

# Is Attending an Ivy League Worth It? The Real Benefits of an Ivy League Education

**Learn the truth about the advantages and drawbacks of attending an Ivy League school**



IS THE IVY LEAGUE WORTH IT?

## Introduction

Deciding **which schools to apply to** is the first major step in your child's college application journey. And if your child is a high-achieving student, they've likely given consideration to applying to an Ivy League school.

Everyone has heard of the "Ivy League," a group of eight private universities defined by their membership in the same collegiate athletic conference. The Ivy League comprises **Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, Columbia, Cornell**, and the **University**

In this post, we'll lay out some of the benefits of attending an Ivy League, while digging into some common concerns.

## Want to know exactly what it takes to get into Ivy League schools?

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## The Benefits of an Ivy League Education

### Excellence of peers and faculty

The selective nature of each of these universities means that your child will be surrounded by stellar students in the classroom, dining hall, and dorm. And while each student accepted to an Ivy League university generally has strong test scores and academic performance, most Ivy League undergrads are also accomplished in [extracurricular activities](#) and notably engaged in their communities. Such a remarkable student body leads to an enriching academic and social experience for all students.

These universities don't just draw the best students, but some of the most standout faculty as well—winners of Pulitzers and Nobel Prizes. Because the resources of Ivy League universities allow them to offer small seminars taught by top faculty, even to freshmen, your child will have direct access to brilliant researchers and academics. As a student at Harvard, your child could choose from a [range of freshmen seminars](#) such as “Broadway Musicals: History and Performance” taught by Carol Oja, the Chair of Harvard's Department of Music and the Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence at the New York Philharmonic. At Yale, your child might take the freshman seminar “What History Teaches” with Pulitzer Prize winner and renowned historian John Gaddis.

That's one of the key differences between Ivy League schools and large public universities. While larger public universities certainly have brilliant faculty on staff, they may have less time with students, and/or be more concerned with publishing or researching. Larger Ivy League universities like Cornell and smaller colleges like Dartmouth alike place an emphasis on teaching.

### Lifelong Ivy League network

Your student won't only benefit from engaging with other extraordinary students and faculty during her four years of college. Her peers will go on to pursue a wide variety of careers, meaning your child will have access to a rich network for the rest of her life.

In addition, your child can find similar internship opportunities in the United States, as well as abroad through the [International Internship Program](#). Every Ivy League university will offer your child an alumni database that she can access to help find her dream internship.

And if there is a specific field your child is interested in, attending an Ivy League may give her a leg up. Harvard is known for having an especially strong entertainment industry network, organized as “[Harvardwood](#).”

Research also shows how Ivy League graduates are overrepresented in leadership roles in the corporate and political worlds. [One study](#) showed that nearly a third of Fortune 500 directors and CEOs attended elite undergraduate institutions (note that these institutions were not limited to the Ivy League).

### Availability of resources

Ivy League universities command a tremendous amount of resources. With their [massive endowment funds](#), each of these universities can afford to offer research funding, Broadway-level performance spaces, enormous libraries, and the support your student might need to initiate their own unique extracurricular group, academic project, or small business. However, each Ivy League university also boasts a unique set of offerings and your child should consider which of these schools commands the resources that best match their interests.

(Suggested reading: [How to Create Your Perfect College List](#))

If your child is an aspiring visual artist, they will have access to renowned faculty and studio space at [Brown University](#). If your child is looking for a foundational education in humanities, they might want to attend Columbia University for its [Core Curriculum](#) or Yale University for its [Directed Studies Program](#). Or if your child craves access to hiking trails, skiing, or cabins they can rent through their college, [Dartmouth](#) might be a good fit.

### Name recognition

Some say there isn’t much value to an Ivy League diploma other than the name. The truth in this statement is that “the name” does carry some value. In addition to serving as an entry point to the alumni network, an Ivy League school listed at the top of his resume can help your child land his first job out of college, as well as internships and other opportunities while he’s in college. Ivy League universities took up half of the slots in the top ten of [the 2019 Global University Employability Ranking](#), compiled based on the perspectives of job recruiters.

While [research shows](#) attending a selective institution may not have a notable positive impact on student learning, job satisfaction, or well being, attending an Ivy League or comparably elite university has been found to have a measurable positive effect on future earnings for some student populations.

Attending a university with a 100-point higher average SAT score (most Ivy Leagues fall under this category compared to most other schools) [has been found](#) to increase future earnings for women by 14 percent. And [another study](#) showed that students from low-income backgrounds who attend elite colleges on average earn more than those from low-income backgrounds who attend less prestigious schools.

Attending an Ivy League college can also provide students with [an edge](#) if they decide to apply to graduate school.

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## Drawbacks of Attending an Ivy League School

### High costs of tuition

Another commonly held assumption about Ivy League universities is that they are expensive. Tuition and room and board for these schools doesn't run cheap. In 2019-2020, the average sticker price of tuition and fees at an Ivy came out to **\$54,414**.

But while this number is undoubtedly high, it is also somewhat misleading, given that these schools generally have large endowments and can offer generous financial aid packages to all students with financial need.

For example, while Yale's cost of tuition and fees in 2019-2020 was \$55,000, the average cost for all Yale students, after factoring in financial aid and grants, came out to just \$17,000, with the **average need based scholarship** offered coming out to \$55,100. At Brown University, the most recent average financial aid award was \$42,445, and at Princeton that number came out to a whopping \$53,100. Every Ivy League university is need blind, meaning that the ability to pay for college won't hurt any student's chances for admission.

And if your child does graduate from an Ivy League with loans, they're likely to go on to **make more money** than their peers who attended other colleges, meaning they'll be able to pay off those loans sooner.

The amount of need-based financial aid many Ivy League students receive and the ultimate return on investment helps explain why U.S. News ranks seven out of the eight Ivy League schools in the top twenty of their "Best Value Schools" (Cornell, ranked at #23, is just outside of the top twenty).

### Competitiveness

Many parents worry that sending their child to an Ivy League will mean sending them to be a small fish in a big pond. It's true that the freshman year of college can be an adjustment period for students who are used to leading within their high school classrooms or for those who are encountering imposter syndrome and worrying they can't compete with their peers.

However, your child will soon realize that she was admitted because the admissions committee knew that she would excel in an environment where she would be surrounded by equally engaged academic leaders. In general, there's a sense at Ivy League universities that instead of competing for a few plumb internships, academic opportunities, or, eventually, jobs, there is room for everyone in the student body to thrive.

group of Asian / American students recently [sued Harvard](#) for discriminating against them with their admissions policy.

(Suggested reading: [Asian American Discrimination in College Admissions: Myths, Facts, and Strategies](#))

While the Ivies still have a long way to go toward becoming more inclusive and supportive institutions, they have made strides in recent years. Previously mentioned generous financial aid policies allow these universities to offer financial support to students from low income backgrounds. The undergraduate communities at these schools are also becoming more racially diverse, with the [majority of Harvard's incoming class](#) being nonwhite for the first time in 2017 and 55 percent of students [accepted into Cornell's class of 2023](#) identifying as students of color.

### Low student to faculty ratios

While most Ivy League universities are not considered “small,” with undergraduate enrollment ranging from around 4,000 at Dartmouth to over 15,000 at Cornell, the level of resources they offer means that your child may receive more individual, personal attention than they would at many other colleges. The Ivies have a [low student-to-staff ratio](#), with Yale's the lowest at 5.4 students to every one staff member.

At an Ivy League school, your student will also have access to various academic and student life advisors, tutors, and one-on-one relationships with professors. Residential advisors may be more involved and supportive than they would be at other schools, with [Yale's First-Year Counselor Program](#) and [Harvard's Proctor Program](#) giving freshmen the chance to foster relationships with exceptional upperclassmen who can help with the transition to college.

## Final Thoughts

Gaining admission to an Ivy League university is never easy, and that adage about the hardest part being getting in isn't quite true either, but should your child be accepted at one of these schools, a wide range of benefits will be available to them. If your child will be served by what an Ivy League university can offer, then applying is worth the effort.



### About the Author

**Dr. Shirag Shemmassian** is the Founder of Shemmassian Academic Consulting and one of the world's foremost experts on college admissions. For nearly 20 years, he and his team have helped thousands of students get into top programs like Harvard, Stanford, and MIT using his exclusive approach.



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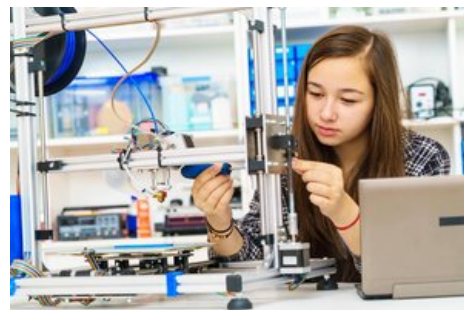
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My daughter is a senior with a 4.5 GPA and she did not get into any Ivy league schools. I do not know what went wrong, but I have been reading that many of the Freshmen last year took a gap year and this created fewer seats for the Freshmen this year. She also did not submit a SAT/ACT score, and I am reading that even though the universities said it was not required, it appears that they really did consider it and this had an impact on a student being admitted or not. She is planning on attending a school ranked in the top 30 schools this fall, but it is not a school that she wants to go to and she has drifted into despair this last semester. I am just trying to see what to do to help her get into a better school next year.



**Dr. Shemmassian** 9 months ago · 0 Likes

Hello Dottie,

Thanks for reaching out. While I'm glad your daughter got into a top 30 school, I'm sorry to hear that she did not get into Ivies.

The 2020-2021 application cycle was the toughest ever. The "deferral issue" you highlighted is one reason. Moving forward, your daughter will need to decide whether she wants to take a gap year and reapply for freshman admissions vs. enroll this Fall and apply for sophomore or junior transfer. Read this to learn more: <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/how-to-transfer-colleges>