

## Cheat Sheet for International Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering your time to represent Vassar College overseas. Since over 11% of Vassar's student body comes from overseas, having dedicated alums represent the College around the world is very important for our continued success. We also recognize that there are some unique challenges to representing Vassar outside of the United States. Therefore, we have compiled this "cheat sheet" to provide a few tips for you when you meet with students at college fairs and/or one-on-one.

### Why Choose a US Liberal Arts College

**Note** that some students might be confused by the term "College," which outside of the US is often used for secondary schools. Be prepared to explain that in the US "College" is used interchangeably with "University" and both grant 4-year bachelor degrees. Also be prepared to explain that "liberal arts" is short for "liberal arts and sciences," and many students major in the sciences as well as the social sciences, arts and humanities.

Below are a few key points to stress with students & parents regarding the benefits of a US liberal arts college.

- **Academic Flexibility:** Students do not need prior preparation to choose a major, nor do they need to choose a major/course of studies in advance. A well rounded, secondary school curriculum is the best preparation for a Vassar education. Majors/concentrations are chosen after enrollment, usually during the second year, allowing students the option to explore multiple areas before deciding—and even change their mind.
- **Academic Breadth:** Even after choosing a major, typically 2/3 of a student's courses will be outside a major. Rather than just a narrow education, students graduate with broad-based knowledge across many fields, and can even choose additional majors unrelated to the first.
- **Adaptability:** A broad-based liberal arts education gives students multiple skills. Training is not just for one profession, but rather provides skills for any future path to allow them to be more well-rounded and adaptable to a changing job market. Emphasis is on critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, with opportunities to pursue study in many different academic areas.
- **Discussion-based courses:** Rather than large, impersonal lectures, the style of instruction is small seminar classes. Small class sizes allow for much interaction with the professor and peers, and promote active learning. Students are actively engaged in their education rather than passive listeners.
- **Emphasis on the Undergraduate:** Unlike at larger universities, liberal arts colleges only offer undergraduate bachelor's degrees. The absence of graduate students pursuing masters or doctorate degrees means 100% of faculty time and resources are devoted to the undergraduates. All the research opportunities on campus go to the undergraduate students.
- **Holistic grading:** Course grades are not based solely on one final exam. Grades are given based on a combination of work done throughout the academic semester, including class participation.
- **Campus life:** Completely residential communities mean that students live on campus for all four years. Housing is generally guaranteed and on-campus for all four years. College life is all-encompassing, not just a part of a student's day. Many offerings in activities, the arts, and sports provide further means of growth. The diverse campus community becomes a major avenue for learning outside of the classroom.

**Important Points for Vassar with International Students**

- **Admissions:** Students may use the Common, Coalition, or Questbridge Application. The primary criterion is academic ability as demonstrated by superior performance in secondary school; about 90% of matriculated students rank in the top 15% of their high school classes. All students must present the same standardized tests (SAT or ACT-- the writing sections of both tests and SAT II subject tests are not required). A TOEFL/IELTS is only required if English is neither the first language nor the primary language of instruction used throughout secondary school. Vassar expects scores of at least 100 on the TOEFL (although virtually all admitted students have higher scores). Vassar also accepts the IELTS Academic Test with a minimum score of 7.0.

Students may ask what they must get on their IB exams or A-levels for admission. Although Vassar does not have a required minimum, the most competitive applicants will have a predicted IB score in the high 30s/low 40s, or two As and a B on the A-levels. If questions about an individual student's competitiveness become more specific, please refer them to the Office of Admission.

- **Financial Aid:** Vassar does offer need-based financial aid to international students applying as freshmen and is one of the leading providers of financial assistance to international students among American colleges and universities. However, Vassar is not need-blind in the evaluation of international students as the number of scholarships available is limited. Therefore, admission as an international aid applicant is very competitive. If admitted, Vassar meets 100% of the candidate's demonstrated financial need for all four years. Vassar currently awards nearly \$1 million/year to each entering class of international students.

\*\* Students who are neither US citizens nor permanent residents who wish to be considered for financial aid at any time during their four years at Vassar should apply at the same time that they apply for admission. Those admitted without financial aid subsequently would not be eligible to receive Vassar funding during their years at the college, except under the most extreme circumstances (i.e., death of a wage-earning parent, natural disaster, etc.). \*\*

- **Advanced Credit** is available for many international credentials. Vassar awards up to two units of credit for International Baccalaureate scores of 5, 6, or 7 on the Higher Level examinations. (No credit for IB Standard Level courses.)

Vassar also grants credit for high marks on certain foreign advanced programs of study. Common examples include: GCE/Cambridge A-Level exams with a grade of A or B (as well as Cambridge Pre-U courses); French Baccalaureate exams with a minimum coefficient of 4 and a minimum score of 11; German Abitur exams with minimum score of 10; CAPE exams with a grade of I or II.

- **Rankings:** Vassar is consistently ranked among the top 1% of all colleges and universities in the United States and was recently ranked #11 in US News & World Report Top Liberal Arts College List.
- **Location:** Poughkeepsie is only 120 km (75 miles) from NYC and easily accessible on public transportation from all major NYC airports.
- **Weather:** Poughkeepsie weather is much like the temperate climate of New York City. The average temperature in the winter months is about 30°F (-1°C), and in the summer months about 80°F (27°C). We are not located in a "snow-belt." However, moderate snowfall is the norm during the winter.
- **Number of international students:** About 15% of Vassar students hold non-U.S. citizenship and represent 60 countries. The largest representation of our international students comes from: China/Hong Kong, India, Japan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, UK, Vietnam, Canada, and Korea.
- **Advising:** Vassar's Office of International Services (OIS) provides year-round assistance to all international students and scholars, including help with the visa/immigration process, workshops on summer and post-completion employment, and programming designed to help students adjust to life in the United States. Beyond the staff of the office, several student interns - who are international students themselves - are available (now and during the academic year) to answer questions.
- **Housing:** Vassar guarantees campus housing to all students for all four years. International students wishing to remain on campus during the academic breaks may stay in campus housing.