

Jean-Pierre

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Professor Clauss

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Situation: As a student who has done much of his schooling in Haiti, I am writing to my friend Bertrand, a senior in a Haitian high school, Saint-Louis de Gonzague, who is considering applying to universities in the United States. Bertrand is also considering colleges in the Dominican Republic, Canada, and France but still has not made a final decision. I am writing him to highlight the many opportunities an education in the United States has to offer, while convincing him that the application process is feasible by introducing him to the application's main components. I hope this letter serves as a motivational tool for Bertrand to take his application to American universities seriously.

### A Higher Education to Break High Barriers

Bonjour Bertrand,

Sak pase? [What's up?] I must tell you how happy I was to receive your letter. I'm glad that you and your family are doing well, and I'm particularly happy to hear that you are excelling in your classes and that you were elected as the Secretary of the Student Body Council. Congrats! Also, it's amazing that our school's reconstruction is finally over; I assume that you will stop complaining about the infernal heat in the wooden temporary structures that used to serve as classrooms! [My high school in Haiti collapsed due to the 2010 earthquake; the students were placed in wooden temporary structures until the school's reconstruction was over.] What pleases me the most is the fact that you are still considering applying to universities in the United States. Believe me, if you choose to go to an American college, you're in for a good experience. Coming to the United States for college is one of the best decisions I have made thus far; the opportunities and outcomes from an education offered by American colleges are simply priceless.

It's unfortunate that high schools in Haiti, including our own Saint-Louis, don't provide enough assistance to their students on the subject of application to international universities. Luckily, there are now many resources available online to assist international students with their college applications. I often used the College Board website in order to clarify steps for the application; the website is *www.collegeboard.org*. I also watched many videos on YouTube, in which college faculty and students talked about their school; this is a great way to learn about colleges. Be sure to do much research, in order for you find the school that suits you the best. In addition, I am disposed to remain in correspondence with you for additional help. As you may recall, I was in the same boat you're in now two years ago, when I was clueless about the procedures to apply to a college in the United States. I can now testify that the application process is not as bad as we thought. Let me give you a brief insight on the general requirements in order to get rid of any possible fear that would prevent you from applying to American colleges.

The application forms are there to help you introduce yourself, your goals and your passions to college admissions counselors. All you need to do is submit your transcript, take the SAT, write several essays in English, and send letters of recommendations from the school faculty; I suggest asking Mr. Carré, since he knows you well. There are more details involved in these steps, but I just wanted you to be assured that the application process is rather simple and that many universities in the United States have their doors wide open for you and are waiting for your application. The biggest secret to being admitted to an American college is to show interest and dedication.

Hoping that the application itself is no longer a concern to you, let's explore some of the infinite advantages that an American higher education offers; but first, I understand that you are

also considering colleges in the Dominican Republic, France and Canada. While I do encourage you to apply to colleges in these different countries in order to increase your range of options, I also encourage you to give much importance and even prioritize those in the United States. For a student who was educated in Haiti like us, I strongly believe that colleges in the United States are the best option. You have always expressed your willingness to explore the world and be exposed to a new life setting through your college education; trust me, the United States is the perfect place for you. American colleges are welcoming to and value international students because these can add diversity to a college or university and thereby enrich the experience of other students on campus (“Most”). On the other hand, the Dominican Republic is our closest neighbor; what gain is there in attending Dominican universities, considering your adventurous spirit? As for France and Canada, they are both francophone countries like Haiti; therefore, many aspects of their culture overlap with segments of our culture.

Attending an American university implies an immersion in the American culture such as its language and diet. An important factor associated with this foreign culture is the opportunity to become more fluent in English. Do you remember how Mr. Dorsainville always emphasized the importance of learning English? His understanding was that the ability to master English will open many doors to us as this language is widely spoken around the world; here comes your chance to take a hold of this language. There is no better way to learn a language than living in a country in which this language is spoken. Also, I am sure that by now, you must be tired of hearing me, Hans and Kevin speak of doughnuts, waffles, hamburgers, and other fascinating American meals; why don't you come experience them yourself? It would be especially interesting to see how fast you would become addicted to hamburgers. I am sure that you would love them.

On a more serious note, an American higher education is also made invaluable by the numerous options it gives to its students. First, are the options available to students in the choosing of their career path. As you know, one of the reasons why many Haitian students apply to international universities is to have the possibility to earn a degree in any area, instead of being confined to the few degrees offered by Haitian universities. Here in the United States, you will undoubtedly find a university with a program in any major that interests you- from the liberal arts to the sciences. Just imagine the choices that will be available to you when it comes the time to declare your major! I have recently read an article published by *Time* magazine; the article points out that there are over 2000 universities in the United States (“Choice”). This is to say that you will encounter the right university and will be able to earn the right degree if you are willing to put in the effort.

A factor that you may consider in the choosing of a university is the rigor of the winters. Be ready to experience the real cold—not the chilly breeze that we used to complain about during our early morning walks to school—especially if you enroll in a college in the northern part of the United States. Notre Dame is the university which I attend and this school is located in Indiana; a northern state in the United States. As much as I love Notre Dame, I must admit that the winter here is not quite enjoyable for those like us, who have lived most of their lives in a tropical country. However, I am sure that you will find interesting the winter clothing and the abrupt change of scenery. Also, your daring nature will allow you to appreciate living in an environment different to the one to which you are accustomed. I have still not experienced the snow, but I will keep you posted.

Another aspect to the advantages of studying in the United States is the development of relationships with American students and other students from many different parts of the world. Did you know that more than 291,000 foreign undergraduates were enrolled in U.S. schools in the 2010-2011 school year (“What”)? In other words, a higher education in the United States is valued internationally and attracts students from all over the world. At Notre Dame, for instance, I have befriended students from Brazil, France, Zimbabwe, Peru, and Nigeria. Interestingly, my closest friend at Notre Dame and one of the greatest people I have ever met, Bright Gyamfi, is from Ghana. These students are better resources than textbooks and even the internet; they will give you more insight on their homeland’s history and many aspects of their culture. This is your chance to travel around the world while being in one place!

The first class quality of an American higher education lies in the resources available to the students. If you choose an American university, be ready to be taught by professors who have mastered their subjects; the *American Academic Journal* mentions that the majority (83 percent) of faculty have either a master’s degree (57 percent) or a Ph.D./professional degree (26 percent) (“National”). Your courses will thus be led by the best. In addition, you will have access to libraries rich with books covering many topics. It is impressive that many of the American universities have private libraries, considering the few libraries we have in Port-au-Prince for the entire population; but what will amaze you the most is the role of technology in American colleges. Many of my homework assignments are done online, I use the internet for most of my research, and emailing is the most effective form of communication.

I know that you are an ambitious man seeking to acquire the best education he can find; as your friend, I simply want to help you find the direction that will suit you the most. Whatever your final choice may be, I highly encourage you to apply to universities in the United States.

You will not regret it. Realize that you will be able to acquire an education in the field of your choice, whatever it may be, while experiencing a new way of life, meeting and interacting with students with a different background from yours, and having access to unlimited information resources. As Mr. Legagneur always told us, one has to work hard in order to achieve success. If studying in the United States is something you sincerely want to do, believe me that it is possible; simply make sure that you are in good academic standing and do not overlook any part of the application which we will discuss further very soon. This being said, the decision is in your hands. I hope to hear from you very soon!

Sincerely,

Jean-Pierre

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