



On His Way to Harvard

CASE STUDY



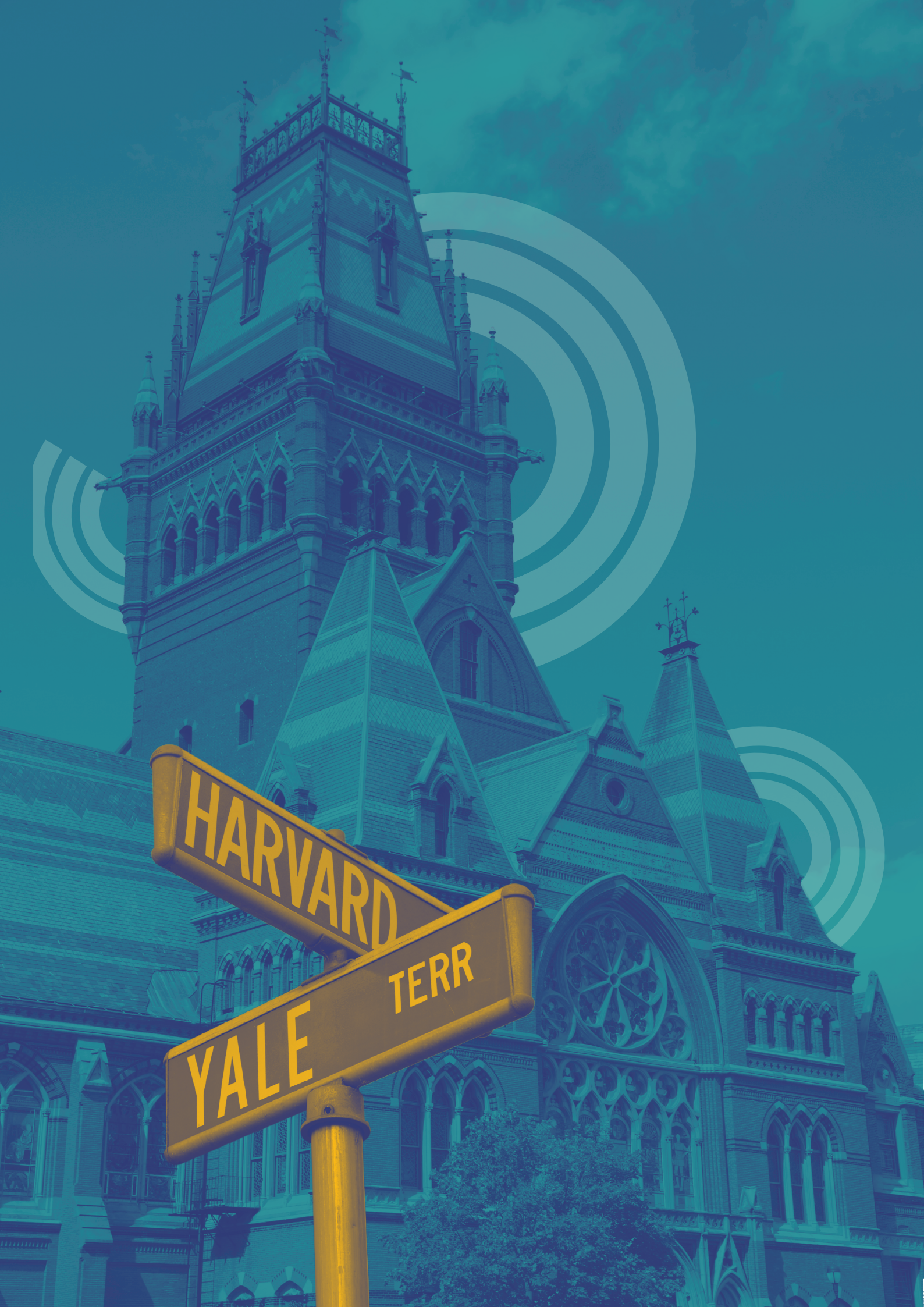
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On His Way to Harvard



About Rares

While for most students secondary school can be a stressful time, for Rares, these years were a profoundly powerful time of self-discovery and personal growth. The key was that Rares never approached his academics or his extracurricular activities as a results-oriented competition. He did it all to pursue his passion for computer science and STEM. Rares was great at taking one day at a time and making everything an opportunity for personal growth. However, one thing he lacked was the ability to focus on the greater picture of his academic future.



The right decision comes when you do what you feel like doing, without letting yourself be influenced by others' opinions.

Rares' Stats

GPA	9.99
SAT Score	1490
SAT Essay	17
SAT Maths 2	800
SAT Physics	800

Going Against the Grain

Many of Rares' friends and family members used to believe that the UK was the best option for his academic trajectory. Rares felt that he couldn't go against that mindset, at least in the beginning. It was only later he realised that the United States was his dream study destination.

Changes in university costs due to Brexit forced Rares to reconsider his university options. He realised that US universities can offer Financial Aid and have the environment he could see himself thriving in: everything from passionate students to dedicated teachers, a multitude of resources and diversity of ideas.

Building Character and Leadership Skills

Rares inspires others through embodying his convictions, his strong personal values, and an enlightened mindset.

Although Rares has been gifted with these traits, the extensive amount of time dedicated to additional study, both in school and individually, is the root of Rares' outstanding results. His extracurricular activities and the work he accomplished with his mentors at Upgrade set Rares up for success in his admission process. So, let's take a closer look at the actions Rares took in order to get into Harvard.



Passion and Extracurricular Led Self Development



Managing Robots

Rares felt the need to share his passion and excitement about science with like-minded individuals. However, there was no class, club or institution for Rares to develop his skill in a meaningful and creative way.

Together with friends, Rares founded the school's Robotics Team, which he proudly oversaw throughout secondary school. Some of the key highlights included participating in a number of national competitions with his own Robotics team.



Reforming Educational Systems

With a clear academic path in front of him, Rares decided to help his fellow classmates also understand the benefits of going to a top university abroad. To that end, he represented the academic needs of over 1500 students within his school's Administrative Board. As the Student Representative for his school, Rares was able to stand up for his fellow classmates and make sure that the school's initiatives were truly in line with the students' wishes and academic growth.

Rares also gave back to his community as the students' representative in the national decision-making body in his County Centre of Excellence. There, he left his mark by restructuring the teaching methods for gifted students.



Crowdfunding for a Better Education

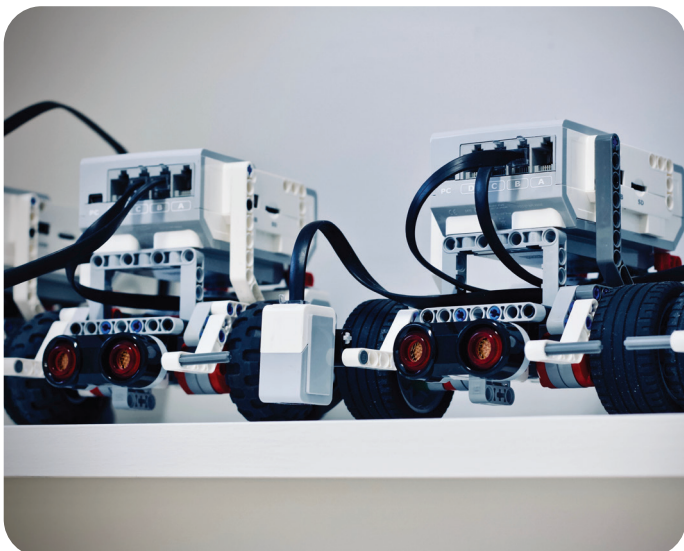
As Robotics Team's leader, Rares raised almost \$30,000 through crowdfunding. He also built a school laboratory and organised events to raise awareness about Robotics and STEM.

Rares' initiative and the success of his projects enabled him to lean into his entrepreneurial spirit; something he hadn't even considered he would be able to do while still in school.

QUICK TIPS

How to raise money for a cause as a student:

- Ask influential people to donate
- Create an event to promote the cause
- Use platforms (such as gogetfunding.com, kickstarter.com and crowdcube.com) and promote it on social media
- Go to the press or local magazine





Overcoming Your Fears and Opening up for Criticism

The personal statement is essential in the application process because it is how admissions officers gauge your maturity, personality and ability to succeed in the university class.

Rares knew from the start that the essay is one of the most difficult parts because it is highly nuanced and there is so much at stake.

For this reason, he felt insecure about his application as he realised that he had never learned how to create a meaningful piece of writing that expressed his genuine personality. That's where Upgrade stepped in.



Becoming Vulnerable

One of the greatest challenges for Rares was to change his mindset. At first, he was reluctant to be completely transparent with the admission committee. But in the end, he had to learn to express his feelings and be more introspective when writing about his life.

Perfecting Your Writing With Some Help

After sending in his Harvard application, Rares felt that the application was finally coming together. This experience had taught him how to convey his thoughts and emotions in writing, a skill that Rares will use in university and all throughout his life.



How Did Upgrade Academy Mentors Help Rares Achieve His Dream

Rares first learned about Upgrade Academy by following the weekly live sessions on Instagram (@upgradeacademyglobal). Every week, Rares was ready to learn new insights and was eagerly waiting for our mentors to go live on Instagram. That is why, when he decided to apply to the US, he immediately called Upgrade for guidance.

Watch Rares's Testimonial



I wasn't sure I had enough time to complete my application. But that initial talk with a mentor was the trigger that changed that. It got me motivated to pursue this path because I realised that if a qualified person who does this for a living supports me in this journey, then there really are chances to accomplish my goal.



Ongoing Emotional Support

As Rares told us, there were 3 times when he wanted to give up on his dream due to the rising pressure. Thankfully, he found in his mentor a person to rely on every time things got rough, to give him an educated opinion and to answer any small questions. Rares' mentor was there to support him in all aspects of his application, which reassured him that he had what it takes to gain admission to the US university of his dreams, Harvard.



Working with Upgrade and overcoming my fears regarding the essays and the interview felt like the most efficient personal development seminar I could have ever attended.

The feedback the Upgrade Academy mentor gave him at that initial talk was a real game-changer. Rares was told how the application process usually goes and although he was starting late, with a bit more work from both the mentor and him, Rares could arrive at a top US university with Upgrade Academy's help. After the meeting, together with the mentors and his parents, Rares had set a game plan for his application. The first step was starting the "Coach Me" program right away.

For Rares, his experience with Upgrade Academy was a truly inspiring one. Not only did it help him gain admission into Harvard, but those months helped him mature and learn what really motivates him.



Personalised Mentoring

Since Rares decided to apply to the US rather late, he had to learn how to properly manage his time. Luckily, his mentor helped him stay organised with schedules and plans that kept Rares on the right track.



Mastering the Interview

It is essential to make a great impression on the admission committee and with the help of his mentors, Rares knew how to do that. He needed to ace his interview.

Although he was nervous at first, Rares' mentor taught him how to answer flawlessly the most frequently asked questions and how to master interview techniques that helped him feel at ease during the process.

“

I would advise younger students not to think of secondary school as a period when you only have to learn school subjects. For me, it was a time when I grew a lot through the other things I pursued.



“

I feel that there aren't enough days in a year to do everything I'd want to do there - but I guess that's how you know you are in the right place.

Rares' Advice to the Younger Generation

Rares would like the younger students to understand the importance of defining their unique path without letting others influence them. In the end, the choice of where to go to university will define your academic life and your career – it is imperative that this choice reflects your wants and needs.

“

Take your time, be passionate, and never forget that at the end of the day high school means way more than university application and good grades, no matter where you will end up.

Rares' Expectations for University Life

Rares will go to Harvard in a few months and he is truly excited about it. He already started looking up courses and programs he could get involved in.

Although he doesn't know yet what his major will be, he is eager to meet more Harvard students and teachers, and he is determined to make the most of every single day at University. And who knows? Maybe he will leave his mark there too and found a Robotics startup.



The Application Process – A Mother’s Perspective



The confidence his mentor gave him and the emotional support he received had a tremendous impact on his success – here I am talking about the entire effort Rares put in in a relatively short amount of time.

Like any other unknown path in front of you; first, you ask yourself how you can go through the application process and which steps you should follow to be successful. For Rares, the application process was complex, including honing his writing and introspection skills that he used to write his entire application.

The mentors’ experience of having studied at top universities and the chance of working with young people who could understand his personality and mentality constitute Upgrade Academy’s main strengths. I am pleased with their open-mindedness, availability and their willingness to share their experience. I highly appreciated the sincerity and professionalism the team showed us.

When I heard that Rares got into Harvard, the joy of such news is immense because as a parent, I know every single bit of effort my child put in these last years. I am talking about his admission to Harvard – it’s not just going through the admission process. It is accumulating the required knowledge and skills Rares built up throughout the years. Everything he has done until now contributed to his formation and his future. We are happy his efforts had such successful results. I truly believe in him!



Who We Are

Upgrade Academy is a mentorship service that offers admission support for secondary school students. We have helped our students gain acceptance to the best universities in the world by offering them individualised coaching plans and comprehensive guidance from inspiring mentors.



What We Do

After our initial discussion, when we get to understand your goals, as well your current academic situation, our mentors create a long-term personalized plan, specifically suited to your particular needs, so that you maximize your chances of admission to your dream universities. Each application prep plan starts ASAP, from the point you are NOW in your high school career and ends at the end of high school, when you have all your results and are ready to leave for college.

Learn from the people who actually studied there. We are alumni from top US and UK universities including but not limited to Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford and Yale.

How Does Upgrade Academy Help You?



Decide on a Dream

We help you in choosing your field of study, the right schools and university programs.



Essays Support

Write unforgettable essays that truly convey who you are. Together we brainstorm ideas, create a structure and iterate through multiple drafts.



Academic Development

Gain proficiency in the field you are going to study in university.



Interview Prep

Mock interviews, advice and feedback from people who have been through these interviews themselves.



Extracurricular Development

Create your own projects with a real impact on society.



General Application Support

Clear application timelines, advice on financials and constant communication with students and parents.

Talk to a mentor!



Scan the code here to see how the perfect **Common App essay** looks like!



Read the comments our mentors have and use them **to improve your own essay!**



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Do you want to know how to
become a student yourself?

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