



# The Secret to College Admission (It's Not Straight A's)

Alex Lee  
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Is it...

- 2400 SAT or 36 ACT
- 4.0 GPA – Valedictorian
- 5 extracurricular activities

???



**Not necessarily.**

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**Here are a few stories you may  
have heard about...**



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- Salutatorian from class of 400+ students
- Vice President of a Local Youth Group
  - Secretary of the Math League
- Plus “tons” of other extracurriculars



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- **Rejected by Columbia, Princeton, Cornell,  
and Dartmouth**



# Story of Michael Wang

## James Logan High School (CA)

- 2230 SAT + 36 ACT (perfect)
- 4.67 Unweighted GPA – Salutatorian
  - 13 AP Credit Tests
- Debate Team – National District Qualifier
- First Place Finish in AMC 12 – National Math Competition
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**So what does it take?**



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**Good grades & test scores**

**+**

***Strategically* chosen  
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## Law of Diminishing Returns

- If you can pull up those scores with a fair amount of work, go for it! But if you have to work to the bone for 20 more points on the SAT, that time can be better spent elsewhere.

## ***Strategically* chosen extracurricular activities to best present your *unique* story**

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- Unique – Ivy League admissions officers read thousands of essays about students “volunteering in a hospital”. They also read many applications where the students has perfect test scores, plays a string musical instrument, plays a racquet sport, is involved in a club, and wants to be a doctor. Standout from the rest by forming a *story* that is *unique*.





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Captain of Badminton Team	Not a focus
Board Member of Asian Club	Not a focus
Plays the Piano	Musical Theater
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- Accepted early admission to Harvard.



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- If you play a musical instrument, consider starting your own YouTube channel, whether its performing or giving lessons.
- Instead of a racquet sport, consider something dramatically different like parkour! You could even be a parkour instructor as a high school student.





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- There were two essays:
- Common App: Basically, write about anything related to you.
- Cornell Supplement: Describe two or three of your current intellectual interests and why they are exciting to you. Why will Cornell's College of Arts & Sciences be the right environment in which to pursue your interests?



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- Letter of Recommendation: Talked to the teacher about describing his thirst for learning and interest in Astronomy.
- Common App: Story about an archeology trip to Peru back in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. International experience + exposure to Spanish + learned a lot about teamwork and how it related to his pursuit of academic knowledge.
- Cornell Supplement: One interest is Astronomy (duh) but he recognizes to do research in astronomy, it requires funding so he wants to minor in Business to learn how to manage a team and finance his research.



## ***Tying It All Together***

- Passionate about astronomy.

+

- Recognizes importance of business.

=

- Major astronomy & Minor business





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## ▪ **Interdisciplinary Study**



## ***Stratton Advantage***

- Seattle-based college admissions consulting firm with start-to-finish counseling.
- Our system is unique. Every client has a dedicated college counselor, a senior strategist, and a blind reader. That's 3 people ensuring you put your best foot forward.
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- For questions or to schedule a free 30-minute consultation, email [alex@strattonadv.co](mailto:alex@strattonadv.co)



**Thank you!**

**Questions?**

