

The Importance of The Name of The School and Advisor in Graduate Studies

One common question, especially from foreign students who desire to pursue their studies in the US, what school should I target?

Some facts to keep in consideration:

- 1- The US has over 2000 accredited schools who offer high degrees in medicine, engineering, science, art, linguistics, business, accounting, Human Resources, etc.
- 2- There are different ranking systems and criteria.
- 3- Admissions for non-resident students maybe more challenging and costly
- 4- English, GRE, GMAT, and other tests may be required and can play a significant role in the admission process
- 5- Financial support is limited to those who qualify
- 6- Background and academic records are very critical
- 7- Area of research and finding an interested professor is very helpful
- 8- Having an undergraduate degree from a US school makes a big difference and can waive English requirements
- 9- There is no doubt that the name MIT on the resume is way more attractive than a school with a rank of 200, for instance. However, and especially for international students, it is very difficult to get into a high-ranked school like MIT.

So, what is the solution for such a challenge? It is as simple as this:

- 1- score high in the required examinations (TOEFL, GRE, etc.).
- 2- need to almost be an A student in your undergrad
- 3- earn your undergraduate degree from a decent accredited school
- 4- have practical experience (a year or two), is a plus, maybe couple of publications too!
- 5- allocate a well-known professor in that school and establish a high profile communication with her/him
- 6- prove to that professor that you deserve to join her/his crew
- 7- Secure a financial support, whether through the professor or through family.

This will almost guarantee your admission.

Now, what if one of these conditions was not met, should you give up on going to graduate schools? The simple answer is NO.

Instead, think about an alternative, lower the rank of the school from top 20 to maybe top 100, and remember that the US has 2000+ schools. You are still good, and guess what? You can make the difference and compensate for the deficit through the quality research and publications that you can control. You couldn't control your GPA during your undergrad or you failed to impress the system with a high TOEFL/GRE scores or you couldn't find an interested professor or

financial support became an issue, or for whatever reason you were not able to get into one of the top 20 schools. It is ok, you need to have plan a B; for example get into top 100 school for master's degree and later on, move to a higher rank school. What if you already have a master's degree from abroad and your BSc GPA was below 4.0 or even slightly below 3.0? You can still do it, you can obtain a PhD from lower tier school and develop a resume to make it attractive enough to be, at least, interviewed at one of the big companies, research centers or educational institute. Everything is possible with hard work and determination, sincerity and good intentions are always required throughout this journey.