

SPARK PREP NEWS

Q3/2024





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GRADUATION PARTY CLASS OF 2028

*Grad vibes only
So, there ya have it!*

A Recap of the Spark Prep Class of 2028 Graduation Ceremony

"The US college application process challenged me to face my toughest moments and become more mature to choose the right path for myself. Working with Spark Prep taught me how to manage my time down to the minute, make my application preparation better organized and efficient."

"Your journey is just beginning. Keep believing in yourself, give your best effort, and cherish every meaningful experience that comes your way. Whenever you encounter difficulties, remember that Spark Prep will always be here to guide and support you."

These heartfelt words, shared by students and teachers at the 2024 Graduation Party, marked the end of another unforgettable college application cycle at Spark Prep. We hope the college application journey has been meaningful, helping shape who you are today.

We hope the college application process has been a meaningful and transformative experience, shaping you into who you are today. To all the graduates of 2024, we wish you a bright and successful future! Spark Prep is proud to have been part of your journey and will always be here to support you.

Let's look back on the memories from the Graduation Party in Hanoi!



NARRATIVE WRITING

Transforming Ideas into Impact

Peter Thompson

Khoi Tran

Phong D. Nguyen

At Spark Prep, our Narrative Writing is more than just about learning – it's a journey of personal growth. Over the last two months, students have improved their storytelling skills, sharpened their creativity, and elevated their writing skills to the next level.

In 12 exciting sessions, students explored how to:

- Craft stories with purpose and clear messages.
- Write openings that grab attention from the very first sentence.
- Choose vivid details that make stories unforgettable
- Add creative twists that evoke strong emotions and keep readers engaged.

This course goes beyond writing skills, helping students think critically, explore new perspectives, and unlock their potential as they move toward their learning goals.

Narrative Writing Class - Student Testimonials:

“ This writing course made me realize that I have pretty good vocabulary and a vivid imagination. However, I still need to work on my 'show, not tell' technique to enhance my storytelling skills.

“ This summer course was fantastic. Mr Peter was incredibly skilled and experienced. Even when my word choice wasn't perfect, he was patient and guided me through every step. Thanks to his support, I can now describe my experiences more vividly in my essays. I'm truly grateful!!!

“ Mr. Peter helped me improve my vocabulary. I truly enjoyed his lessons and am grateful for his guidance!



Crafting a Standout College Application for STEM Programs



SPEAKER

Xue Yan

Giám đốc Tuyển sinh từ College of
Computing & Informatics, Drexel University

**Ready to take on STEM?
Build your college application
with our experts!**



Ready to ace your STEM application? Join this exclusive webinar with an admissions expert from Drexel University!

Are you a student with a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM)? Planning of securing a spot in top STEM programs? Spark Prep is thrilled to present a special webinar that's designed just for you!

Special guest speaker: **Xue Yan**, Director of Recruitment, College of Computing & Informatics, Drexel University

Date: Friday, 06 October, 2024

Time: 8pm-9.30pm

Format: Online via Zoom

Xue Yan will walk you through what universities, particularly Drexel, look for in STEM applicants and provide actionable tips to elevate your application:

- Discover what sets successful applicants apart
- Learn how to choose and highlight activities that align with your STEM interests
- Showcase your genuine passion for STEM
- Get advice on writing a compelling personal statement that stands out

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from one of the best in the field and take your STEM application to the next level. Whether you're just starting your college journey or refining your application, this webinar is packed with valuable insights that can make a real difference.

Register now: <https://forms.gle/ukH79E3HdUXbTmFr9>

Join us and take the first step toward your future in STEM!

STUDENT CASE STUDY



Anh Nguyet's inspiring journey: From journalism enthusiast to top U.S. university student

Anh Nguyet, a student at Nguyen Tat Thanh High School (Hanoi), has long aspired to pursue a career in journalism. Her hard work finally paid off when she got accepted to 12 U.S. universities in the 2023/2024 college application cycle. Among these, she earned a spot at Mount Holyoke College, the oldest of the prestigious Seven Sisters, with a generous financial aid package worth over 6 billion VND for her four-year journey.

Nguyet's impressive college acceptance list also includes: Furman University (\$52,180/year) - #46 LAC, St. Lawrence University (\$40,000/year) and Knox College (\$52,000/year).

Despite not attending a specialized high school or having a large budget for U.S. studies, Nguyet made her application stand out through her unique strengths and experiences.

Here's how she shone as an applicant

Extracurricular activities showcased her contribution for journalism and community building

- Founded a non-profit project and wrote articles on film, music, and literature.
- Led a team of 70 members in a food rescue project to provide meals and organize activities to raise community awareness.
- Became a Journalist Intern at a national press agency, produced content on health, the environment, society, and education.
- Co-led 100 members in organizing vocal show and dance performances for her high school's Arts team.
- Owned a personal blog, wrote articles on Vietnamese culture, art, food, travel, and lifestyle.
- Top 19 in the Climate Launchpad - Global Green Business Ideas Competition.
- Beyond these roles, Nguyet also showcased her writing skills for various volunteer and educational projects.

CONGRATULATIONS!

ANH NGUYET MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE



Personal statement reflected a journey of valuable personal growth

Choosing the prompt "Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design", Nguyet crafted a compelling self-introduction that showcased her growth and dedication. She shared how growing up in a 'culture of silence' led her to express herself through writing, marking a pivotal moment in her maturity and commitment to journalism.

Using the metaphor of 'sugar cubes' to symbolize the encouragement from her peers, Nguyet illustrated her journey of finding motivation, connecting with her values, and discovering her unique voice. This support drove her passion for journalism, and inspired her to write stories about unsung heroes that deeply resonate with readers.

Nguyet also maintained an **outstanding academic record** with an average score of 9.0 throughout high school and reached the final round of the prestigious John Locke Institute Writing Competition during her junior year.

Spark Prep is proud of Nguyet's remarkable achievements and honored to have supported her throughout this application process. We are excited to see her continue to grow and make a meaningful impact in her future endeavors.

STUDENT CASE STUDY

BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

Unveiling Hien Anh's Drive: The Dual-Major Journey

Hien Anh demonstrated exceptional dedication to the diverse fields of Communications and Neuroscience. Her innovative approach earned her acceptance to over 10 prestigious U.S. universities, including Boston University. Known for its leading advertising experts and dynamic media environment, Boston University welcomed Hien Anh into its Bachelor of Advertising program.

Though Communications and Neuroscience may appear disparate, Hien Anh ingeniously bridged the gap between them. She became fascinated by how the human brain responds to digital platforms, which sparked her interest in exploring the intersection of these fields. Her hard work and interdisciplinary approach resulted in offers from several top universities, including Boston University (#43 NU), Boston College (#39 NU), Bucknell University (#30 LAC), Brandeis University (#60 NU), and Furman University (#46 LAC).

How did Hien Anh demonstrate her potential for both majors?

She built an impressive portfolio of activities that showcased her ability to develop skills relevant to both Communications and Neuroscience:

- Co-founded a podcast channel, where she led a team to brainstorm and produce content on personal growth.
- Managed social media channels for an educational book project and a charity club.
- Collaborated with NGOs to create content, organize seminars, and raise funds for school libraries.
- Organized Mid-Autumn and Christmas fairs to raise funds for disadvantaged and disabled children, produced content for promotion and engagement.
- Analyzed manufacturing & packaging process of small businesses, proposed sustainable options for the branding & packaging of foods products.

These meaningful experiences helped Hien Anh gain valuable lessons, which she used to craft personal stories in her college essays.

CONGRATULATIONS!

HIEN ANH
BOSTON UNIVERSITY



What did Hien Anh write in her personal statement?

For her essay, Hien Anh chose to answer the prompt 'Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design'. She focused on a personal project that changed her outlook:

- Growing up in an environment filled with generational differences, Hien Anh created a podcast channel to help young people navigate these challenges. Through discussions with guest speakers, she gained diverse insights and explored new perspectives on a variety of topics.
- Networking with peers helped Hien Anh realize the value of personal beliefs and experiences. This broadened her own perspective and nurtured her intellect by embracing different worldviews.

Hien Anh also impressed the admissions committee with her **strong academic performance:**

- Achieved a GPA 9.5/10, IELTS 8.0, and received a scholarship for outstanding academic achievement.
- Won First Prize in the Career Quest Competition.
- Secured Third Prize in Queen's University Entrepreneurship and Innovation program.
- Ranked among the top delegates in Model United Nations.

Congratulations to Hien Anh for a successful application cycle! We are delighted to have supported her on this meaningful journey, and we truly wish her continued success in the future!

STUDENT CASE STUDY



Trong Hieu's Journey: From a Specialized Language School Student to a Freshman in Computer Science at a Prestigious U.S. University"

Can you excel in writing, languages, and Computer Science all at once? Trong Hieu - our outstanding student - proved that it's possible.

Initially interested in Computer Science, Hieu's curiosity led him to Actuarial Science—a newer but promising field with great potential for future careers. Through continuous learning, he discovered a passion for analyzing risk and applying mathematics to real-world problems, setting his sights on a career in this rapidly growing field.

Hieu's journey to Actuarial Science was enriched by interdisciplinary experiences that spanned investment, programming, web design, and content creation. These experiences helped him clarify his interests and boost his career prospects. His perseverance and eagerness to learn pushed him further than he initially imagined.

His hard work paid off when he got accepted to Grinnell College, ranked in the top 11 U.S. LAC, with a financial aid package of \$40,270/year. Hieu also received offers from other prestigious schools, including: Ohio State University (#43 NU), University of Rochester (\$14,000/year) - #47 NU, University of Connecticut (#58 NU), Kenyon College (\$42,000/year) - #39 LAC.

Since grade 10, Hieu built a strong academic profile that set him apart:

- Maintained a 9.2/10 GPA
- Scored 1530/1600 on the SAT, ranking in the top 1% globally
- Achieved an IELTS score of 8.0
- Participated in summer course in theoretical computer science, learned about probability, cryptography, algorithms, and complexity theory; resolved assigned problems by writing codes with LaTeX & code blocks

CONGRATULATIONS!

TRONG HIEU GRINNELL COLLEGE



Beyond academics, Hieu demonstrated leadership and initiative through various activities:

- Led a team in a global high school investment competition, enriched financial knowledge & guided team on strategic planning.
- Managed a blog, connected cross-field topics like math-literature, analyzed graphs, translated data into text & applied research skills to compose weekly posts on economics.
- Interned at a commercial bank, tracked portfolio performance; adapted financial tools & models to study data, trends for decision-making; researched & presented proposals to clients.
- Conducted research with experts from top U.S. and UK universities on behavior simulation and data analysis.
- Created a website for accommodation reservation using ReactJS, JavaScript & PHP.

In his **personal statement**, Hieu reflected on a turning point in his life. After his family relocated, he struggled with cultural differences and homesickness. However, his efforts to adapt and engage with his new environment led him to discover joy in the urban lifestyle and build resilience. This experience taught him the importance of adapting to new situations and embracing challenges beyond his comfort zone.

Spark Prep is proud to have been part of Hieu's journey. We are thrilled to see him achieve such remarkable results and look forward to watching him continue to grow and excel in the next chapter of his academic and personal development.

STUDENT'S REVIEWS

Ngoc Tran

University of South Carolina



In my experience, Spark Prep's coaching program is truly well-rounded. It covers everything you need for college admissions, from test prep to essay writing. The team offers expert advice and emotional support, helping students feel confident and ready for success.



Phuong Anh

Boston College



Initially, I planned to handle my college application on my own. However, after some consideration, I realized that having a mentor could make this process much smoother. So, I started working with Spark Prep from October until around the end of January.

I applied to 15 schools, carefully choosing them based on their location and strengths in my intended major. My coach, Tran and Joon were very helpful in guiding me through the school selection process. I dived deep into researching each school through various ways—talking to friends, browsing school websites, checking professor ratings, and exploring forums and group chats of current students and alumni.

The toughest part of the application process was juggling my schoolwork, essay writing, and application preparation. My application didn't turn out as perfectly as I had envisioned since I did not spend enough time on it, and looking back, I wish I had started the preparation earlier.

Writing essays was particularly challenging because I was often stressed about meeting deadlines rather than focusing on crafting my essays. However, I ended up writing around 20 essays for those 15 schools with the support of my coaches.

Despite the hurdles, I'm proud that I managed to complete all my essays while facing some personal challenges. My advice to college-bound students is to write your essays early to allow ample time for revisions. I'm also proud of how much more confident I became in my interview skills, thanks to the tips and mock interviews with Mr. Joon.

Spark Prep coaches supported me, answered all my questions, and encouraged me every step of the way. For those preparing to apply to college, I recommend starting as early as possible, as the college application involves many components and requires a lot of time to perfect. Starting early on researching the college application process and preparing necessary documents is absolutely crucial.




Research. Apply. Ignite.



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