



How to strengthen your applications and profile for MS and MIS?

NISTHA TRIPATHI

MS CS, UIUC

MBA Dropout, NYU Stern

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Director of Operations, Yipit

Founder, Scholar Strategy



Nistha Tripathi



- When I was an engineer, I thought that I could never manage to study in USA, I am from a middle-class family. Thank God, I did not give up.
- I went to Top 10 schools in USA for my MS and MBA
- I earned \$100K+ seven years ago
- In last one year, I have helped 50+ students go to Top 40 universities in USA.

SCHOLAR

STRATEGY

So, I know that studying abroad is for anyone and everyone. Many students have built a successful career by studying abroad and so can YOU.

Agenda

1. Secrets to a winning application
2. Student Profiles – How we helped students get into top schools?
3. How to strengthen your profile?
4. About Scholar Strategy
5. Q and A

SECRETS OF A WINNING APPLICATION

What matters?

- ✓ GPA
- ✓ Reputation of your undergraduate program
- ✓ Academic background
- ✓ Research/Professional Experience
- ✓ GRE score
- ✓ Extra curricular

PLAN early – FALL TIMELINE

✓ JULY - SEP

- Take GRE/TOEFL to have enough time to retake if necessary
- Retake GRE if required by Sep

✓ OCT

- Shortlist Schools
- Drop emails to relevant Professors you are interested to work with (especially for people interested in research)
- Apply for WES if any of your shortlisted schools require it
- Order transcripts from your undergraduate college
- Check for scholarships available in India (so that you can apply by the stated deadlines)

✓ NOV - DEC

- Finalize SOP, essays and LORs
- Fill the application online and send application packets where required

✓ JAN

- Follow up on the status of your applications and if the required material has been received by the schools

Timeline continued...

- ✓ MAR
 - Receive results
- ✓ APR
 - Submit financial docs for I-20
- ✓ MAY
 - Finalize your school and apply for education loan
- ✓ JUN
 - Appear for visa interview
- ✓ JULY-AUG
 - Arrive on the campus (2 weeks earlier if you need to look for funding on campus)

Do not ignore your weakness

Address the weak points in your profile - Tell the admission committee why they don't reflect your capability

- “My GRE exam happened to coincide with a big project release at my work. The professional in me could not let my work suffer and unfortunately in the process, I had to compromise with my GRE preparation. Without seeking an excuse, I can only request the admissions committee to not judge my candidacy by my GRE score alone.”

When to apply for specialized programs?

- E.g. MS Software Engineering, MS Cybersecurity, MS Embedded Systems
- Pros – If you have relevant work-ex in the field, you will be more competitive and chances of admission higher. Fewer students apply to these
- Cons – You are narrowing your focus and limiting your professional opportunities upon graduation

HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR PROFILE?

Matters especially when you are from non-IIT,
non-NIT, non-BITS background.

How to demonstrate your capability to succeed?

Get Research/ Industrial Experience

- Research ex matters more for core MS and PhD
- Industrial more for MIS and MEM
- Do summer and semester internships – can get professional LORs
- E.g. Diploma courses at CDAC

Develop Skills

- Learn skills relevant to your area of interest
- Use MOOCs to compensate for low grades
- Compensate for different major
 - For example, if you are expressing an interest in Computer Security and your college did not offer enough relevant electives, you can take such of courses on a MOOC.
 - E.g. SAS certification for Business Analytics

Example

- One of my students, from Chemical Engg background, took certifications to apply for MSBA programs
- One student, going for Embedded Sys, had lower grades in college. He did CDAC Diploma and scored very high

Hands-on training/ real-world projects

- May be you can learn a new software to help manage accounts at your friend's Dad's shop?
Any kind of real experience will give you something to talk about!

Extra-curricular/Community projects

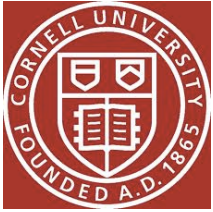
- More helpful for MIS/MEM
- Show leadership qualities
- Show how these make you a better professional
- E.g. playing chess can show a strength for strategic thinking

How we improved prospect of our students?

STUDENT PROFILES

Student 1 – MS CS

- BE Computer Science and Engineering from BMS Bangalore
- GPA – 9.36
- GRE – 301
- 2 years of software engineering experience at a global bank and research internship at CDAC Bangalore



What we did?



- Focus on professional MS/M.Eng programs, apply to non GRE centric schools
- No specific area of Interest
 - Came up with Network Security and general CS that fitted with his background
- Get LORs that justify those areas and ambitions
- Reinforce story in SOP, cover the GRE weakness

Student 2 – MS EE

- BE Electrical Engineering from BMS Bangalore
- GPA – 7.76
- GRE – 311
- Experience – Good internship and 1.5 years solid research experience from IISc and RRI (2 International journal research publications with him being the 1st author)
- Area of Interest – Computer Vision and Robotics
- Applied ambitiously first time and NO ADMITS

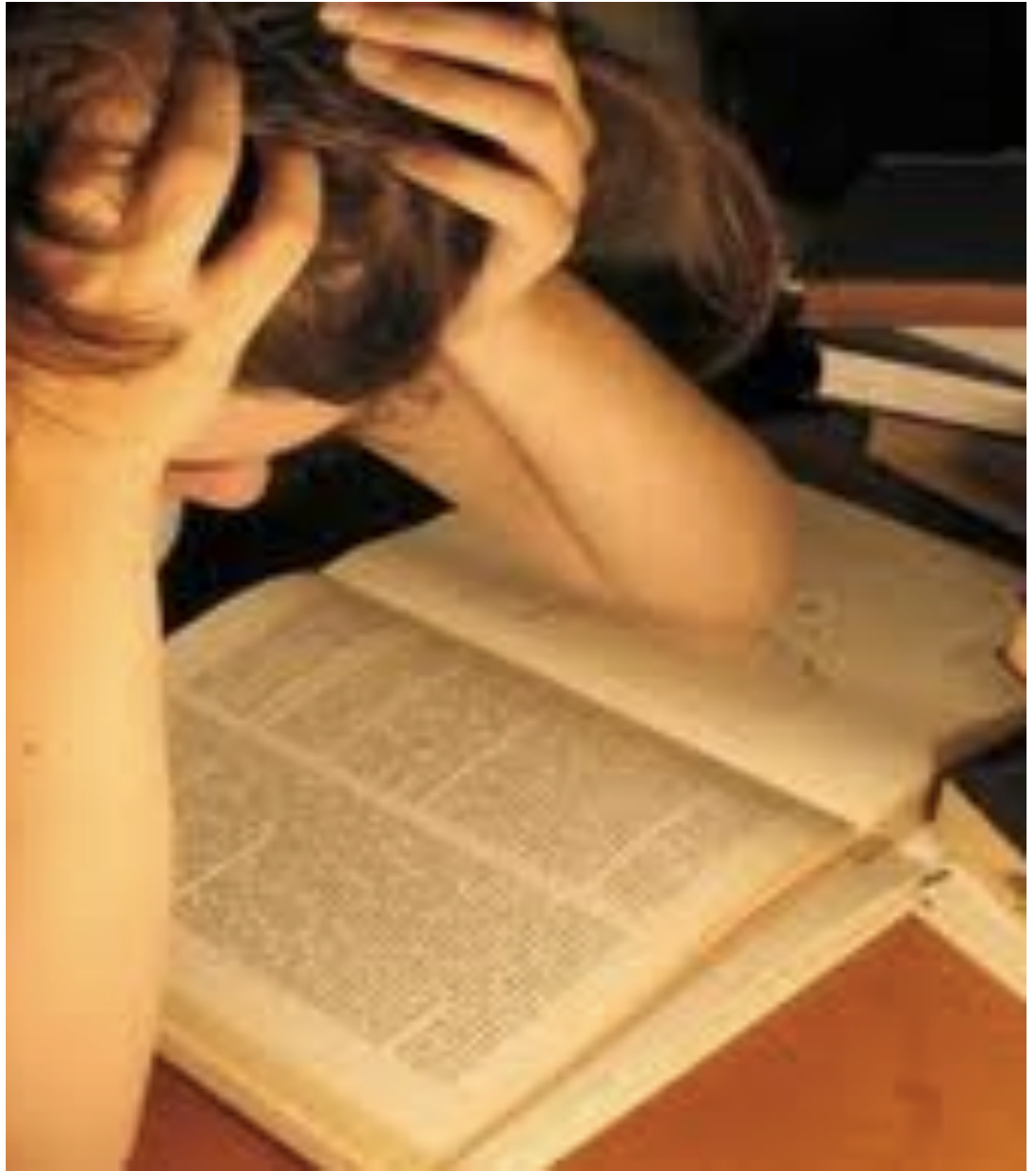
What we did?

- Fewer choices in Spring – apply early and focused on schools that would fit with the background
- Don't go by overall ranking alone
- Got into WPI – Top 10 program in Robotics



GPA MATTERS MORE THAN GRE for Core Engineering Programs

Lesson # 1



Student 3 – MS in MIS

- BE Computer Science and Engineering from NIT Allahabad
- GPA – 8.55
- GRE – 332
- 3 years of software engineering experience at Oracle, not outstanding but good

What we did?

- Laser focused on MIS
- Applied more aggressively since scores were high

Carnegie Mellon University
HeinzCollege

The logo for the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona. It features a stylized blue 'A' with a red outline, containing a red 'A' with a blue outline. Below the 'A' is the word 'ARIZONA' in blue. To the right of the 'A' is a vertical line, followed by the word 'Eller' in a large, blue, serif font.

The logo for the Mays Business School at Texas A&M University. It features a white 'ATM' monogram on a dark red background. To the right of the monogram is a vertical line, followed by the text 'MAYS BUSINESS SCHOOL' in white, bold, uppercase letters, and 'TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY' in white, uppercase letters below it.

Student 4 – MEM

- BE Computer Science and Engineering from Amrita College, Bangalore
- GPA – 7.88
- GRE – 312
- One year of average software engineering experience at Cognizant
- Summer course at Stanford

What we did?

- Laser focused on MEM, Re-applicant
- Improved the SOP a lot, earlier SOP looked like regurgitated version of her resume. Now we crafted a story that highlighted her global exposure and took attention away from weak work-ex



Student 5 – MEM and MS EE

- BE EE from College of Engineering, Pune
- GPA – 7.23
- GRE – 319
- One year of consulting experience at Bristlecone
- Applied for both MS EE and MEM
- Good SOP and Decent LORs (none from work)
- No Admits the first time

What we did?

- Introspected and decided to focus on one program – MS EE which was his bigger passion
- Switched job to core EE
- Took one professional LOR
- Got into UC Santa Cruz, Vanderbilt, NYU Poly etc



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

Know what you want

Lesson # 2



Can Freshers not make the cut?

- BE Computer Engg from Indraprastha University
- GRE 320
- GPA 85%
- Good internships (1 at Microsoft)
- Great extra curr
- Could afford to apply ambitiously

What helped her in getting admits?

- “I was an all-rounder and worked hard to make sure that the tag of studying in a tier 3 engineering college should not hamper my profile.”
- “My internship at Microsoft and the recommendation from my Manager there.”

Tips for Freshers

- Do lot of internships, try to manage a professional LOR
- Approach Profs at IITs for internships/ projects/papers even if you are from a mediocre univ – you need to do something that your batchmates are not doing
- Maintain good grades – do NOT let your GPA go down
- Assume leadership roles at clubs etc

Tips for Professionals

- Get into a job related to your field of interest
 - if not, freelance or do a side project
- Try to manage strong work LORs (more imp for MIS/MEM)
- Assume leadership roles at communities in workplaces

Improving the state of things

SCHOLAR STRATEGY

SCHOLAR STRATEGY

Indore's Nistha Tripathi develops strategy for scholars

Saswati Mukherjee | June 11, 2015 at 4:00 pm



A tech enthusiast, Nistha Tripathi, a resident of Indore, toyed with several startup ideas before zeroing in on a venture close to her heart – Scholar Strategy. It is an alternative, purely online strategic counseling service for engineers interested in pursuing higher studies (MS/MIS/PhD) in US universities.

Nistha was disappointed with the guidance being given to students in the name of counseling in the market, so she started her own venture in the field. While some of the other ideas could not shape up due to logistical problems, [Scholar Strategy](#) was different; it was an enterprise that she could run completely on her own.

- Recently featured on YourStory for our innovative counseling and success
- Strategic one on one guidance for students

Mentioned by UIUC CS page

University of Illinois Computer Science
College & University

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Fariba Khan and 8 other friends

117 people have been here

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4.7 4.7 of 5 stars · 12 reviews
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ABOUT

- CS @ ILLINOIS is shaping the future of computing.
- <http://cs.illinois.edu/>

PHOTOS

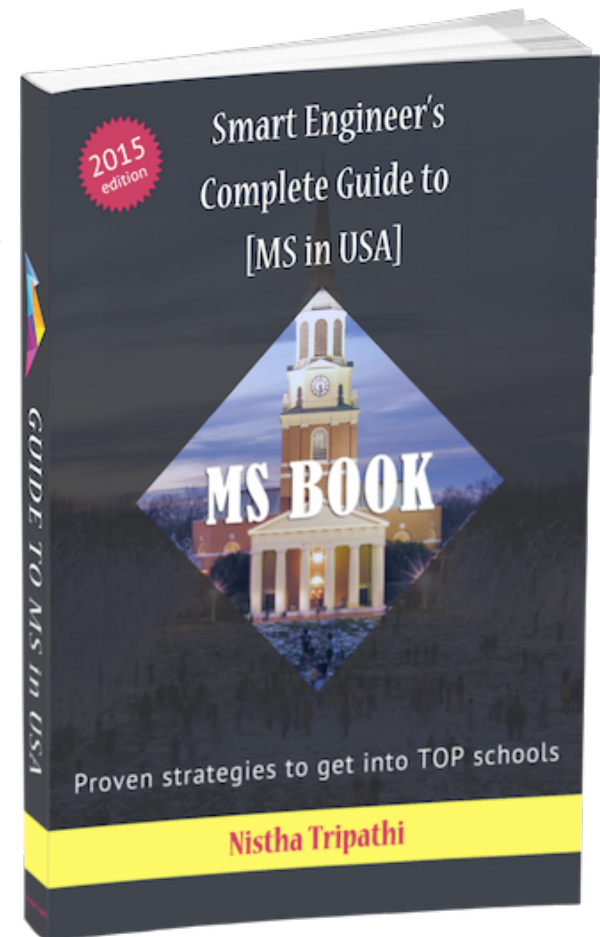
University of Illinois Computer Science
15 hrs · 🌐

Alumna Nistha Tripathi (MS CS '07) is the founder of Scholar Strategy, an online counseling service for engineers interested in pursuing higher studies in US universities. <http://her.yourstory.com/nistha-tripathi-0611>


Nistha Tripathi from Indore starts her online counseling, trains engineering students for...
Nistha Tripathi is an author, tech enthusiast and an entrepreneur.
HER.YOURSTORY.COM

MS Book: Smart Engineer's Guide to MS in USA


- Launched MS Book last month, already a hit
- Insider tips for Applications
- How to manage MS finances
- Interviews of Professionals
- Sample SOPs, SOP canvas download etc
- www.scholarstrategy.com/smart-engineer-book



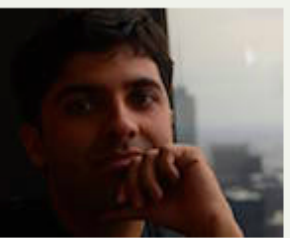
Drawing on interviews with...



Nikhil Rasiwasia
Cofounder at Fashiate
(acquired by Snapdeal)
PhD in ECE, UC San Diego




Ankit Srivastava
Professor at IIT Chicago
PhD in ECE, UC San Diego




Abhinav Bhatele
Researcher at Livermore
National Lab
PhD in CS, UIUC




Manish Maheshwari
Mobility Engineer at
Motorola
MS in Mechanical, UIUC



Bhavesh Sanghvi
Software Engineer at
Amazon
MS in CS, Iowa SU




Vivek Y
Managing chemical
manufacturing family
business
MBA, Columbia; MS in CS,
UIUC




Roopa V
Manager at British Telecom
MBA, Chicago Booth; MS in
IT, RPI




Parth Shukla
Project Engineer at J.
Roberts, Inc.
MS in Civil, UMCP




Arushi Arora
going to Columbia for MS
in Data Science



Akash Gandotra
studying MISM at CMU



Kanchana
studying MEM at Duke



Krish Prasad
studying MS at UT Dallas

OUR MS APPLICATION COUNSELING SERVICE

COUNSELOR-

- Nistha (Me)
 - MS from UIUC (briefly worked with Adcom, RA)
 - MBA from NYU (worked as a TA)
 - Wall Street, Tech Startups in New York
 - Wrote a book on MS in USA for Engineers
- Other Mentors:
 - Successful professionals on Wall Street, Consulting, Tech firms, Startups...

Our Network:

- Alumni in UIUC, Cornell, Columbia, CMU, Duke etc

Why Scholar Strategy?

- Lack of genuine advice in the market
 - No good university has tie ups with counselors!
- Personal experience
 - Have done it myself – twice at TOP universities
 - Admission committee insights
- Better resources and connections
 - Network of students and professionals in US and UK

Our approach

- We do a detailed call to craft student's story and then formulate strategy for SOP and LORs
- NEVER use templates! Each application should be unique

SOP evolution (Before)

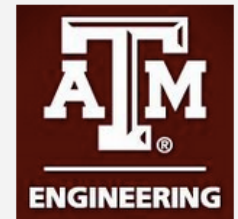
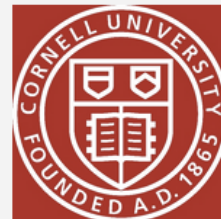
“My long and enjoyable interaction with computer science goes back to my fourth grade vocational course, when I applied math formulae to cells of an excel sheet. Programming since has had my interest and my motivation to choose to computer science as my major. After a year and a half as an Application Developer in Java and ETL logic at JP Morgan Chase, I wish to return to academic study to build on my learnings from undergraduate school particularly in the fields of Theory of computation and Network Security so that I may be able to provide more effective produce in academia or industry.”

(After)

“From programming cells of an excel sheet with math formulas in my fourth grade to building a security plugin for Mozilla Firefox considering the current threats to privacy and security on Internet, I have realized that problem solving is what excites me. After a year and a half as an Application Developer in Risk Technology at JP Morgan Chase, I have found my passion in improving the way Information is used in businesses. Therefore, I wish to return to school to pursue a Master's degree in Computer Science that will allow me to explore the subject in greater depth, particularly the fields of Data Mining, Database and Software Engineering, and use it effectively to address real-world challenges.”

OUR STUDENTS ARE GOING TO...

Our Students have received admits from



UC San Diego
Jacobs School of Engineering



NC STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Computer Science



Duke
MASTER OF
Engineering
Management



PACKAGES

Check our counseling packages at

<http://scholarstrategy.com/counseling-packages/>

Start at Rs. 6,999/-

LIMITED SEATS LEFT

Check out these free resources

- ✓ Scholar Strategy – www.scholarstrategy.com
 - ✓ Free resume templates, free process guides, case studies
 - ✓ Our newsletter has grown 500% in last 6 months
- ✓ Edulix forums
- ✓ US News rankings
- ✓ Quora – www.quora.com (can ask insightful questions)
- ✓ LinkedIn – Use to effectively contact with students studying abroad
- ✓ StupidSid – Aggregates useful information about US universities

TO DO list for YOU

- Get a copy of this presentation by signing up for newsletter on www.scholarstrategy.com
- Get your copy of <http://scholarstrategy.com/smart-engineer-book> (now is the right time)
- If you need personal guidance, contact us - <http://scholarstrategy.com/contact> (Our counseling is extremely selective, apply early to be considered.)