5 INSIDER SECRETS TO A WINNING 'WHY US ?' ESSAY

WHY US ?

Featured Articles

5 TIPS FOR STUDENTS AS YOU RESEARCH 'WHY US' ESSAYS

The Secret Steps to Crafting a Compelling and Personalized 'Why Us' Essay

By
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Admyssion

Adi Ram

Understanding the Purpose of "Why Us"

The 'Why Us' essay is a crucial component of your college application. It's not just about showing interest; it's about demonstrating that you've done your homework, understand what makes the school unique, and can articulate how you'll be a great fit there. Admissions officers want to know that you're genuinely excited about their institution instead of applying simply because of name recognition.

This essay sometimes goes by other names, or the question is reframed in creative ways. Make no mistake - any question that allows you to connect your profile to the offerings of the university is a "Why Us" essay, and your answer should cohere with the best practices below.

Tip 1: Dive Deep into Research

Effective research is the backbone of a strong 'Why Us' essay. Start by exploring the college's website. Look at academic programs, extracurricular activities, campus culture, and any unique opportunities offered. Read student testimonials, faculty profiles, and news articles about the school. Attend virtual tours, webinars, and Q&A sessions.

To make your "Why Us" essay stand out, find unique factoids that other students won't reference. Everyone can (and does!) read the website. And while proving that you've done that bare minimum research is critical, going two steps deeper is key. The best "Why Us" essays are based on one-on-one connections between applicants and members of the campus community, as that level of detail cannot be replicated and stands out to admission officers.

Tip 2: Connect Your Goals with Their Offerings

After gathering detailed information about the college, the next step is to link what the college offers with your personal goals and interests. This means going beyond generic statements like "I love the strong academic reputation" or "The campus is beautiful." Instead, explain how a particular program, professor, or extracurricular activity aligns with your aspirations. For instance, if you're passionate about environmental science, you might highlight the college's sustainability initiatives or a specific professor whose research aligns with your interests.

Tip 3: Highlight People, Culture and Community

Colleges are not just academic institutions; they are communities. Understanding and appreciating the campus culture is essential for writing a compelling 'Why Us' essay. Research student organizations, campus events, and traditions that excite you. If the college has a strong emphasis on community service and you have a history of volunteer work, emphasize this alignment. The best way to develop a human connection is to discuss a one-on-one relationship with a professor, current student, or alumnus based around shared values

Tip 4: Reflect on Your Fit

The 'Why Us' essay is not just about why you want to attend the college, but also about why you're a good fit for the college. Reflect on how your profile aligns with the school's mission and culture. If the college values innovation and entrepreneurship, highlight your experiences with startups or your entrepreneurial mindset. If diversity and inclusion are core to the college's identity, discuss your commitment to these values through your experiences and perspectives.

Tip 5: Be Specific and Avoid Clichés

Specificity is key in making your essay stand out. Avoid vague statements and clichés that could apply to any school. For example, if the college has a unique study abroad program in Japan and you're passionate about Japanese culture and language, be very precise in what parts of the program interest you. You can never be too specific or dive too deep in a "Why Us" essay.

If you dive deep into a specific academic program offered by the university, there is a risk admissions officers have never heard about those opportunities before. That is not a bad thing! Most admissions officers, upon hearing of a new program, will add a note into your file and verify the accuracy of your essay in the final rounds of selection. Knowing more about the school than the application committee is a big green flag.

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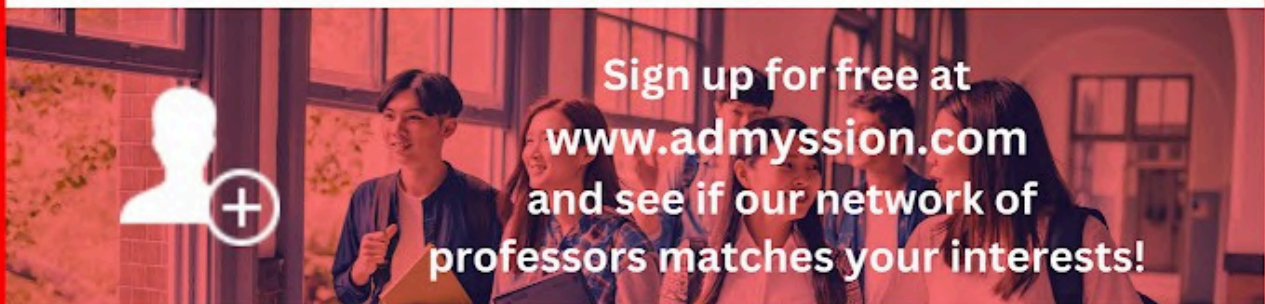
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YOUR GUIDE TO OPT AND CPT

How Syracuse University Helps International Students Thrive in the U.S. Job Market

By
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Regional Manager (West & South India)
Syracuse University

Denver D'Souza

As an Admissions Officer at Syracuse University, I have the pleasure of engaging with enthusiastic students from India and around the globe. One of the most frequent topics of discussion is Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT). These programs offer invaluable opportunities for international students to immerse themselves in the American work culture, adding a rich layer of experience to their academic journey. Let's delve into the world of OPT and CPT, and discover how Syracuse University excels in supporting students through these programs.

Understanding OPT: A Golden Ticket to U.S. Work Experience

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows F-1 visa students to work in the U.S. for up to one year, either before or after completing their academic programs. For students in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), there's an added advantage: an additional two-year extension, making it a total of three years of valuable work experience. Syracuse University ensures that students are well-prepared to navigate the OPT application process, offering personalized guidance and resources to help them succeed.

Diving into CPT: Hands-On Learning for F-1 Students

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) provides F-1 students with the opportunity to gain real-world experience directly related to their studies. Whether it's an internship, practicum, or cooperative position, CPT allows students to work part-time or full-time if the job is integral to their academic program. At Syracuse University, the emphasis is on aligning academic and career goals, ensuring that CPT experiences are meaningful and relevant.

Syracuse University's Exceptional Support for International Students

Syracuse University is renowned for its comprehensive support system for international students, particularly when it comes to navigating OPT and CPT.

Personalized Guidance from International Student Services (ISS): The ISS team at Syracuse University is dedicated to providing top-notch advice on immigration regulations and the intricacies of OPT and CPT applications. ISS offers workshops and one-on-one sessions that walk students through every step of the application process. For instance, Maria, a graduate student from Brazil, attended an OPT workshop and, with her ISS mentor's guidance, successfully secured a position at a leading tech company in California.

Career Services Tailored to International Students: Syracuse University's Career Services department goes above and beyond to support international students in their job search. From resume writing and interview preparation to job search strategies, Career Services provides personalized coaching that equips students with the skills they need to succeed. The university also organizes career fairs that attract top employers. Raj, an engineering student from India, benefited from a resume workshop and connected with a recruiter at a career fair, landing a coveted summer internship through CPT.

Academic Support That Makes a Difference: Academic excellence is crucial for maintaining eligibility for OPT and CPT. Syracuse University offers robust academic support through tutoring and writing centers that help students excel in their courses. Each college also has dedicated advising offices that assist students in aligning their academic pursuits with their career aspirations. Li, a business major from China, significantly improved her English writing skills with help from the Writing Center, which enabled her to qualify for CPT and secure a marketing internship with a top firm in New York City.

Leveraging the Alumni Network: Syracuse University's alumni network is an invaluable resource for current students. The university facilitates mentorship programs where alumni provide guidance and networking opportunities. Additionally, job shadowing programs allow students to gain insights into their chosen fields. Ana, a journalism student from Spain, connected with a successful alum from a leading news organization, which led to an OPT position at the same company after graduation.

Conclusion

OPT and CPT are more than just work programs; they are gateways to invaluable hands-on experience for international students. Syracuse University plays a pivotal role in this journey, offering exceptional support and resources that help students navigate these opportunities and achieve their career goals. With a dedicated support system, tailored guidance, and a strong alumni network, Syracuse University ensures that international students are well-equipped to excel in their academic and professional endeavors.

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U.S. News & World Report

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OF RECENT GRADUATES
are employed or enter graduate school, service programs or the military within six months of graduation (based on 2022 graduating class).

14:1 STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO

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2023 College Factual

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2023 College Factual

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2023 College Factual

#6 Best Design and Applied Arts
2023 College Factual

#8 Best Information Science
2023 College Factual

#10 Best Food and Nutrition
2023 College Factual

#11 Best Entrepreneurial Studies
2023 College Factual

#30 Most Innovative Schools
2023 *U.S. News & World Report*

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> Personal essay
> Recommendations
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SAT/ACT scores are not required for students applying for Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 admission.

For more information, visit **syracuse.edu/admissions/apply.**

CREATIVE ARTS AND HUMANITIES BA AT UCL

Preparing Students for the Future of Creative Industries

By
Arvind Vepa
Liaison and Recruitment Manager
UCL

Arvind Vepa

Embracing Creativity and Critical Thinking

In this reflective essay, Gregory Thompson, Professor of Creative and Collaborative Enterprise at UCL, draws on ancient Indian tradition to think about the relationship between machines, human beings and the skills our students will need for the future. Gregory argues that—in a world of machine learning and automatization—the skills that will be valued above all are creative and critical skills: the ability to understand an ever more complex world and to do the things that robots cannot do.

This is the approach that underpins UCL's innovative BA in the Creative Arts and Humanities. This programme gives students high-level critical and analytical skills, alongside creative skills in performance, writing and moving image. It prepares students for roles in the Creative and Cultural Industries, but also for a wide range of roles (in business, in start-ups and entrepreneurship, for jobs that don't even exist yet) where there is a need to understand complexity, to tell persuasive stories, and to work creatively with others.

Historical Perspectives

"They say that everything is contained within the Mahabharata, and in India machines have been doing the heavy lifting since the days of the Rgveda and Atharvaveda where there are two names for the plough: laangala and seera. These ploughs of wood and bronze and iron increased productivity. The Yajurveda tells of a twelve-oxen plough cutting deep into the earth and turning the soil so that it will yield more. The bull was put under the yoke so that the human was free to invent textiles, mathematics, and steel.

Evolution of Work and Education

The world of work has been evolving for thousands of years. In every generation the machines eat some jobs and produce new ones. The car, the train, and the steam engine replaced some jobs and created new ones. AI is no different to the electric light, the telephone, the computer, or the internet. Parents want their children to learn to do something that will not be obsolete. Education has been traditionally about special information absorbed through study, and the university has been the way of gaining access to that knowledge. But now, all that knowledge has now been uploaded to Large Language Models that will answer any prompt.

Future Challenges

AI and the Large Language Models are coming for the creative industries. Many of the copywriters and the graphic designers, the wordsmiths and the image makers, can be replicated by the responses to prompts typed into chatbots. There will be a proliferation of ideas, articulations, and memes, generated by tapping keys and clicking screens.

Human vs. Machine

So, what is it that the human can do that the machine cannot? Machines do what they're told. And humans in merely functional roles do what they're told. The more that machines do the expected, the more we need humans to do the unexpected. Machines generate a form of novelty by combining existing ideas. But humans can create ideas that have never been thought before. Humans can understand and explain. Humans can solve problems. Humans can evaluate which of the multitudes of ideas made by machines are useful. It's humans who generate valuable knowledge through creativity, criticism, and evaluation.

Innovating Beyond Boundaries

The workplace of the future needs critical creative humans that understand innovation: humans that can explain problems to other humans (and to machines); and humans that can organise other humans to work together to create more than they might otherwise create by themselves. This goes beyond the old certainties of command and control, and requires courageous and inventive collaboration.

The university must prepare students for a brave new world that is already here. We have machines crammed full of past ideas, words, images, and memes—machines ready to reproduce what has been before. In the Mahabharata, Krishna urges Arjuna to break free of the past, transcend karma, and go beyond the mechanical. We need students who also go beyond the mechanical—students who both absorb information through study and learn to solve problems in new ways. We need students who innovate and create things that are unlike what has been produced before—students who can evaluate critically and build relationships."

Website: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/degrees/creative-arts-and-

BROWN UNIVERSITY: AN NM SQUAD REVIEW

10 Things You Must Know About Brown

By
Ravisha Maheshwari
Research Associate
NM Squad

Ravisha Maheshwari

Brown University, situated in Providence, Rhode Island, is a private Ivy League research institution. It is known for its compact, walkable campus integrated into College Hill. The climate mirrors Boston's, with warm summers and cold winters. Brown's admissions are highly competitive, with a 5.23% acceptance rate from 51,316 applicants in 2023.

1. Location Benefits
Brown is 41 miles from Boston and 155 miles from New York City. The area around Brown blends historic charm and vibrant student life, featuring landmarks like Benefit Street, known for its colonial-era architecture, and Thayer Street, a bustling hub of shops, cafes, and restaurants. Adjacent to Brown is the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), with which it shares a close relationship.

2. From Need-Aware to Need-Blind
Brown University meets the full demonstrated financial need for all admitted students, including international students who qualify for need-based aid. For Fall 2025, Brown will have a need-blind policy for its applicants.

3. Open Curriculum
Brown University operates on a semester-based system and offers an Open Curriculum, which requires students to satisfy only their major department requirements and complete the writing requirement. With over 80 concentrations (or majors), students are encouraged to explore a wide range of subjects before focusing on a specific area. Brown has 48 academic departments, including the Division of Applied Mathematics, Program in Biology, Department of Chemistry, Department of Economics, and Department of Philosophy.

4. No GPA on Transcripts
There is not much academic pressure at Brown. The university does not compute or include GPA on transcripts. Instead, they only list letter grades. There is significant grade inflation, and students can drop courses until the finals period. Even if students fail or drop a course, it is not displayed on their transcript.

5. Academic Flexibility
Students at Brown University can declare their concentration by the third or fourth semester and have the flexibility to switch concentrations until the end of the seventh semester. In addition to concentrations, Brown offers minors. The university's philosophy encourages students to keep their chosen field at the center of their academic pursuits while exploring other interests on the side, as there are no restrictive requirements.

6. Collaborative Community and Clubs

The student community is renowned for its collaborative spirit, with nearly 400-500 clubs. Unique groups include the Church of Darkness, hosting monthly rituals under the full moon with black robes, Latin chants, and hot chocolate. The Brown Outing Club focuses on outdoor exploration, while the Inning Club delves into campus history and its tunnels.

7. Quirky Traditions

The Van Wickle Gates is the ornamental gateway to Brown University's main campus in Providence. According to campus lore, students risk not graduating if they pass through the central gate more than twice. Additional traditions include the spontaneous "Naked Donut Run" during the reading period, where students dash naked across campus distributing donuts, as well as a midnight gathering at a designated green space for collective screaming. Finally, the entire university community unites to support Brown during Brown-Harvard games.

8. Historic Rivalries

The Brown–Rhode Island football rivalry is an American college football rivalry between the Brown Bears and the Rhode Island Rams. Moreover, Brown has a one-sided rivalry against Harvard.

9. Campus Safety

Brown University is known for its safety measures, with blue light phones located every 30 seconds to a minute apart, providing easy access to emergency assistance, particularly at night. Moreover, the university offers services like safeRIDE shuttle and SafeWalk to ensure students feel safe when traveling on campus at night.

10. Career Support and Alumni

The Brown Center for Career Exploration provides support for resumes and cover letters, allowing students to schedule meetings with undergraduate peers or trained Graduate Career Fellows for assistance with their resumes and to learn about useful platforms such as LinkedIn. The alumni network at Brown University is sizable and approachable, often willing to collaborate with current students. The "BrownConnect" platform provides access to over 65,000 alumni, searchable by various criteria such as concentration, industry, student clubs/organizations, athletics, and networking preferences. Students can also participate in alumni chats to listen to their career paths and receive real-world advice on navigating their career journey.

TOP 100
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
[*U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT*]

#4 PRIVATE SCHOOL **INTERNSHIPS**

#5 HAPPIEST **STUDENTS**

#13 MOST BEAUTIFUL **CAMPUS**

[THE PRINCETON REVIEW]

93% of graduates are employed, in military service, or continuing education within 6 months

40% OF STUDENTS **STUDY ABROAD**

#2 DORMS
[*THE PRINCETON REVIEW*]

10,523
UNDERGRADUATES

13:1 STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO

63 FAITHS REPRESENTED ON CAMPUS

ABOUT **ONE IN THREE** ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR

LOCATED IN THE **4TH** LARGEST **METRO AREA IN THE U.S.**

INCLUDING **STUDENTS FROM 88** COUNTRIES

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STUDENT PROJECTS WITH TANGIBLE IMPACT

Inspiring Creativity and Leadership Among IB Students

By
Anjana Vaswani
Partner
Uppercase

Anjana Vaswani

At Uppercase, we help students develop content-based projects that make a real difference in their communities. From women's safety apps to financial literacy webinars, our guidance turns ideas into impactful solutions.

A computer science student recently suggested teaching Microsoft Excel to women from underserved communities. While we praised her intent, we highlighted practical challenges. Many women at Hamari Silai, a social impact organization we collaborate with, lack laptops or digital devices and formal qualifications. Their job prospects needing Excel are slim, as most seek factory work or aim to start small businesses.

At Uppercase, a content solutions firm in Mumbai, we blend student enthusiasm with our journalistic expertise and understanding of social impact needs. This synergy helps students evolve into thought leaders, shaping their ideas into innovative solutions. Beyond enhancing college applications, this process allows students to apply their knowledge to real-world issues, engage with diverse communities, and connect with relevant stakeholders. As college admissions and the real world are highly competitive, future leaders need more than just academic excellence. Here's how Uppercase helps students develop impactful ideas.

Combining Leadership and Creativity

Colleges in the US highly value students' extracurricular activities. A National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) survey found that 50.2% of colleges prioritize these activities. However, not all extracurriculars are equal. Stanford University researchers found that admissions officers are more impressed by students demonstrating leadership, initiative, and creativity. This is where Uppercase comes in. We help IB students identify and develop projects that showcase their individuality, strengths, and passions, and address real-world challenges whenever possible. This may seem daunting, but with the right guidance and support, it is entirely achievable.

Guidance for Maximum Impact

Brainstorming with the computer science student led to developing a women's safety app. In India, where women's safety is a major issue, such a project could be impactful. A Thomson Reuters Foundation study found India to be the world's most dangerous country for women due to high rates of sexual violence, human trafficking, and forced labor.

The student was very bright and could have executed the idea independently. However, we provided essential guidance on translations, user interface design, and tweaks to enhance its relevance for underserved communities.

For another student interested in Economics who wanted to develop financial literacy workshops, we transformed his material into content for an Instagram page. When live, this page will offer insurance advice and DIY guides on building a small business, presented through carousels and reels.

Encouraging Authenticity
Our mentorship approach encourages students to consider their audience's needs while staying true to themselves. We challenge them to develop unique, achievable, and helpful solutions that set them apart. For instance, a student passionate about psychology, folklore, and entrepreneurship was unsure how to showcase his individuality. Through brainstorming, we developed a tarot-style deck with Indian folktales and daily mental health messages. This creative project highlights the student's unique interests and shows his ability to make complex subjects accessible and engaging to a broader audience.

The Need to Foster Resilience and Adaptability
At Uppercase, we guide students in first-person research without writing their essays or doing their academic work. Many struggle to find and contact relevant experts. Our mentoring, similar to guiding young journalists, includes providing briefs, directing to sources, and preparing questions.

We help find contact details and suggest alternative experts if initial contacts are unresponsive. Emphasizing deadlines and efficiency, our approach builds resilience, adaptability, and agility—crucial skills in today's corporate world. Navigating these challenges helps students become better researchers and communicators.

The Importance of Active Involvement
Ensuring students actively participate in their research is crucial for several reasons. It fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter, cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they engage actively in seeking knowledge and addressing key issues. Contacting experts and gathering firsthand information also builds confidence and networking abilities, preparing students for professional interactions. Direct engagement with their research topics fosters ownership and responsibility, making their work more meaningful and impactful.

We maintain this approach in assisting projects. For example, when helping students create podcasts, we collaborate closely to develop guest lineups, episode structures, and prepare thought-provoking interview questions. Students research guests thoroughly to anticipate responses. These experiences provide practical skills essential in higher education and future careers, ensuring their readiness for challenges ahead.

Life and Success Beyond College
At Uppercase, we believe true thought leaders are distinguished by their unique perspectives, ability to delve beyond the obvious, and talent for reading between the lines. Guiding IB students to develop achievable and impactful ideas, we aim to nurture young thought leaders who stand out.

While our focus is on securing students' admission to top colleges, our role is to foster the mindset needed to navigate a complex, interconnected world. We encourage thinking outside the box while remaining grounded, preparing a generation of innovators poised to make a difference.

To ensure students benefit fully from their projects, we take a holistic approach. We guide them in understanding their audience's needs, fostering innovative, practical solutions that teach empathy and effective leadership.

Our mentorship transcends college preparation; it imparts life skills essential in any professional setting. By nurturing purpose and a drive for impact, we empower students to become well-rounded individuals ready for the challenges of today's world. We take pride in guiding students effectively, believing we shape future leaders and innovators poised to serve society. The responsibility of shaping these young minds lies with us—those who provide direction, influence, and inspiration. Together, we ensure these students are prepared to forge a brighter tomorrow.

ACT EXAM: FROM CENTRE STAGE TO SIDELINES

The Shifting Status of the ACT Exam

By
Ashish Kumar
Founder
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Ashish Kumar

Introduction

The ACT Exam is a standardized test that has long been a significant part of the college admissions process in the United States and other international universities worldwide. However, changing educational trends, policies, and student preferences have recently challenged its prominence.

Historical Context and Popularity

Introduced in 1959, the ACT was designed to measure high school students' college readiness. It is conducted six to seven times annually. It quickly gained popularity, especially in the Midwest and Southern states. By the early 2000s, over 1.5 million students took the ACT annually, solidifying its role in college admissions. The ACT peaked in 2012 with a record of 1.8 million test-takers, with states like Iowa, Ohio, and Michigan preferring it over the SAT due to its inclusion of a science section, which aligns well with a STEM-focused curriculum.

Then what went wrong?

Despite its historical dominance, the ACT has seen a 20% decrease in test-takers compared to its peak, with students increasingly preferring the SAT. States like Iowa and Ohio, once loyal to the ACT, are now seeing a decline in participation as more students choose the SAT. The reasons are detailed below:

1. **New Digital SAT Exam:** The SAT's shorter duration of 2 hours and 14 minutes appeals to students over the ACT's 2 hours and 55 minutes. According to the College Board, the average test-taking time reduction makes the SAT more attractive to a broader student base.

2. **Test Format and Content:** Research by The Princeton Review shows that students generally find the SAT format less stressful and more manageable than the ACT. The SAT's less stressful format, more time per question, organized reading questions, and formula sheet for math are preferred by students.

3. **Challenges Finding Test Centers:** ACT popularity has declined due to difficulties in finding nearby test centers. An NCES survey showed that 25% of students faced this issue, causing frustration and lower participation.

4. **Fear of the Science Section:** The ACT's science section has become a point of anxiety for many students. This additional section, requiring specific knowledge and analytical skills, has deterred some students from choosing the ACT over the SAT.

5. **Exam Difficulty:** The ACT is often seen as more challenging than the SAT. NACAC study found that 60% of students considered the ACT more difficult, influencing their preference for the SAT.

Recent Changes and Feedback

To evaluate a shorter version of the ACT exam, ACT.org conducted a pilot test with June 2024 test takers. This test aimed to gather feedback and analyze responses to the ACT's shorter format. Unaware of the format change, the students were randomly selected to take the shorter ACT exam. TutelaPrep's students who took part in the pilot provided specific feedback as follows:

1. **Content Feedback**

   - **English:** Questions focused on grammatical correctness and tone matching.
   - **Math:** The difficulty was random, with four answer choices instead of five.
   - **Reading:** Highlighted lines in questions eased navigation but discouraged comprehensive   reading.
   - **Science:** Navigating figures was challenging due to the inability to annotate them.

2. **User Experience:** The overall user experience with the new software could have been better. Issues included small screen sizes, clunky highlighting tools, and confusing administration of the test. Many students found the new format distracting and frustrating

Expert Opinions

Education experts and college admissions officers have mixed feelings about the ACT's changes. While some appreciate the attempt to modernize, others criticize the need for clearer communication and the potential impact on students' test experiences. Dr. Jane Smith, a college admissions expert, notes, "The shift towards test-optional policies has significantly impacted standardized testing. The ACT's recent changes are a step in the right direction, but they must address user experience issues to remain competitive.

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, the future of the ACT remains uncertain. Analysts predict continued decline unless significant improvements are made. The organization must address the concerns raised by recent test-takers and provide a clear, more student-friendly approach to stay relevant in the ever-evolving landscape of college admissions. The ACT organization could benefit from increasing transparency about any new changes or pilots. Clear communication and consent from students are essential to maintaining trust and credibility. Learning from the SAT's approach of involving volunteers in pilot studies could be a valuable strategy. By addressing current shortcomings and proactively adapting to new trends, the ACT can continue to play a meaningful role in helping students achieve their educational goals

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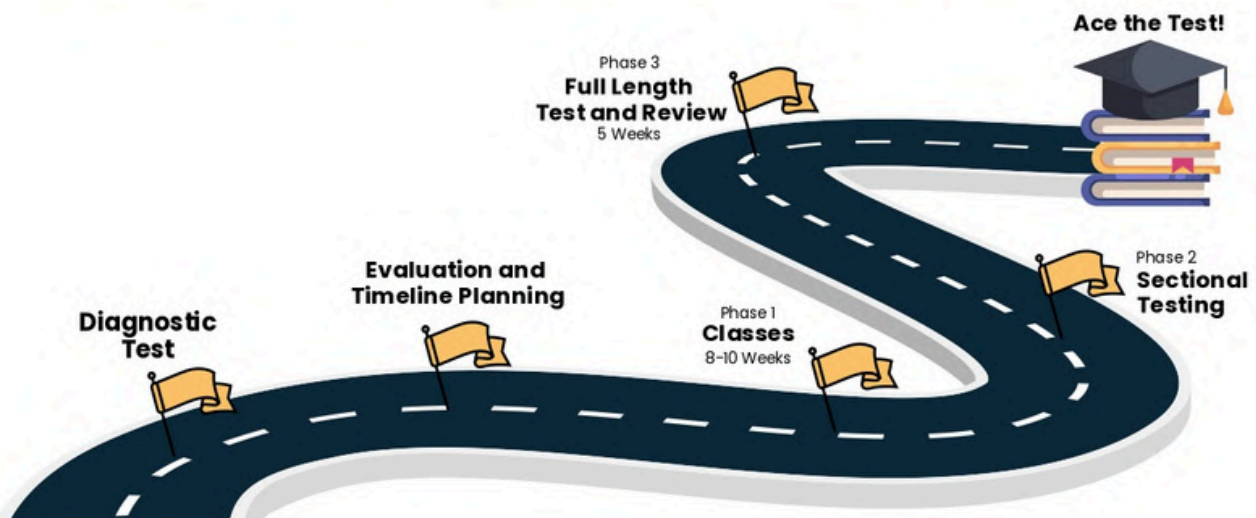
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