



Start of Year: 2026–2027

Dear ISB Families,

I am writing to you live from our second annual U.S. College Application Bootcamp, an intensive, four-day experience that has quickly become a cornerstone of our university counseling program.

Working with roughly 80 rising seniors before the official school year even begins is no small feat. It requires an extraordinary level of care, energy, and expertise, and I could not be prouder of our team's dedication. As we embark together on a new and exciting school year, I am deeply grateful for the exceptional colleagues I work alongside every day. A heartfelt thank you to **Becky, Doug, Swati, and Taylor** for their unwavering commitment to our students!

As I do every summer, I spent time connecting with university admissions officers and counseling colleagues across the globe. This year, however, felt remarkably different. I received more unsolicited praise for our students, our school, and our counselors than ever before. Admissions officers specifically highlighted how much they value our community's **authenticity**.

In an era when [the integrity of application essays and personal achievements is increasingly questioned](#), our refusal to acquiesce to pattern-matching behaviors, embellished "passion projects," and ghostwritten essays is what's beginning to set our students apart. ISB University Counseling coaches students to step into their own stories with confidence. We encourage them to own their high school experience—growing as curious, resilient individuals rather than "optimizing" their time solely in an attempt to control admissions outcomes. As a result, we are building a foundation of deep trust with university evaluators and a growing interest in our students.

But candidly, I continue to receive questions that remind me we still have much work to do as a community to shift this mindset:

- **"Should my student stop playing their instrument so they can focus more on the SAT?"**
If they find fulfillment in music, absolutely not. High school should not be about stripping away joy and personal expression in exchange for test prep, especially when universities care deeply about sustained commitment and personal growth.
- **"What should they do to build their profile?"**
Let's ask your child. Strong profiles aren't manufactured; they emerge naturally when students pursue what genuinely excites them and choose to dive in deep. Hopefully intellectual stimulation and purpose beyond personal gain become part of that.

Moving forward, it is critical that we as a community continue to protect and nurture a culture of organic personal development and authentic engagement. We must support our students in becoming the best, most genuine versions of themselves rather than feeling pressured to fulfill a perceived checklist of "activities that look good."

To help guide us in protecting our students from unhealthy "check-the-box" behaviors, I highly encourage all parents and community members to read Making Caring Common's [Turning the Tide in 2026 report](#). It offers essential reading and insights into how U.S. colleges are reshaping admissions to prioritize authentic engagement, character, and student well-being over superficial stress. As a department, we are aligned with these principles, and it drives our work with your children.

We look forward to walking alongside you in the year ahead. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our team at any point.

Grade Level University Counseling Events on the Horizon

We have an exciting semester ahead, with events planned for every grade level. While our first semester is heavily focused on seniors, *every* high school student has already been assigned a university counselor (found in PowerSchool), including our incoming Grade 9s.

Here are key dates for each family grade-level information evening:

- **Grade 12:** August 20
 - **Grade 11:** September 1 [Webinar]
 - **Grade 9:** September 23
 - **Grade 10:** December 2
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College and University Visit to ISB

Our **Global University Fair** returns to ISB on **Thursday, September 17**, showcasing over 200 colleges and universities. This is an excellent opportunity for all high school students to meet university admissions officers in person. And our **Thai University Fair** will take place on **Thursday, October 29**.

Over the last few years, we have seen a significant increase in our students attending small, private U.S. colleges because of the ISB-like class sizes and close teacher-student relationship that fosters powerful mentorship. The word is out among these colleges, and this year many of them are choosing to visit Bangkok just to see our students. Look out for **Liberal Arts Week** starting on Friday, August 28. On **Monday, August 31 at 6:30 PM**, Deans and Directors of Admission from Bates, Claremont McKenna, Davidson, Haverford, Colgate, and Wellesley will join us for a special evening roundtable that you do not want to miss: **Unlocking the Liberal Arts: An Evening with 6 Highly Selective U.S. Colleges**.

Later that week, [InitialView](#) (more on our partnership next week) is bringing a group of colleges to visit one campus in Thailand. Yes, that's us! While I will be opening that event to other schools in the area, we love that it's our opportunity to be their host. See below for details.

In partnership,

Curt Nichols
Director of University Counseling



ADMISSIONS OFFICERS FROM TOP UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES:



**Carnegie
Mellon
University**



**THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY**
WASHINGTON, DC



**Northwestern
QATAR**



UC Berkeley



VASSAR



INITIALVIEW 2026

FALL TOUR



<https://initialview.com/admissions-tour>

**3
SEP**

Thursday

3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

**International
School
Bangkok**

Sign up now!



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