

Dear Student and Parents,

As part of our University and Careers programme we are in regular contact with university admissions representatives through email, telephone, university fairs and during the frequent visits paid by people in this role to NIST. In recent months we have learned that several selective and highly selective US Universities are concerned about the authenticity of university applications that they have received from Thailand. We are aware that many of our students at NIST have been offered assistance from private university counselling agencies in Bangkok that are employing unethical practices. These practices include:

- The falsification of student “achievements” both in school and out of school with respect to community service, athletic participation, leadership positions held, internships, club involvement and other so called “accomplishments”;
- College Essays written by or overly revised by “advisors” at these private university counseling agencies and not by the students themselves.

As a result of the number of falsified applications being sent to US based universities, the US universities are now on heightened alert from all applications being sent from Thailand. Tufts University has told us that 25% of the applications from Thailand were considered suspicious. We also understand that Harvard has refused to consider applications from Thailand for the academic year 2012-13. We have also been warned by the University of Pennsylvania and Brown University that if a student’s application was under suspect, resulting in a rejection, the student and/or the School may not be notified. It was shared with us that many of the selective and highly selective universities have held meetings to discuss these concerns and will continue to meet. We have no confirmed information, either by the students themselves or by a university, to suggest that any NIST student has been rejected as a result of these practices this year, but we are concerned that this will be increasingly possible if our parents and students do not heed the warnings that the universities have given to us.

It is essential that NIST maintains the high reputation and level of trust that it has previously shared with universities across the world. The actions of a few students and families could and may have already affected the reputation of all applications from Thailand or from NIST. It is crucial that as a school community, we commit to ethical practices to safeguard the university application of all our students in the present and in the future. NIST offers a complete comprehensive university preparation programme at NIST, under the guidance and supervision of trained and experienced counsellors. The NIST counsellors are trained to advise students by using acceptable and ethical practices that any US based university would deem appropriate and trustworthy. An authentic application allows the university to evaluate the student based on the student’s own voice as demonstrated in the essay and an honest representation of the activities in which the student has participated.

In addition to our current application procedures from August 2013, NIST will also add these measures to help regain the universities' trust:

- a. A certified list of in-school activities will be generated by NIST and sent with all applications. Any activity that occurred outside of school must include the name of a supervisor and a valid email address and will be kept on file;
- b. NIST will send a copy of the application essay(s) that have been reviewed by the school counselor to any university which students claim to have sent it and these will be kept on file;
- c. The application essay will also be submitted to Turnitin.com, an online plagiarism detection tool, prior to sending the supporting documents;
- d. An agreement will be signed by both student and parent which states that if the counselor becomes aware of any fraudulent application material they understand that the counselor must notify all universities to which the student has sent applications. In addition, the agreement will permit all universities in which the student has sent applications to release a copy of application materials to NIST;
- e. Universities will be notified of these new application procedures via the counselor's recommendation letter. Visits to NIST by university representatives and the procedures will be outlined in our school profile which is sent to all universities that a student has sent an application;
- f. The NIST parent and student community will be regularly reminded of these university application procedures in written, group and individual sessions;
- g. School disciplinary action will also be taken in relation to the NIST policy on academic honesty.

We would like to share some comments we have received from some of the universities:

*As you can expect, we take the ethics and integrity of our applications seriously. In the last couple years, Tufts has devoted considerable resources towards the veracity of applications coming from around the world, and specifically to those coming from Thailand. A considerable number of Thai applicants this past year were denied as a result of suspicious authenticity. It is a tremendous comfort to know that NIST is working with us; I have a deep respect and admiration for our Thai students and applicants, and new safeguards will help put NIST applicants beyond reproach.*

Daniel Grayson  
Associate Director  
Office of Undergraduate Admissions  
Tufts University

*UCLA has become aware of the conversations taking place between many of the international schools in Bangkok, and I applaud the steps you are taking. Obviously*



*we don't, and won't, support fraudulent applications. If any student submits a fraudulent application we have, and will continue to, revoke their offer of admissions at any time – including once the student has enrolled at UCLA. All of the UC Directors of Admission will be discussing the cases coming out of Thailand this summer to see if the UC application needs to change since we currently don't require school notification of any disciplinary issues – including academic dishonesty. I hope this will change soon. I can't speak for all of the UC's, but UCLA would be happy to receive any supporting documentation from NIST. It's probably easiest to send everything directly to my attention and I'll make sure it gets to the right place.*

Ffiona Rees  
Senior Associate Director of International Recruitment  
UCLA Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools

*We are so grateful to you and the NIST leadership for taking such a proactive position on this issue. As you know the process of applying to US universities is a holistic process in order to find the best fit for both the student and university. We have to have complete integrity in the process including what the student submits. These measures will give us assurance again that students applying from NIST will have written their essays and participated in the activities that they list in their applications. I know we also have the support of our alumni leadership in Thailand and our University leadership to make sure there is integrity in the admission process.*

Elisabeth O'Connell  
Associate Dean  
Undergraduate Admissions  
University of Pennsylvania

We are taking this issue extremely seriously and liaising regularly with the other major international schools in the city. Please help us to protect the reputation of our school and our students by supporting us in this matter.

Sincerely,

Simon Leslie  
NIST Headmaster

Adrian Watts  
NIST Director of Academic  
Studies

Julian Edwards  
NIST Secondary  
Principal

[www.nist.ac.th](http://www.nist.ac.th)

