not a departure from the intrinsic cultural value of education; it's a pathway that can enhance it. It provides an opportunity to grow as an individual, contribute to society, and relieve some of the academic pressures that modern students face.

A gap year is not a detour, but a meaningful bridge to college and adulthood. By embracing this concept and creating tailored opportunities for young adults, we can ensure that the next generation enters adulthood with confidence, skills, and a strong connection to their culture and community.

# OVERCOMING & THRIVING: STUDENTS UNIVERSITY JOURNEY IN SPAIN

Adapting & Excelling: The International Student Experience

By  
Elisa Melendez Martín  
Global Markets Director for Undergraduate Programs  
IE University



**Elisa Melendez Martín**

## **Three challenges and opportunities students will face at university.**

The word challenge is associated with the ideas of effort and difficult. Opportunity, on the other hand, conjures the idea of change under different or new circumstances and scenarios. Both 'challenge' and 'opportunity' will happen during university years, and they go hand-in-hand. Let's highlight three areas, from a Spanish point of view, where students may face challenge and opportunity in having chosen to study abroad at an international university.

### **Language:**

Even though Spanish has become a popular language for students to study in high schools the world over, most students are not fluent in the language. This is especially true if they are coming to Spain to study a degree fully taught in English. This may seem to be an obstacle, but it is just the case for the first months. With proper academic support and immersion in the country, international students are able to achieve a working fluency in Spanish in a remarkably short amount of time. In turn, this means that there are doors that open not only to the Spanish job market, but also across the Atlantic in Spanish-speaking Latin America.

### **Schedules:**

Both academic and personal schedules in Europe are very different from the rest of the world and even within Europe, they vary from country to country.

When it comes to Spain and talking about class schedules, students could either have a morning or afternoon block of classes in which they should expect a minimum of four sessions per day.

Social schedules are also quite different in Spain: lunches and dinners are later. However, this awards students much more flexibility with the schedules and personal time. It's not uncommon to see people finishing a late lunch and then immediately others starting dinner at the same restaurant!

### **New Academic Approaches:**

Students will also notice there are big differences in academics compared to what they may be used to in their home countries. Most courses are evaluated using various methods such as group assignments, individual papers, exams, and participation.

This could be challenging for some students, but it is a great opportunity for students to develop skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and public speaking. Furthermore, this is advantageous for students who may be coming from a secondary education system that is heavily theory-based.

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# DECODING THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS CELEBRITY: VIRAL DOSHI'S IMPACT

Viral Doshi and the College Admissions Revolution

By  
Brendan Bond  
Associate Director of International Admissions  
University of Rochester



**Brendan Bond**

I can't say exactly where I was when I first heard of Viral Doshi the consultant cum college admissions guru with the unassuming professorial look, but what I derived from the conversation I was having with my colleagues in college admissions, he was someone who held a key, or at least perceived key in Ivy League and highly selective admissions. For the well-connected Indian parents who can schedule a meeting with the in-demand consultant, who reportedly has offices in Mumbai, Delhi, Dubai, Singapore, London and New York, his years long guidance of their child is worth the cost to gain advantage in the arms-race that is college admissions profile building.

Of course, those of us who have worked in admissions for some time, understand acutely there is no secret handshake or code to break with college admissions, holistic admissions provides that no one factor will guarantee admissions to selective US higher education institutions.

Now I am not sure what Mr Doshi tells his clients, besides the same conversation that we all hold with prospective students who hope to be admitted to our universities, and I am not so interested in what he has to say, but what does pique my curiosity is how a figure could rise to such reverence and respect, celebrity, in a field that should be as anodyne as accountancy. Reasonable analysis suggests this popularity may be more due to the status symbol education has become in India, as well as the rest of the world for that matter rather, than any concrete direction he provides to his clients.

But perhaps I am asking the wrong question, perhaps his fame is not surprising, we all want the insider that can provide an edge in whatever endeavor we are taking on. Especially in education, as parent's endless measuring of themselves via their children, though not new to the world of helicopter parenting, is becoming endemic in university admissions.

However there lies within the human need for information and connection – what we provide on both sides of the desk, those who work in university admissions and those who advise the high school students as independent educational consultants.

I do not doubt Mr. Doshi's advice, of which I am sure is sincere, and success, which has been well documented over his decades in the business. Though I do wonder whether the mystique around his knowledge is owed more to his latter-day renown, rather than actual results. Nevertheless, a visionary trendsetter now Mr. Doshi finds himself one of thousands of IEC's across the country. And as a university representative working in the international recruitment industry with over a decade of experience I do welcome the proliferation of independent educational guides and I see our partnership as crucial. Not necessarily with the eminent, but with those hard-working independents that strive to provide the positive reinforcement and good advice that can our students rely on to achieve their goals. This does not find its birth in mystique but in individual hard sought connection and that is why I appreciate the AIIEC initiative and applaud the efforts to bring everyone under the big tent that this organization strives to build.

Honest communication is the tenant of success in a field such as ours where good faith sharing of knowledge is critical, this is obvious, but too often this becomes a catchphrase with little behind the words. My interactions with the AIIEC and all independents represented, exemplifies honesty in communication, I have no problem sharing information with any of the independents I work with India. Veracity through communal trust and networking is essential in the due-diligence of building an organization like AIIEC.

My work has evolved, coming to incorporate more independents in India, not simply because of the proliferation of them, or in the increasing quality of independents, but because now there is a group I can connect with, under one organizational banner that signifies integrity. One that I trust, built on relationships with individuals that I have met, and some whom I have not met, but know via the network of confidence that AIIEC embodies. I look forward to growth going forward.

The only question that remains is how best to deploy this web of support, how can we support each other in finding best fit, in not being engrossed by the tractor beam that is 'top 10 US universities.' Of course, these are the conversations that have been going for years and will perhaps be another article for this publication. But what remains fascinating and important and what I hope I have conveyed in this short dialogue is how exciting it is too be aware of a new organization that strives to bring the disparate and often unverified network of independents together. Perhaps Mr Doshi, while torpedoing the lock on Ivy League Admissions, has still left room to be innovative in this field.

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# CONNECTING MINDS: THE POWER OF EDUCATION NETWORKS

Collaborative Networking in Education

By

Daniel Marschner, Ph. D.

Director of International Admission

Loyola Marymount University



**Daniel Marschner**

Students pursuing higher education today are part of an unprecedented era. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the globe has been turned upside down in myriad ways but yet in others has hardly changed. For colleagues who work in secondary schools, as independent counselors, or at university admission offices, the networks that sustain and support students who pursue tertiary education are more vital than ever before. In this new era, professional development in the sector remains absolutely essential to be an effective member of this community, regardless of one's role. Listed below in alphabetical order are a plethora of organizations that provide resources to enhance professional growth and development:

- All India Independent Education Consultants
- Asian-Pacific Association for International Education
- BMI
- British Council
- Canadian Bureau for International Education
- China Institute of College Admission Counseling (ChinaICAC)
- Cialfo
- College Board
- Council of International Schools
- EducationUSA
- European Association for International Education
- GenNext Education
- Higher Education Consultants Association
- Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA)
- International Association for College Admission Counseling (International ACAC)
- International Career and College Counseling Movement (IC3)
- Maia Learning
- National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- Unifrog

Each of these organizations offers a variety of networking opportunities for their participants, and professionals who are unfamiliar with these options can easily be overwhelmed. For colleagues in the field, these considerations will be crucial to maximizing one's time, budget, and energy:

Event format: In-person and virtual networking opportunities frequently occur and each present pros and cons. For example, in-person events are often preferred for establishing authentic connections, attracting a broad audience, and to provide perspective outside of one's home environment; however virtual events can be more accessible, more cost effective, and less disruptive to other expectations of one's professional role.

- Organization size and focus: Strength in numbers is certainly valuable and therefore larger entities can provide more impact when meeting with government representatives or other decision makers; however smaller organizations can provide a less intimidating introduction to the field and can facilitate bespoke experiences relevant to one's professional setting.
- Membership: Each entity listed above determines its own expectations regarding its participants. For some groups, there is an extensive process to determine the applicant's role – for example to verify that one works at an educational institution or is an independent counselor who has established a practice for a minimum duration. Organizations also determine the structure of their membership – in some cases individuals are expected to register and pay an annual fee to engage in professional development opportunities; for others any individual who wants to participate is welcome.
- Management: These entities vary in terms of their administrative bodies; the hierarchy could be an elected leadership committee or an appointed advisory board. An alternative format is an egalitarian structure without formal roles where all participants are welcome to contribute in their own capacity. Regardless of structure, within these groups committees are often instituted; participation in these groups is an efficacious mechanism to expand one's professional network and contribute positively to the organization's mission.

Ultimately, regardless of one's role within the sphere of supporting student mobility towards higher education, individuals should take solace that ultimately all parties are looking for the best outcome for students. Additionally, as new professionals to the field constantly enter, opportunities to welcome individuals to the space are plentiful; for career veterans, numerous methods to enhance one's professional practice exist, and mentorship roles provide new perspectives on their positions. For this reason, professional development organizations are essential to the perpetual upgrade of one's knowledge database. Fostering effective professional relationships regardless of one's role leads to more dynamic student outcomes and more proficient practice.



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# QUALITY EDUCATION STARTS HERE: THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE WAY

The Real Value of Community College Education

By  
Deepali Shah  
Assistant Director, International Student Recruitment  
Foothill + De Anza Colleges



**Deepali Shah**

Have you heard about community colleges in the U.S.? Do you think students who opt for community colleges have disadvantages compared to those going to four-year universities and colleges? Let's discuss!

## What are community colleges?

These are accredited 2-year public institutions that offer affordable and easy 2-year transfer programs to universities for bachelor's degree. Students opting for undergraduate education can complete the first two years of general and lower division class requirements at a community college and transfer directly into the third year at any university in the United States and beyond. After two more years of studying upper division classes, bachelor's degree is awarded by the transfer university. Community colleges also offer associate degrees, vocational and certificate programs. Some also offer few bachelors' degree programs.

Traditionally, international students opting for undergraduate programs in the U.S. often talk about enrolling at four-year universities over community colleges due to many myths associated with community colleges. Let's look at these myths and provide more accurate information (reality check).

**Myth # 1:** Community colleges are inferior in teaching pattern compared to four-year universities.

**Reality:** Community colleges offer quality education, same level of general education and lower division classes just like one would study at a university. In fact, many community college students successfully transfer to four-year institutions to complete their bachelor's degrees. There are articulation agreements that community colleges have with many universities that ensure same level of classes with credit transfers. Example: At Foothill + De Anza Colleges (community colleges in California), we have more than 120 transfer agreements, preferred and guaranteed transfers and our faculty have earned degrees from top universities such as Stanford, MIT, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Princeton, and others. They include Fulbright Scholars, California Professors of the Year, winners of the Outstanding Undergraduate Science Teaching Award, etc. Moreover, there are no teaching assistants teaching in classrooms, classes are only taught by professors.

**Myth # 2:** Community college degrees are not respected by employers.

**Reality:** Many employers value the skills and knowledge acquired through community college education. Some careers require only an associate degree, and community colleges often provide practical, job-oriented training. Moreover, the final bachelor's degrees are awarded by the universities where students choose to transfer in the third year. The degree does not mention that these are transfer students nor is there any differentiation. Many famous people like Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, Astronaut Eileen Collins, U.S. Ex-President Barak Obama, and more started their undergraduate education at community colleges.

**Myth # 3:** Community colleges are primarily for low-income students.

**Reality:** Community colleges are affordable options, making them attractive to a wide range of students. They serve students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, including those who want to save money on the first two years of college. However, many students who want to experience more hands-on learning, small class sizes and flexibility in the initial years of undergraduate education also choose community colleges. Some students who do not get into their top choice universities directly in the first year, begin at community colleges giving themselves a second chance to eventually graduate from their dream universities.

**Myth # 4:** Community colleges lack extracurricular activities.

**Reality:** While community colleges may have fewer extracurricular options than larger universities, they still offer student clubs, organizations, athletics, part-time jobs, libraries, gymnasium, cafeteria, transfer centers, international counselor support, academic counseling, career fairs, transfer fairs, and other activities.

**Myth # 5:** Community colleges offer limited program offerings.

**Reality:** Community colleges give you the freedom to explore different academic programs and your interests. For example, at Foothill + De Anza, we offer more than 100 majors and certificate programs. Some students also change their majors while exploring options during transfers.



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