

COLUMBIA - CASE STUDY



AddedEducation



NAME

N.Z.

COUNTRY

Hong Kong

GPA

4.0

INTENDED MAJOR

BioTech

TYPE

ED

GOING TO

Columbia University

OTHER APPLICATIONS

Columbia, MIT, UPenn, UC

HIGH SCHOOL COURSE LOAD

Advanced Placement

- AP Chinese 5
- AP Human Geography 5
- AP Environmental Science 4
- AP US Government and Politics 5
- AP Chemistry 5

GRADES

Grade 9

Subject	Grade
Geometry (Honors)	A
Chemistry (Honors)	A
Drama Production	A

Grade 10

Subject	Grade
Biology (Honors)	A
Advanced Algebra (Honors)	A
Humanities II	A

Mandarin (Honors)

TESTING

Foundation in Visual Arts	A
SAT Subject Tests	A
SAT Reasoning Test Score: 1590	
SAT Subject Test Chemistry: 800	
SAT Mathematics Level 2: 800	

Mandarin (Honors)

Concert Choir	A
PE	A

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ACADEMIC HONORS AND HONORS

- United Kingdom Chemistry Olympiad (UKCHO) Silver Award
2021
- Qualified for USA Biology Olympiad (USABO) Semi-Final
2021
- Junior Canadian Chemistry Olympiad (JCCO) National Silver Award
2021
- Qualified for National Merit Scholarship
2020
- Research Paper on Organic Chemistry, guided by CalTech Professor Brain Stoltz 2020
Investigated how retrosynthesis was utilized in the creation of Remdesivir, a compound used in Covid-19 vaccines
- Young Finance Scholar Summer Program, by New York Institute of Finance
2020
Most Professional Research Award
- Head of School Commendation Award (G9&G10)
2018 - 2020

EXTRACURRICULAR AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

- Hong Kong National Development Squash Team
- Most Valuable Player of School Honors Mandarin Program
2013 - Present
2018 - 2020
- An avid and competitive player of squash for about 9 years, typically spending around 16 hours per week for training and league competitions. Ranked #4 of Girls U15 and #7 of Girls U17 in Hong Kong Squash
- Academic Excellence Awards by School Science Dept. (G9&G10) 2019 - 2020
- AP Scholar with Distinction Award, Hong Kong International School 2019 - 2020
- Hong Kong National Debate Team
2018 - Present
- School Team for Chemistry Contest by University of Waterloo Avogadro
An active debater representing Hong Kong and constantly participating in many local, regional and international debate events and tournaments. 2019
- Essays published in school newspaper INKLING and Chuanlong
○ Grand Finalist in the 2020 Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam Debate Open, out of 80 participating teams, 14th best Open speaker out of 150+ speakers
- Semi-finalist in the 2019 Hong Kong British Parliamentary Debate Competition, 8th breaking team out of 88 participating teams
- Semi-finalist in the 2020 3rd Linkbate Debating Championships out of 74 participating teams, 16th best Open speaker out of 147 speakers
- Quarter finalist of the 2020 Asia Schools Debating Open, 7th breaking team out of 70 teams, 17th best Open speaker out of 140 speakers
- Quarter Finalist representing Team Hong Kong in the Hong Kong Debate Open 2020 out of 41 national teams worldwide
- Quarter-Finalist of 2020 Hong Kong British Parliamentary Debate Competition out of 80 participating teams
- High School Science Club - Co-founder & Leader
2020
- High School Chemistry Club - Club Leader
2019
- High School Varsity Debate Team - Coach & Team Leader
2020
- High School Student Digital Leadership Team - Club Leader
2018
- High School Choir Leadership Team - Team Leader

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SOCIAL PURSUITS

- **Founder of Pre-High School Chemistry Summer Program – by NZ
2018**

Self-designed program drawing reference from IB and AP curriculum to bridge the knowledge gap for middle school students to move on study high school chemistry. Delivered on zoom class for a group of more than 10 middle school students in HK and China over the summer, and proceeds going to non-profit organizations in China.

- **Bloom Outreach Program – Founded Public Speaking Program
2020**

Working closely with this non-profit organization that recruits overseas student-volunteers teaching students in rural mountain areas in China to write and read in English. Founder of the public speaking club for empowering the student-tutors

- **Summer Community Math Club - designed and run by NZ
2020**

Organizing and teaching her younger brother and some G4-G7 students in the neighborhood to study math during summer holidays

- **Community Service on Saturdays Sharon Lutheran Club - Club Leader
2018**

Teaching students to read and write in English at the Sharon Lutheran Primary School

- **Squash Coaching Assistant at Hong Kong Football Club
2019**

Volunteering to assist club head-coach training junior squash players

EXTRACURRICULAR AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

- **Internship with Innowealth FinTech limited Summer
2020**

*Working and helping with financial AIDS Orphanage School and Foshan Orphanage as part of school social service programs
One month internship at a FinTech start-up which develops AI equipped hotels in China. The newly launched business model emphasizes on AI appliances and online operation. The hotels are equipped with AI self-check-in machines, wireless room keys, and a comprehensive online service platform. Joined as the third member of the project initiative team and contributed substantially by leveraging English and Mandarin bilingual capabilities, liaising with target customers, developing marketing strategy, building relationships with potential partners, and recruiting staff members.*

- **Research Paper**

2021

*“How the biotechnology, financial services, and technology sectors have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic”
Wrote an independent research paper that analyzes how various sectors perform during the Covid-19 pandemic and how cognitive biases influenced the change in investment behaviors in said sectors resulting immense volatility in the stock market*

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WHAT IS COLUMBIA LOOKING FOR?

Though it's housed under the larger roof of Columbia University which is composed of many graduate and professional schools, Columbia College is a liberal arts college, and it holds the traditional liberal arts values of cultivating broad and applicable knowledge, critical thinking, and general intellectual ability and inquiry.

Like all other top liberal arts colleges, Columbia looks for well-rounded students with strong academic profiles, extracurriculars, and personal essays. However, like every other top college, Columbia has specific elements that it looks for in a student, or rather, there are certain elements in students that are going to make them a better fit for Columbia. Remember that this is assuming that the baseline requirements have already been met: Columbia's evaluation process is a holistic one, meaning that every part of your application is taken into account when admissions officers make a decision, but the quantitative aspect of your application (test scores, GPA, etc) has to pass a certain threshold first.

When it comes to qualitative aspects, Columbia places a particular emphasis on intellectual curiosity, and looks for students who show not only specific depth of intellectual inquiry, but also diversity in their intellectual pursuits. You should demonstrate that you are actively pursuing intellectual growth, whether through your rigorous course load or through your essays. If you have strong STEM courses on your transcript, you should also have strong humanities courses, and vice versa. Your extracurricular activities should also demonstrate your engagement in activities beyond the classroom.

Overall, the factors that Columbia takes into account when considering a student for admission can be grouped into the following:

- **Curriculum and grades:** Columbia wants to see transcripts that depict a student is avidly pursuing intellectual growth across a range of disciplines through rigorous coursework and exceptional grades.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Columbia places a lot of weight on a student's extracurriculars. Students should display passion and depth of involvement in activities outside of the classroom.
- **Character:** This entails the personality of a student which Columbia has gauged from the whole application, and the impact the student will have on the campus.
- **Fit:** Columbia takes into account how a student will fit into the distinctive "Columbia experience", including the intensive Core Curriculum, a traditional liberal arts education at an Ivy League school, and an urban campus.
- **Recommendations:** Columbia looks for evidence of intellectual curiosity and promise, school and community participation, and overall potential to make an impact on campus.
- **Context:** Columbia's "holistic" evaluation process means that it takes into account all the parts of the application while considering the context from which a student comes. This includes family resources, high school, community, interests, and access to resources.

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STEPS TAKEN

COACH COMMUNICATION

- Initial discussions regarding college aspirations and her squash profile
 - Where does she play? What is her rank in HK
- Tournament planning
 - Junior opens in HK and US, league matches (even though international tournaments didn't come through due to Covid)
- Prepare and continuously update resume and introduction email to college coaches
- Sep 1 is an important date (where she can speak to college coaches for the first time)
 - All introductions to be sent out before Sep 1 and that AE also did backend communication to coaches saying that she is working with us
- Before Sep 1, she also did the summer tours and met college coaches through camp.
 - There was an initial introduction because of this to the coaches.
 - The coaches remembered meeting her.
- Advised her in replying to college coach emails and also discussions revolving strategies to negotiate in coach calls
- AE did coach communication in the backend and give updates to the family to give knowledge on where she stood on the coaches' radar compared to other recruits and also secured pre-reads for her
- She received an offer from Columbia and other pre-reads also came positive so that she was able to confidently apply to other colleges

INTERNAL DISCUSSION

In our initial discussion we wanted to hear her story. We sat with the family and went through her entire life story to try and pinpoint parts of her life that we can use for her narrative. What we found was a compelling story about the two strong women in her life that inspired her to be the person she was today.

IDENTIFY THE NARRATIVE

From the previous discussion about her life story we concluded that what drove her to succeed was this innate desire to break gender norms and empower & inspire the young women of the future. This all stemmed from being raised by two very independent women in her life, her mother and grandmother. From that upbringing it was clear how a future in stem was something she was destined for. The hard early years of her grandmother and mother also reflected her interest in finance, another interest that deeply fascinated her.

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UNIVERSITY CHOICES

Her intended major was Biochemistry. Which is the branch of science that explores the chemical processes within and related to living organisms. It is a laboratory based science that brings together biology and chemistry. By using chemical knowledge and techniques, biochemists can understand and solve biological problems.

We targeted all of the top schools which would allow her to be apart of the schools squash team like Princeton, UPenn, Columbia, MIT, University of Chicago, Yale, UCLA just to name a few. Then we had her research these schools to narrow down the list to a workable final ten that we would apply to.

IDENTIFY EA & ED CHOICES

This family was split between Columbia, UPenn, and Harvard. Since this was an athletic application, we decided it was best to ED to the school where she was getting the most coach interest from which happened to be Columbia.

SECURED RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

We spoke to the family and we identified some high target individuals who would be willing to write a rec letter for my client. We pinpointed an individual working in the financial sector who loved her research paper and wrote a stunning letter of recommendation for her.

ESSAYS AND SUPPLEMENTALS

For her CommonApp personal statement she took us through the two inspirations in her life, her mother and grandmother. All of the hardships they went through and how growing up with two independent women gave her the drive to be that inspiration to young girls of the next generation.

WEBSITE

So we have the narrative, all the bits and bobs between, the incredible essays and now needed to package them all together with the website.

We went with a timeline of all her achievements and accomplishments whereas the timeline itself was in the shape of a DNA strand. As you scrolled down the strand, Her numerous activities would manifest and you could click them and read more about them.

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COMMON APP

- Double check all information has been populated correctly
- Check all essays for grammar or spelling mistakes
- Check to see if all transcripts and recommendation letters have been submitted
- Give the family the ok to submit

MOCK INTERVIEW

Prepare for admissions interview

- Research interviewer and prepare some personal questions for you to ask them about their time in Columbia
- Give client AddedEducation's document of probable Columbia interview questions for the client to fill out the answers to
- Practice giving mock interviews switching between counselor and counselor manager until the actual interview will take place

FINAL TAKEAWAYS

- Achieve a high GPA while taking the most challenging classes available
- Aim for a 1570 on the SAT and 35 on the ACT
- Cultivate at least one or two Tier 1-2 extracurriculars
- Write engaging essays
- Prepare for your interview if you are offered one
- Apply Early Decision