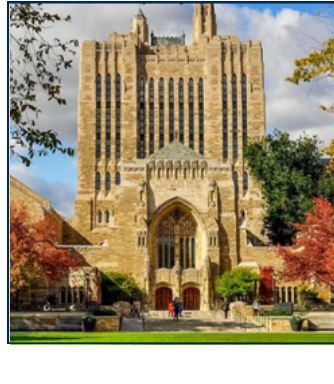


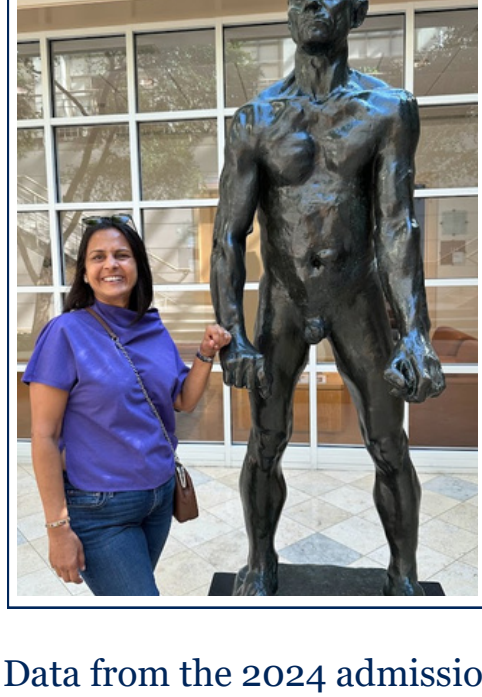


ON POINT INSIGHTS

Navigating higher ed



From the Counselor's Desk...



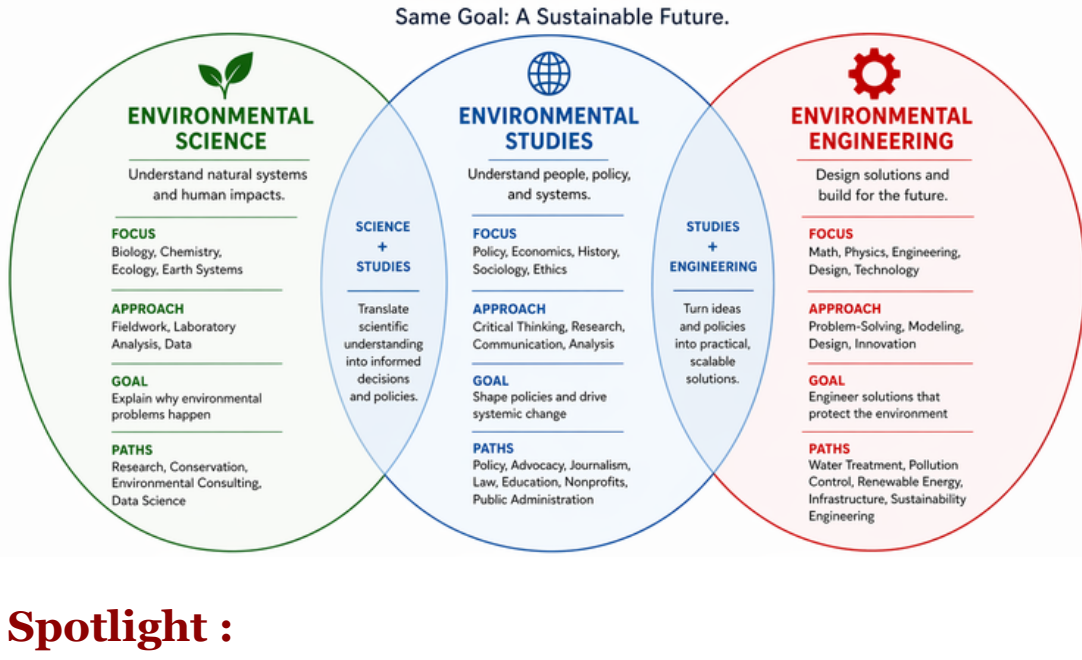
One of the unsettling aspects of the admissions season is when a student with perfect grades and a thoughtful application is denied. What's even more confusing is when they are rejected not from a dream school but from one considered a match. The instinct is to assume the application was not well prepared. But that is not always the full story. Admissions offices are often evaluating not just the strength of an application but are shaping a class while managing enrollment numbers. If a college admits 1,000 students and 320 enroll, the yield rate is 32%. Selective colleges work hard to protect and improve this number each cycle.

Data from the 2024 admissions cycle shows how inconsistent outcomes can be. **Princeton University** admitted 3% of students from the waitlist for the fall of 2024. **Williams College** admitted 13% of students from the waitlist. At the top 20 ranked national universities and liberal arts colleges, **waitlist admission rates ranged from about 3% to 13%, with an average close to 10%.**

And in that process, only one question matters: If we admit this student, how likely are they to say yes? And that is often the hardest part to remember. Not every rejection means something was lacking. Some outcomes reveal less about the student and more about the institutional priorities behind the process.

Raise the Bar with Research Projects...

While admissions officers say they don't look at research papers, such projects give students an opportunity to demonstrate academic curiosity. The question is not whether research “matters,” but what it actually represents in the context of an application. Delving into meaningful research indicates one’s ability to pivot — from learning passively to asking questions actively. It reflects the willingness to explore ideas independently and engage with a subject beyond the classroom. That is where its real value lies. As with any academic pursuit, the starting point matters. Is the paper a regurgitation of existing literature, or is the exploration connecting dots across domains and experiences? Consider a student whose interest in financial decision-making began through participation in the Wharton Investment Competition. Rather than stopping at portfolio strategy, she explored the behavioral patterns behind risk-taking. Extending this investigation to how biases influence academic decision-making, she gathered primary data and wrote a paper comparing parallels between psychological and sociological drivers of high-risk behaviors in finance and education. What began as an interest in markets gradually evolved into a deeper inquiry into how people make decisions under pressure. What stands out is not the research paper format, but a curiosity that moves beyond the surface, the initiative to ask and answer one’s own questions, and the ability to connect ideas across disciplines. It signals someone who is analytical, reflective, and willing to engage with complexity — qualities that are hard to replicate. Not everyone needs to engage in research, but those who do should approach it with intention and curiosity to reflect the intellectual depth universities value.



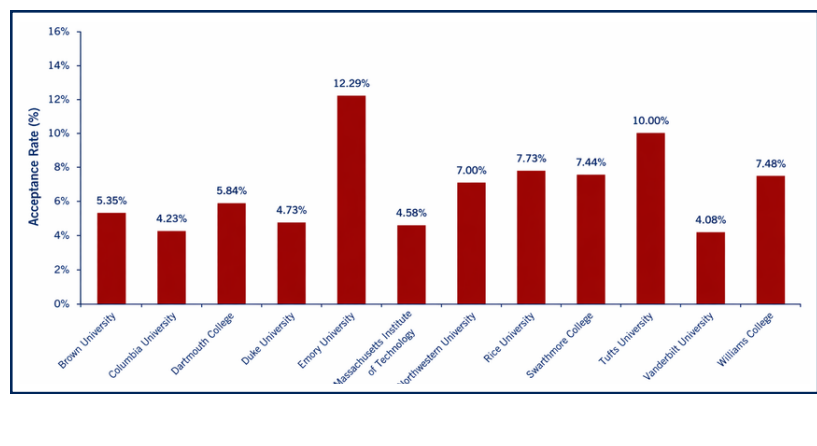
Degree Spotlight : Environmental Science / Environmental Studies / Environmental Engineering

If one cares about the environment and is wondering which degree fits, it helps to understand the differences. Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, and Environmental Engineering all address the same urgent global challenges in very different ways. Grounded in biology, chemistry, and ecology, **Environmental Science** is for those who want to understand natural systems and human impacts through fieldwork and data. On the other hand, **Environmental Studies** tends to feel closer to a liberal arts education than a traditional science degree. Weaving together policy, economics, history, and social science, this course of study suits students drawn to advocacy, journalism, law, or systemic change. **Environmental Engineering** is the most technical of the three, sitting squarely within the engineering faculty and combining rigorous mathematics, physics, and design thinking to develop solutions such as water treatment systems, pollution control infrastructure, and clean energy technologies. Where Science explains why a river is contaminated and Studies helps build the policy response, Engineering designs the plant that actually cleans it. The clearest way to navigate the choice is to ask yourself one question: do you want to study the problem, shape the conversation around it, or engineer a fix for it?

What’s Happening In Higher Ed?

The Big 4

Admissions are becoming more competitive, with **record-low admit rates** reflecting rising selectivity. On the other hand, surging US **F-1 visa refusals** last year add another layer of uncertainty for international students. **Yale sets an example for reinstating public trust in**



admissions fairness, and the purpose of higher education.

The **demographic cliff** is expected to shrink the US domestic high school student pool, forcing institutions to rethink enrollment strategies, even as some **private colleges face increasing risk of closure.**

Policy recalibration is underway across key markets, with the **US considering protections for OPT.** Canada is continuing to **adjust its international student system** and introducing **hybrid study models and targeted scholarships**, while also **simplifying co-op work rules** to improve access and flexibility for international students. In the UK, however, the environment is tightening. **Post-study work rights**

are being reduced, and international enrolments have already dropped by **30% year on year**, reinforcing a more restrictive outlook for international graduates.

Country	US News Global Ranking 2024	QS World University Rankings 2024	THE World University Rankings 2024	ARWU World University Rankings 2024
Switzerland	100	83	86	72
Germany	100	82	85	71
France	100	81	84	70
United Kingdom	100	80	83	69
United States of America	100	79	82	71
Canada	100	78	81	70
China	100	77	80	69
Japan	100	76	79	68
South Korea	100	75	78	67
India	100	74	77	66
Australia	100	73	76	65
New Zealand	100	72	75	64

Beyond the Big Four

The **Henley Opportunity Index** signals a clear shift: countries like **Switzerland** and Singapore are outperforming traditional “Big 4” destinations in education-linked opportunity and mobility. A group of **14 countries**, including France and Germany, is also pushing back against the dominance of this model.

Indonesia is exploring visa reforms to attract more students, and Germany is emerging as one of the most **strategic destinations for international students** as it turns to global talent to offset a shrinking workforce.

Student demand is becoming more sensitive to global events, with **interest in Gulf destinations dropping sharply.**

No student left behind: inclusion is increasingly shaping higher education across the Asia-Pacific. At the same time, India is strengthening its position as a **global education hub**, with inbound student numbers expected to rise steadily. This momentum is reflected in **global rankings**, where India is expanding its presence alongside the **growing visibility of Southeast Asia**, led by Singapore and Malaysia.

Testimonial

“Rachna Ma'am is one of the most honest college counselors you will get, who is not just going to treat you as one of the pack, but rather personally, depending on where you are, where you want to apply, and what you want to study. I think the way she handled my own personal problems along with school deadlines and stuff was very good. I think there is nothing I would want differently with my results and final application.”

Vivaan Poddar
Rhode Island School of Design
Class of 2030

