Name: **Chaitanya Talnikar**

UNIV : **MIT**

GRE/TOEFL:329/113

CPI:8.92

The first advice I'd like to share is that do spend some time in deciding the department to apply to. Most likely you'd be interested in 2-3 subfields of chemical engineering, so consider directly applying to these fields in the various grad schools.

In my case the areas that I was interested in were bioinformatics and CFD, so I could have applied to depts like Applied Math, Computational Sciences, Biophysics, Genome Sciences and many more. This exercise helps in expanding your research interests and discovering new applications that you were previously unaware of. Another side benefit is that in case you decide to apply to a dept. other than chem engg, it reduces the competition with your classmates who are applying to the same university.

**UNIV APPLIED:**

I had applied to 9 universities, 8 in the US and the last one being EPFL in Switzerland. The field I applied in was Computational Sciences (though the name is not common among all univs). After getting 4-5 admission offers I finally accepted admission into MIT's Computation for Design and Optimization program.

I decided to go for an MS as I wasn't certain on the exact area I wanted to do my PhD in. After completing my Masters I'm definitely planning to go for a PhD, mostly related to the Masters project that I'll be doing. Before deciding if you want to App or do Masters or a PhD please do read the PhD Grind by Philip Guo, it will help in deciding whether a PhD is what you want in life.

**GRE/TOEFL:**

Don't require much preparation. I got 329 and 113 respectively. For GRE 320+ (with a higher score in Math) and for TOEFL 100+ are good enough for all universities.

**Research profile:**

* Consisted of a project on cyanobacteria under the guidance of Prof. Wangikar. I was fortunate enough to receive a URA in my third year.
* I also participated in the Google Summer of Code(GSoC) program(organisation: biographer).
* In my second year I did an internship in ThyssenKrupp Polysius.

The 2 most imp things in my profile were the URA (which showed my aptitude for research) and the participation in GSoC that demonstrated my programming experience. My CPI was 8.92, so I wasn't really expecting a call from MIT. But you never know what can happen, I think this shows that even though CPI plays a major role in apping, good research projects and internships can offset a not so high CPI. All hope is not lost if your CPI is not 9+ or you are not in the top 5 in the class. You can still app!

Also spend ample time writing/reviewing/revising your Statement of Purpose. After the transcripts it is the second most imp document.

I hope this experience will be useful for the future batches and more people decide to pursue research as a career option.

