

# Getting in and getting on

## Why top US universities welcome Cambridge learners

Knowing that Cambridge qualifications open doors to universities worldwide is one of the top reasons why schools register with Cambridge.

Our strategy for recognition can be summed up as 'getting in and getting on'. We focus not only on making sure universities understand and recognise Cambridge qualifications, but also on equipping students for success when they get there. We do this by working closely with university admissions staff and by developing qualifications that prepare learners with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed at university.

We invited senior admissions staff from US universities to Cambridge recently to discuss recognition of Cambridge qualifications. The group – called the US Higher Education Advisory Council (HEAC) – meets twice a year and includes representatives from universities such as Columbia, Duke, Florida State, Maryland, Michigan, MIT, Pennsylvania State, Southern California, Texas at Austin, Virginia, Washington and Yale.

We interviewed some of the HEAC members about their admissions criteria. What is striking is that they all look for a set of common skills and qualities in applicants:

- learners who can think independently
- learners who can analyse and synthesise information
- learners who are willing to engage – not just in their studies, but in campus life.

These are also the types of qualities that Cambridge programmes and qualifications help to develop in learners, making them ready for university study.

For more information about recognition of Cambridge qualifications, including a database of university entry criteria, go to [www.cie.org.uk/recognition](http://www.cie.org.uk/recognition)



Cambridge US Higher Education Advisory Council, June 2011



### Key numbers

**450** US universities recognise and accept Cambridge International AS and A Levels

**425** of those institutions award academic credit for Cambridge International AS and A Levels

(US institutions generally require students to achieve a minimum number of credits to graduate)

**100%** of Ivy League universities recognise and accept Cambridge International AS and A Levels

## The interview

### Who we spoke to:

**Mary Adams**, Associate Director of Admissions, Pennsylvania State University

**Philip Ballinger**, Director of Admissions, University of Washington

**Sally Lindsley**, Senior Associate Director of Admission, University of Michigan

**Stuart Schmill**, Dean of Admissions, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

**Christoph Guttentag**, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University

**Jerry Lucido**, CERPP Executive Director, University of Southern California

**John Barnhill**, Assistant Vice President for Enrolment, Florida State University

**Kedra Ishop**, Vice Provost and Director of Admissions, The University of Texas at Austin

### Why do you value Cambridge programmes and qualifications?

**Christoph (Duke):** "One of the things we look for is a sense that when students have completed their secondary school studies they don't just have mastery of content, but are able to analyse, look at a text critically, make connections between subjects and among them, and write effectively. And one of the things we notice is that Cambridge students, obviously [students] who have done well, come with those skill sets and we value them – we value them greatly."

**John (Florida State):** "I value Cambridge preparation because the students we have received with that kind of preparation have done very well at our university. We like the fact that no matter where they come from, they come prepared."

**Jerry (Southern California):** "I think there are tremendous benefits to pursuing the Cambridge curriculum. It is a proven international curriculum for success in higher education and we know that students who pursue it have been successful around the world."

**Philip (Washington):** "Our experience of students who have studied the Cambridge curriculum and Cambridge qualifications is that firstly, they have done rigorous studies – they have had to work hard which is a good habit to have; and secondly, in addition to having worked hard and developed good study habits, they have also had to develop good critical thinking habits."

### Why does your university recognise Cambridge International AS and A Levels?

**Sally (Michigan):** "We are looking for students who come to the university with the ability to think critically, to be able to articulate their thoughts, and to write their thoughts so that they understand the full scope of what they have learned and are about to learn. And we have found that students with Cambridge International AS and A Level backgrounds, because it's an internationally normed curriculum, have excellent preparation to do that and to take full advantage of what a major research university in the United States has to offer them."

**Stuart (MIT):** "One of the things we find with students who have studied Cambridge International AS and A

Levels is that they have a real depth of understanding of the subject matter that they have had classes in, and a real engagement with it. Those are some of the things that we find really help students succeed once they get to our campus."

**Mary (Penn State):** "We believe that Cambridge International AS and A Level examinations are excellent preparation for students to take the next step in the path of lifelong learning. We think the more a student's secondary school preparation can emulate the skills and the challenges they will need at the university level, the smoother the transition will be into higher education."

### What do you look for in students who apply to your university?

**Christoph (Duke):** "There are certain skills and certain experiences which we find make students particularly well prepared for higher education, and certainly at a school like ours. They include collaboration, analysis, looking at things from a global perspective not just a local perspective, and an inter-disciplinary approach where a student will look at a topic from several subjects."

**Sally (Michigan):** "We are looking for students who can come to our institution and really take full advantage of what we offer in terms of the courses of study... We are looking for students who will certainly challenge what we offer, be risk takers, but most importantly our faculty wants students who will engage in civil discourse."