

# ALMA MATTERS

[Episode Notes](#) | [Episode Transcript](#) | [Podcast References](#)

## *Episode Notes*

**Episode Title:** [Episode #100: Why I Picked My College!](#)

**Episode summary introduction:** To mark this special episode, I decided to go through the tens of College Alumni podcasts and select the overriding reason they picked their college.

The reasons fall into 6 different categories.

### **Topics discussed in this episode:**

- Introducing Episode #100 [[0:22](#)]
- Fit [[2:40](#)]
- Top College [[14:10](#)]
- Best College for a Specific Interest [[19:27](#)]
- Freedom to Explore [[27:26](#)]
- Location [[33:18](#)]
- Financial Aid [[37:04](#)]

### **Our Guest:**

- College Alumni featured in our Podcast over the last year.

**Episode Transcript:** Please visit Episode Transcript.

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## *Episode Transcript*

Transcript of the episode's audio.

### **Venkat Raman 0:22 [Introduction to Episode #100]**

This is a special episode. Episode Number 100!

It is hard to believe that about a year ago, I started this podcast with the idea of staying connected during the pandemic. I should add that I had no idea what doing a podcast would entail.

That initial experiment seems to have grown thanks to all of you.

- the thousands of listeners in over 60 countries;

- podcast guests that include College Alumni, College Faculty, Admissions Officers, College Counselors, International Education Experts - all of whom have been extremely generous with their time, stories, and their ongoing encouragement and enthusiasm for this effort.

The stories have been amazing: Unique.Detailed.Inspiring.Insightful.

I am humbled by the overwhelming support and encouragement.

Thank You!

To mark this special episode, I decided to go through the tens of College Alumni podcasts and select the overriding reason they picked their college.

Then, I have classified the reasons into different buckets.

Needless to say, the decision to accept a college is not a simple one. Reconciling conflicting factors is challenging for all of us.

Now, add the fact that we are talking about 17-18 year olds, it becomes a bunch harder.

Ok, here goes. There are 6 different buckets:

1. Fit - as they saw it
2. Top College - they got into
3. Best College - in their area of Interest
4. Freedom to Explore
5. Location
6. Financial Aid

Now let's go through these buckets - one by one - in their own voice.

Venkat 2:40

***Fit - as they saw it***

The following alumni felt that their college pick was the best match for their values, personality, and college expectations.

Narayan Subramanian, Columbia University 2:57

I think the thing that really stood out about Columbia to me even when I was applying, the big reason I, I kind of Columbia was my dream school who even went and applied is Columbia, is a, is a research university.

And so reason research universities, they're they're a little different from your average University and that the graduate schools are quite prominent within the university system. And there's not just graduate schools, there's also entire research institutions. So at Columbia, there was something called the Earth Institute or the Lamont Doherty, Center for climate science research. And so there's all these, you know, different institutes within the university.

So, I went into college, knowing that I wanted to study environmental and energy policy and climate change policy that that was something that I knew I wanted to do. But to be frank, you know, my interest within that realm were quite broad. I mean, I applied and when I went to Columbia as an engineering student, I knew I wanted a technical education, but I wanted but I but my kind of ultimate interests kind of lie at the intersection of law policy and engineering. Sure.

Clare Overmann Georgetown University 4:14

Well, I think there were a couple of different factors. I mean, you know, in the United States, we, we often in high school, were laboring over this decision and looking at so many different types of institutions.

I kind of narrowed it down to just a general education quality and size for sure. And then kind of just that X factor of that general feeling.

So I grew up in a household where just understanding that Jesuit education was of very high quality. And so I had a lot of respect for just Jesuit schools in general. I didn't go out seeking only Jesuit schools, but I knew of course Georgetown's name just it's a great brand name.

I really you know, I really liked their, their morals, their values I also really enjoyed the fact that, that Georgetown had this perfect combination of both being in Washington DC you know metropolis as well as having a traditional campus experience.

Seth Shapiro University of Pennsylvania 5:32

Interestingly enough, my introduction to Penn started way earlier than my senior year. So it was actually, I believe it was an eighth grade. So I wasn't even in high school and a close family friend had actually gotten in Early Decision. And I was very, I always looked up to her, I thought she was quite smart, very accomplished. And I said, Oh, well, this is good. She obviously has good judgment. And so, you know, that I should put on my radar.

And so believe it or not, it actually, the relationship started to build and I went on a Penn Model Congress trip, I think it was either my freshman year, my sophomore year, I'm drawing a little bit of blank. Uh huh. This, this is what age coming Yeah.

And I and what that basically meant it was a lot of people know, sort of like the UN just more for the US. And I actually went to the campus on sort of a four day trip. And I was very impressed with the campus environment, the students that I met, who were Penn students who ran the conference itself, and just the entire ambience that was there.

And then after that, it must have been sophomore year, because then the next year, junior year, I did the formal tour to campus with my parents and my sister, and a really good flavor for what that experience would be like.

And then finally, senior year, I actually spent an overnight in the fall to make sure that I was really set on applying early decision, which I want. And so it was all of those experiences that continually led me back to Penn to say, you know, I really like this place, and I want to constantly learn more.

Rob Franklin Stanford University 7:11

So I was deciding between yeah between Stanford, Columbia and Harvard and then i'd kind of i'd kind of decided that Harvard just wasn't like vibe wise it. And so then like after I went to honestly i mean a lot of the reason I was, I was kind of thinking about going to Columbia was just because I wanted to live in new york and we you know it was there I went to Admit Week in there and basically didn't do any of the kind of set aside programming.

I made some friends and we kind of left campus and walked around and so I didn't really even have that much of a sense of the school leaving admit weekend and I hadn't had as good of a time or it hadn't felt as much of a fit as I thought it was going to.

And then I just went to a weekend at Stanford and I like made some fast friends and I remember i mean this one night i went steam tunneling which is like a big stanford tradition where you basically go through these tunnels that are beneath the campus so you're kind of punched over like crawling through these these steam tunnels for you know a couple hours and just like it's exploring this sort of like you know like underbelly like piping of this university with a group of people who were complete strangers some of whom became good friends of mine and I just had such an incredible time and it felt I think I was drawn to really like the campus atmosphere of that and felt perhaps like i was going to be missing out if I went to a school in a big city.

Anika Gupta MIT 9:16

Yeah, so I actually thought that I would never want to go to MIT based on what I had heard until I visited the school. I had a chance to do a road trip with my dad in high school where we visited a couple of schools in the northeast and MIT was our very last stop. And I had very low expectations. I just thought it wasn't an environment that I would fit well in. And then I arrived on campus and I shouted to students, I met with a couple others sat in on a class. And I remember it being almost like the middle of winter, so end of January, early February, and the weather wasn't particularly inviting.

But, all of the students who I've met there were brilliant. That was just kind of the baseline. But in addition to that, there was just this air of humility and this air of, I am a part of something that is much bigger than me, and I am contributing to read something

but there was very minimal ego that I saw in the students that were there. And that is what really, really I found compelling.

Ike Wilson Yale University 10:27

It's, uh, well, I mean, I guess the easy answer is that it was probably the best school that I got into high school. So you kind of can't say no.

I, I suppose I wanted to, to one one part of it was, you know, I'm from the west coast. I'm from California. And I, I think one part of it was, I did want to go away from home and kind of do the classic Northeastern college thing. probably wasn't so much. You know, the fact that it was an Ivy League. It wasn't really I mean, the prestige is certainly part of it. As I said, it was a good school and you can say no to it, but I just felt like there was a particular vibe or character to the, to the school that was was interesting to me.

I visited as a senior in high school after I got in. They call it Bulldog days. It's like an Admitted Student weekend. And you can spend time there with a usually it's a freshman, maybe a sophomore. And so you can ask all the questions you want to ask and you can get a sense of the school and with a nightlife is like what the social life is, like, obviously, you can visit classes. So you see what it's like academically. You get a sense of all the different clubs that are there, you know, acapella groups, and clubs, soccer and club basketball, and I don't know people, you know, everything in between.

Karen Doster Dartmouth College 11:58

Most of the schools I was looking at, was sort of like, small, snowy, New England's colleges. A lot of like, the [NESCAC](#) [*New England Small College Athletic Conference*] schools, you know, my older sister went to Hamilton. And but I like to start with because it felt like it was that perfect size of like, not, you know, is a little bit smaller than the typical liberal arts college, which felt kind of like the same size as my high school because I went to a big public high school. But it you know, wasn't so big as like a big university.

I mean, there, there are a handful of graduate programs, namely, like the business school, the med school, but undergrads really, are the are the ones in charge. Right? Right. And they get, you know, 90% of the the focus and attention.

So it's about 4000 students, and it felt like it was kind of that, that perfect balance.

Bianca Brown Williams College 12:59

The reason that I was interested in Williams, at first was because of my sister, who was two years older than me, and she, I graduated from Amherst. And so down the street, so to say, I applied not to Amherst, but to Williams. I didn't want to go to the exact same school as her right, both are small.

And so you can have different lives, but you know, only different to some extent. But I applied to the competitors school, and it's also, it was a nice little dynamic, like, we had still had overlapping friends because of folks who are involved in the Christian fellowships on the different campuses, and we did inter campus events and so it was close enough, but far enough.

So that was my primary influencing factor because I visited Amherst. I when I was in high school, that my sister's college friends, I went to the acapella concert, I ate in her dining hall, and everything I saw I wanted, but just my own, so that's why I chose Williams.

Venkat Raman 14:10

### ***Top College - they got into***

The following Alumni believed that this was the Top College they were admitted to, using ranking or brand as parameters

Sibi Venkatesan University of California Berkeley 14:29

So, I have a serious answer and a joking answer. I don't know which one you want to hear first.

Venkat Raman 14:35

Both. Let's start with the fun one first with the fun one.

Sibi 14:38

So my name is "Sibi" and UCB is the initials of Berkeley. And somebody else was telling me "U R CB", where else will I go?

Sorry that was the serious answer. Now I'll tell you the joking one.

So the criterion is is fair really simple i think for a lot of people in India i think we in general it's a little unfortunate sometimes but it's a rat race for the best named engineering school even in india everybody calls the IITs and such, so yeah the ranking is using a ranking as an as a criterion for choosing is pretty common and that was what we looked at.

We applied to the top programs for computer science and electrical engineering it came down to Berkeley and CMU. At that point not just the ranking, rankings I think for CS they were the same but Berkeley pipped it for an overall school and at that point that and California and proximity to the people like a bunch of people including yourself who I know in both in california kind of tilted towards that.

Athena Lao Harvard University 15:51

When I was thinking you know where do I want to go to college, I applied, I didn't apply to that many schools. I only applied to six schools actually one of them was in my hometown Athens. Georgia has the University of Georgia which is our flagship public university and has a lot of students. My mom said if you stay here I'll do your laundry every week so that was very tempting.

But yeah um you know when I thought well how can I really make the most of these next four years how can I get this new experience and see and figure out who I am you know I knew i wanted to go out of state so the two ivy league schools that I applied to were Yale and Harvard.

And I will share a secret that i kind of really wanted to go to Yale. Sorry to anyone from Harvard listening to this, but I think after visiting both schools and just looking at the financial aid that I received and I think it was great at both schools, but just thinking about you know what is the school that has not only all the resources and the networks and the unparalleled excellence in learning and just you know has that name brand, Harvard did have all of those things and it was a little bit stronger than Yale and also I knew my parents they would they, they'd be happy too. So, win win for everybody!

Avi Nayak Princeton University 17:31



In the end they kind of came to me deciding between three schools specifically and those three schools were Princeton, Carnegie mellon and Caltech.

At that point I was, I was kind of looking at college as as what I wanted to be a pretty holistic experience for myself so when I you know when I went and visited Caltech and when I went and visited CMU, to be honest at that time, I thought that they were a little bit too nerdy for me, what my experience what I wanted my experiences to be in college.

So yeah that's that's kind of what was going through my head in high school and it's you know how I ended up choosing Princeton in the end.

Harvey Mogojwe Williams College 18:25

And so by the end of my A levels or towards the end, you know I had applied to different schools and actually Williams was like the last school I applied to. It was the last school, honestly it wasn't even my top school honestly and so you know I applied and then you know I got in.

Actually again I'm gonna be like super honest, yeah I don't think we actually ever talk about this, you know when we want, you know when you get schools like Williams, because we're always assumed that like you know, everybody had like 10 plus offers but honestly the reality is for whatever reason I got into Williams and I think got wait listed until like some other Liberal Arts Schools and I didn't have any other acceptances. In a way, for me it almost feels like Williams chose me!

Venkat Raman 19:27

### ***Best College - in their area of Interest***

The following Alumni who had a passion or interest in a specific field, picked the college best known for it.

Gobi Dasu Stanford University 19:45

Towards the end of high school I had become very much engaged in entrepreneurship so I'd started my own website called "war of word" and that had a lot of my peers from high school, but also other high schools, which you know I popularized through the network

called the Junior States of America which is a political organization and I was part of the Harker chapter on the junior states of america. And so I built this website I'd even tried to monetize it a little bit. It was a website where people would debate political resolutions.

And what I realized was I needed to go to a university that supported that type of entrepreneurship. And when I was, I had applied actually early to Princeton. And the reason why I'd applied early to Princeton is because everyone else was applying early to Stanford. And so I thought that, maybe, since there's less slightly less competition for Princeton and it's an equally awesome school, it would be, you know, a smart thing to do. And it was.

I was, almost, I did get in early action to Princeton and I was gonna go there, but then, then, later on I heard that I also got into Stanford so then I was trying to decide between the two.

And what I realized is I had really been interested in entrepreneurship over the course of the year and been doing things for the website and I realized that you know what probably for for my interests in computer science and entrepreneurship Stanford is a stronger school.

Cleo Handler Yale University 21:26

Um, it's funny that you ask, because when I was at Yale, there was a viral video campaign that the admissions office made called "That's why I chose Yale" like .a musical number I always think about that.

But um, I think the silly answer is you know, I was obsessed with Gilmore Girls growing up very going to Yale and a bit of an influence on me, but but the real answer is that i wanted to go somewhere where I could really pursue you know theater and making things and Yale has an unbelievable Drama Department obviously they're famous for it in their grad school but the undergrad community is incredible and I wanted somewhere that was well balanced and also super academic because I didn't want to just go to a conservatory and again only have that option.

And when I visited Yale I remember just feeling like first of all you know it looks like a castle and and enchanting but it really felt like the students there were super passionate and balanced in their activities instead of the vibe that I got at other schools which was a bit more single minded or competitive.

Chetan Vakkalagadda Washington University in St. Louis 22:51

So it came on my radar in the first place because of the University Scholars program in medicine. So that is a combined medical program but it's a little different than other combined medical programs. It's eight years and you get conditional acceptance to the medical school pending a GPA and MCAT score and so some programs do not require you to take the MCAT and they don't have GPA cut offs. WashU's is not like that.

But the flip side is that you are not required to go to Washington's Medical program or even go into medicine at all, so some people decided that medicine wasn't for them and they chose other fields and then within my class the other people went to similar or you know top caliber medical schools and that was completely accepted so it was kind of nice because you had a soft guarantee of the medical school, but at the same time could explore.

Anna Bartoli Johns Hopkins University 23:54

The main part of it was just an immediate attraction and you know desire to be at Hopkins. I don't know what it was when I was 18 and touring it that I thought you know this is the school I want to be at. But there was always that pull.

I didn't apply early decision for commitment issues in terms of financial aid and everything. But it had crossed my mind I think.

There were at the time also you know had high hopes of going to MIT and so I think ED would have crossed out a couple of schools from my list that I wasn't ready to give up on. When it came down to decisions I think it was a combination of I had somewhat made a list in my head of schools that would have surpassed Hopkins, MIT being the main one that I didn't end up getting into and so it kind of ranked at the top of my list in terms of both national ranking and just my desire to go there.

I think my other options would have been to stay in New York City School or to go to Boston. And so I think between the options, it was just the one that seemed like it would be the best fit for me.

Rohith Jayaraman Berklee College of Music 25:31

Sid Sriram, Sid Sriram as he is known, yeah, is another Fremont, Fremont kid from the Bay Area who went to Berklee and then ended up, and is now doing incredibly well in Indian playback scene as well as sort of more like contemporary American music. He's doing a lot of different things. And he was part of that same event.

And he was just asking me casually, like, what do you, what are your plans for college?

And I said, Oh, you know, I'm thinking of being premed, or whatever I had, had, sort of prepared to tell people.

And he said, Have you thought about doing music? I said, What do you mean? And he said, as like as your career?

And I said, Oh, not really. I was almost like, Can you expand on that, and he was telling me about his experience at Berklee, which I had never heard of. And he was like, it's a great place. It's in Boston. It's not UC Berkeley, which has become a sort of rallying cry for everyone who goes to Berklee.

And as he was telling me about it, I was like, this place sounds amazing. And he said, Why don't you consider doing a summer program? I'm in, I'm going to be entering my last year, I can show you around. And I went home that night. And I just went to the website, saw a couple summer programs, had some conversations with my parents.

And I think within a week, I had just decided that, okay, summer before my senior year, I'll go do this, this summer program here, and it was about six days in Boston. And basically, I think, halfway through day one, I had basically just said, Okay, this is where I'm gonna go to college. This is my number one pick.

Venkat Raman 27:26

### ***Freedom to Explore***

The Following Alumni were unsure of what they wanted to study in college & wanted to be in a college that allowed and encouraged them to explore and experiment.

Priya Chandrasekaran University of Pittsburgh 27:48

What I really liked about Pitt [University of Pittsburgh] was that it was kind of “the best of both worlds” sort of situation where, you know, it wasn't necessarily a college town. Pitt campus is in downtown Pittsburgh, it's its own campus. So it has an urban feel. But

you didn't feel like you were in the middle of nowhere. And you didn't also feel like you were smack in the middle of a super busy city. Right.

So that's what I really liked about. And having grew up growing up in more of the suburbs, more residential area, this was a really nice step into what living in a city might be like. And so that was awesome.

And in terms of applying to the school, what I really liked about Pitt was that it was a school that really allowed a lot of different programs, in terms of the majors and the courses of study. And the programs are really structured in a way where you could really get a feel for different classes and courses, without feeling stuck in a single major.

Joey Fritz Amherst College 28:55

I was a college athlete, I played tennis, all through growing up. And it was always, it was always my intention from a young age to play tennis, in school and in college when I went and so I really want and as I got closer and closer to college, I knew I didn't want to be a professional tennis player. That wasn't my aim.

So I really wanted to use tennis to go to a school that would fit me best academically, and that would, it would help me with the application process. You know, schools recruit athletes, and it makes it easier to get in. And Amherst obviously is a great school.

And what I really liked about it was the the I knew as an athlete, I would still have a really good balanced experience right and focus on my studies over over sport. A lot of the bigger schools you would have to focus on this sport over school, and I didn't, I didn't want that. I wanted to be able to study and to learn.

And so that was, my that was my primary focus. Another big thing for me. With Amherst was the open curriculum. So there are no, no core classes that I had to take. Everything was my choice. And so that was really important to me. Because I, I really wanted to take, I have a very diverse group of classes that I like taking.

Namrata Vakkalagadda Washington University in St. Louis 30:27

For me, it really came down to the vibe of the campus. And, you know, the opportunities, I felt that were going to be available to me there.

And going into college, I didn't really know what I wanted to study, and I didn't know what I wanted to do after college. And so I had visited Berkeley, I had loved the campus,

but we had already set up our WashU tour, and my brother was there. So my family said, you know, let's just go We'll make it a family trip to go visit your brother.

And I ended up attending some of the sessions that were set up for that, that said that that weekend, and there was this one session that just completely sold me on the WashU experience.

And really what it came down to was that WashU was very, the way that the the your your four years are set up, the way the curriculum is set up, allows you to really explore opportunities before making a decision.

And that was the biggest factor I noticed between choosing between a public and a private university. Berkeley has an immense amount of opportunities available, and it's an amazing school. But I was, I was tying myself for four years to the program that I got into I had gotten in for biology.

And for me to transition to any type any other major any other program would have been very difficult.

Mike Mochizuki Brown University 32:02

So I think for me, one of the things that Brown seemed to really be focused on, when I visited the school, when I talked with alumni was this idea of, you know, a journey and a area for discovery.

You know, there were some of the other schools that I've looked at, which were wonderful and amazing and very impressive, seem to have much more of a desire that you showed up on day one. And at 17 or 18 years old, you already knew what you want to be doing when you were 40 or 50 years old. right.

I thought one of the things that seemed unique about Brown is they really seem to be focused on - this is four unique years of your life, you will likely never have again, take this time, enjoy it, try different things, learn different things. It's one of the beautiful aspects of the Open Curriculum is they they say, look, if you know that you don't, you know, you don't care about history, you don't need to take history or if you know that you're not going to try it. It's not important to you to learn another language, don't worry about that focus on exploring the things that you want to focus and explore. That was what I really found compelling about Brown.

Venkat Raman 33:18

### ***Location***

The following alumni picked a College that was located close to the alumni's home, or away, or were driven by weather considerations.

Miloni Gandhi University of California Los Angeles 33:38

From a very young age, I had wanted to leave my home town and go to a major urban city like New York, and actually NYU is my first choice. And I got in, but my parents said no, so I was unable to go there.

UCLA was kind of the next best option for me in terms of vibrant campus life. And our trade off was that if I was staying so close to home for all the four years, one of the four years I was going to do a study abroad.

So that's kind of how I ended up picking UCLA. And I mean, of course, the academics are amazing, the campus is beautiful and all of that, but from a personal standpoint, I still initially remember that I had wanted to move to a real city, as I called it.

Ajan Subramanian University of California Irvine 34:40

I was looking at schools that were good at both, you know, their drama curriculum and the engineering curriculum. In the end, I was able to narrow it down to three schools with [UC] Irvine, UC Davis and Boston University.

And just like all of them were on equal footing when it comes to academics and I was just thinking, hmm, like, given a choice between these two places, where would I really want to live? Like what place appeals to me the most? Right?

And I mean, I had to kind of scratch Boston out because just because coming from India where the temperatures are constant 80 degrees F, I don't want to, I didn't want to give up on that, that lifestyle. I didn't want to have to put many layers on during the winter. So that was a kind of a, you know, no, no for me. So I had to pass on Boston, although I'm really grateful that they offered me the admission.

So I only wanted to stay in California. And compared to Irvine and Davis, or again, like very good schools. Yeah. But I was kind of favoring Irvine because it had like a beach nearby, it had connection to like San Diego and LA, maybe I could drive over the weekends. And also had a very good acting school. So kind of all these factors sort of push me towards going to Irvine.

Neha Kumar Northwestern University 36:05

I thought I could use these 4 years to really experience a different kind of life, a different city meet different people. So that was really important to me, actually. So I felt really strongly that I wanted to leave California and seek out a good school elsewhere.

Apart from that, I did want a school location wise in a big city, where I could have new experiences. But then also, you know, a school that had a really great brand, a really competitive program, a strong program in Psychology and in Business, really good ties to different companies, where I felt like entering into the workforce would be maybe a little bit easier. So those are the other criteria that I looked at. And I just felt like Northwestern hit all of those marks for me.

It was in Chicago, it was a really great school. Difficult to get into. Really strong Psych program seemed like a really well rounded school as well.

Venkat Raman 37:04

### ***Financial Aid***

The College that offered the Alumni, the best Financial package, all other things being equal.

Anu Ramachandran University of Southern California 37:22

And I think, for me, the energy of the school, the diversity of interests of the student body, especially being able to be in a place where I'd be exposed to people who are doing things culturally, artistically that were very new to me, things that I didn't have much experience with. And then I knew, or at least I had an inkling at that time that I was interested in, in Medicine, or at least in some kind of Graduate Studies.



So I don't know that I had kind of made up my mind one way or another. But, But around that time, I had a sense that there probably was going to be more school for me down the road.

And to that, and I ended up getting one of the merit based scholarships at USC called the Trustee Scholarship missions. Yeah. Oh, thanks. Yeah. And, you know, it was a really generous program. It covered the entirety of tuition for all four years and also kind of opened me up to a couple of other scholarship opportunities while I was there at the university.

Iris Li University of California Santa Barbara 38:37

Um, actually, I never thought of studying in the US until 11th grade because I studied in a Mandarin education system. So I didn't have, like English education. Or I didn't study in English education system though. We took some English courses during high school.

And usually for my peers in Taiwan and my friends, we usually take college entrance examinations and stay in town for college. My high school, they encouraged students to apply for colleges outside of Taiwan. They encouraged us to apply for UC Santa Barbara because some of the faculties in my high school actually are UCSB alumni.

So yeah, they highly encouraged us to, you know, try this new opportunity. So and they offered, they are so kind, they offered to pay part of my tuition, college tuition, so I decided to go to UCSB.

Andrew Maguire Vanderbilt University 39:48

I had spent most of my childhood growing up in the south. And when I was a sophomore in high school, I moved to Boston. And so as I was applying for colleges, I felt nostalgic I guess for the South. Yeah. A lot of the schools I ended up applying to were also in the south. So that was why I applied.

Why, saying Yes, was pretty straightforward. Vanderbilt by far gave me the most financial aid. Story that you'll hear time and again, Vanderbilt students have an incredibly robust financial aid program that meets 100% of the financial needs of families. So this was not merit based this is need based.

And it was an offer I couldn't turn down. So that was why I said yes.

Ettie Nikolova Cornell University 40:06

I chose Cornell sort of on a whim, which sounds horrible but basically what happened is, I initially didn't have it on my radar to apply.

I thought I would go to a school in my state, just from the perspective of, you know, cost. And one of my high school teachers mentioned that his brother went to Cornell and really loved it.

So kind of last minute, I was like, let me apply here and let me just see what happens. And so I did. I applied I, you know, interviewed I love the person I interviewed with, and I ended up getting in, and I assumed it wouldn't be possible because I was like, oh, Cornell is going to be so expensive.

But I ended up getting a really good financial aid package from them. They gave I think, in general, what I've learned is that a lot of universities provide really strong financial aid based on need. And so Cornell actually paid all of my tuition. And once I found that out, I realized, you know, I could go there, and it was an easy decision.

Venkat 41:59 [*Close*]

Hi again!

Hope you enjoyed Episode #100 on “Why I picked My College!”.

Do check out the alumni podcasts to get a richer view into their college experiences.

Let us know if you found it useful.

For your comments on this podcast, please email podcast at [almamatters.io](mailto:almamatters.io) [[podcast@almamatters.io](mailto:podcast@almamatters.io)].

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Till we meet again, take care and be safe.

Thank you!

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