

Student Profile:

School: Columbia Business School

GPA: 3.5-4.0

GMAT: 700-740

Finance (IB, VC, PE,
other)

- 1) Please describe any challenges you had in your application (i.e. unusual work experience, low GPA, low GMAT, international applicant, etc.) How did you address them (took classes over the summer, had recommenders focus on quant skills, etc.)?

My challenge was the need to differentiate myself from the hundreds (thousands?) of other white male applicants coming from banking with a good GPA and GMAT from a top undergrad school. The best way I had to differentiate was to emphasize the entrepreneurial nature of my second job (a startup real estate private equity fund).

- 2) How much would you say you “coached” your recommenders? Did you provide detailed outlines of “success stories” or provide info on what may be lacking in your application? Did you write any portion of the letter yourself, and if so, do you feel it hurt your letter of recommendation?

I didn't write any part of the letters myself. I gave them copies of some of my “career aspiration” essays so they could hopefully fit my past success, etc. into what I want to achieve. I much preferred those recommenders who were willing to show me their letter before they sent it in—it gave me a piece of mind and allowed me to ask them to insert specific things if I thought it would be helpful.

- 3) What was the “wow” factor in your application? Did you overcome any extreme hardship, or fail out of college, or otherwise gain acceptance with a great story versus great stats?

I don't know if I really had a “wow” factor. Maybe my track record of achievement mixed with interesting personal stories (didn't meet 4 of my siblings

until I was 21 and then became very close).

- 4) This is related to the last question, but what would have been your “elevator pitch” to describe your overall application?

I would have to think awhile about this one and would need to refer back to my essays. Something about the experience I have working in a global investment bank (including 2 months leading a team in Japan) as well as an entrepreneurial startup housed in construction trailers. I’ve worked in both ends of the organizational spectrum and, therefore, have interesting experiences to contribute to classroom discussions.

- 5) What differentiates your school from the other top MBA programs (other than “my classmates”)?

There are both advantages and disadvantages to the location in NYC.

- 6) What advice would you offer an applicant applying to your school?

Some of the best people in the class get in off the waitlist. For Columbia, it’s really about proving why you want to go to CBS rather than Wharton and some of its other competitors.

- 7) What might be useful information for an applicant to mention in their essays to show a bit of “insider knowledge”? This might be a popular class, or a particular emphasis of the school, or other fact that may not be obvious to outsiders.

Try to do some research beforehand on classes and professors you might like to take and/or fit in with your career objectives. Try to meet with the professor beforehand and maybe insert some of those insights into your essays/application. Don’t push it if it doesn’t fit (it easily becomes obvious). I’m not sure the “insider knowledge” is that important—you should know what sets the school apart, but I don’t think it has to be that detailed. Just know why that school fits into what you want to get out of b-school.

Continued

- 8) Please list a couple of your favorite classes, professors, and school events (social or academic).
 - High Performance Leadership w/ Feiner
 - Happy Hour
 - Follies
 - Daniel Ames
 - Real Estate Masters Class w/ Jeff Barclay

- 9) What advice would you give to a student starting at your school in the fall (i.e. worry less about classes, and more about getting to know your classmates, take “x” class at all costs, etc.)?
 - Get to know the international students—they have the most interesting backgrounds and make great travel companions.
 - Don't worry about grades.
 - Use the time to travel.
 - Don't be cheap—you'll make up the money with what you achieve after school.