

# **ELITE APPLICATIONS**

Applying to Your Dream Graduate School



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WHAT'S UP?!?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*It doesn't matter where you come from;  
all that matters is where you're going.*

- Dennis Kimbro

Marshall Bennett is a graduate of the Master of Science in Foreign Service (MSFS) program at Georgetown University. He also holds a M.A. degree in East Asian Studies from Stanford University and a certificate in Advanced Japanese Language Studies from Stanford University's Inter University Center in Yokohama, Japan. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Business from the University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management, where he also double majored in Asian Languages and Literature.

He has worked at NASA's Public Affairs Office, delved into the New Space startup world in Silicon Valley, and contributed to the Affordable Care Act (or Obamacare) project in Hawai'i as the internal lead for Design Thinking.

Born in a small farming community in South Korea and raised for his few years in an orphanage, Marshall believes that if you always look for ways to better and improve yourself, plan for your goals, and surround yourself with good people who support your efforts, you are more likely to succeed in whatever you choose to pursue in life.

I invite you to connect with me at [facebook.com/AngryBooda](https://facebook.com/AngryBooda) or on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/bennettmarshall](https://linkedin.com/in/bennettmarshall).

## CHAPTER 1

**INTRODUCTION**

*Nothing in the world can take place of Persistence.  
Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.  
Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.  
Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.  
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.*

- Calvin Coolidge

Let's be honest, attending graduate school is a serious investment as you are using this period in your life as a stepping-stone to help you realize some of your greater objectives in your personal and professional life. Being familiar with that feeling and knowing that applying for elite professional degree programs is tough and competitive, the application process may seem fairly daunting. Some of the best advice that an applicant can receive is from an individual who has already reached the goal that they desire to attain. Because there can be a lot of ambiguity along the way, this booklet seeks to reduce it by providing hindsight and strategies to strengthen your application.

*Elite Applications* was originally written with the top international relations programs in mind and with a particular emphasis on my experience of gaining

admissions into Georgetown University's Master of Science in Foreign Service (MSFS) program and Stanford University's Center for East Asian Studies. (Sidenote - while I feel fortunate to note that I had gained admissions into other notable programs, such as Cornell University, I ultimately decided to attend Georgetown and Stanford.) However, the lessons and advice in the book are applicable for many academic programs whether at an undergraduate or graduate level.

Please note, though, that while the book is not the result of a direct collaboration with Georgetown University and Stanford University and that receiving an admissions offer from either school ultimately depends on an applicant's own initiative, experiences and ability, there are some strategies that will help to improve your chances. The content of this booklet is an accumulation of my experiences, lessons, and advice that I have gained – whether from other professors, graduate students, admissions consultants or that I have learned myself – when applying to elite academic institutions and for scholarships and fellowships. I provide advice and tips that I have found to work and be the most effective.

The booklet offers the type of insight that I did not always have unless I was able to find and talk with the right people. I've learned that while you can work and study hard, it's vital that you meet and network with others who have achieved the goals you wish to attain so that you can position yourself and plan accordingly. Regardless, I strongly believe that the sooner you start planning, the better chances you will have in succeeding. I wish you the best in pursuing your goals and hope this book serves you well during the application process.

## RESOURCES

**ARTICLES, ONLINE VIDEOS & BOOKS**

*Choose yourself.*

- James Altucher

I will be honest by noting that it is difficult to create a booklet that completely addresses how attending graduate school will affect your academic, professional, and personal life. And I do not think there is an actual book that does so as each of these areas tend to be treated as separate topics in books. However, there are many sources that will help you reflect on your particular life situation and below are some of the articles, online videos, and books that I have found to be helpful in guiding me through those areas in my life. The list is an accumulation of what professors, academic and career counselors, business professionals and friends have shared with me. I hope one or more of the sources resonates with you and helps you along your path.

## I. FREE ONLINE VIDEOS

### **Meg Jay: Why 30 is Not the New 20**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2MISwT9>

Clinical psychologist Meg Jay has a bold message for twentysomethings: Contrary to popular belief, your 20s are not a throwaway decade. In this provocative talk, Jay says that just because marriage, work and kids are happening later in life, doesn't mean you can't start planning now. She gives 3 pieces of advice for how twentysomethings can re-claim adulthood in the defining decade of their lives.

### **Mel Robbins: How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2NHIDTA>

Mel Robbins is a married working mother of three, an ivy-educated criminal lawyer, and one of the top career and relationship experts in America. Widely respected for her grab-'em-by-the-collar advice and tough love, Robbins drills through the mental clutter that stands between people and what they want. Her approach is smart, effective and entertaining. Five days a week, Mel hosts her own syndicated radio show The Mel Robbins Show, discussing hot topics and giving advice to callers across America. She is starring in a new series, In-Laws, airing this summer on A&E. In addition, she writes a monthly column for Success Magazine, is a former CNBC contributor and is the co-founder of Advice for Living, Inc., which develops products and television programming with experts in the wellness, health, relationship and career categories.

### **Oprah Winfrey's 2008 Stanford Commencement Address**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2wASJOa>

Oprah Winfrey, global media leader and philanthropist, spoke to the Class of 2008 at Stanford's 117th Commencement on June 15, 2008. Winfrey drew on experiences from a career that began in 1976 when she co-anchored a television newscast, and she shared three lessons about feelings, failure and finding happiness.

### **Randy Pausch Last Lecture: Achieving Your Childhood Dreams**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2NEllwC>

Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch (Oct. 23, 1960 - July 25, 2008) gave his last lecture at the university Sept. 18, 2007, before a packed McConomy Auditorium. In his moving presentation, "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams," Pausch talked about his lessons learned and gave advice to students on how to achieve their own career and personal goals.

### **Randy Pausch Lecture on Time Management**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2MEXKPQ>

Carnegie Mellon Professor Randy Pausch gave a lecture on Time Management at the University of Virginia in November 2007. Randy Pausch -- <http://www.randypausch.com> -- is a virtual reality pioneer, human-computer interaction researcher, co-founder of Carnegie Mellon's Entertainment Technology Center -- <http://www.etc.cmu.edu> -- and creator of the Alice -- <http://www.alice.org> -- software project. The slides for this lecture and high-res downloadable versions of this and other lectures can be found at: <http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~robins/Randy/>.

### **Randy Pausch Inspires Graduate Students**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2PY9xXB>

Professor Randy Pausch made a surprise return to Carnegie Mellon University to deliver an inspirational speech to the Class of 2008 at the Commencement ceremony on May 18, 2008.

Pausch was included in TIME Magazine's 2008 list of the world's 100 most influential people. His book, "The Last Lecture," co-written by Jeff Zaslow of the Wall Street Journal and based on Pausch's now-famous talk "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams," is a New York Times #1 bestseller.

### **Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address**

- Link: <http://bit.ly/2Cad9CU>

Drawing from some of the most pivotal points in his life, Steve Jobs, chief executive officer and co-founder of Apple Computer and of Pixar Animation Studios, urged graduates to pursue their dreams and see the opportunities in life's setbacks -- including death itself -- at the university's 114th Commencement on June 12, 2005.

### **Tina Seelig: Fail Fast & Frequently**

- Link: <https://stanford.io/2C7Kgat>

What's the secret sauce of Silicon Valley? Failure, reports Tina Seelig, Executive Director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program. To develop more successes, she urges, entrepreneurs have got to take a risk, and this is the notion behind every deal in the entire ecosystem. Venture capitalists fund risk and, by association, failure, in order to find the "hits" in the haystack. Failure is a perfectly acceptable part of the entrepreneurial process, provided that the smart entrepreneur learns from their errors along the way.

## **II. ARTICLES (Online)**

### **"The Taming of the Tiger Parents" by Donovan Yisrael**

<https://marshallbennett.info/the-taming-of-the-tiger-parents-lessons-for-us-all/>

I am hesitant to give the whole Tiger Mom discussion more attention than needed and yet it is obvious that the topic has hit a nerve among many Americans, including Asian and Asian American



parents and their children. Even people who are totally opposed to Amy Chua's philosophy, as indicated in her book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, become all riled up when they talk about it. I believe the nerve it touches has to do with our deepest fear of failure, a fear that is all too common at Stanford University. And for the parents raising our children to be high achieving members of society, we wonder, "What if my kid could be the next Tiger Woods or Yo-Yo Ma and they don't reach that potential because I did not push them hard enough?" We worry, "What if the Tiger Mom is right after all?" And here at Stanford this debate is relevant within each individual as we consider how to motivate ourselves to work and to achieve.

### **"Why You Shouldn't Go to Grad School" by Frances Bridges**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/francesbridges/2012/02/17/why-you-shouldnt-go-to-grad-school/>

Most soon-to-be or recent college graduates today look at their post college life like a multiple choice question:

- A. Have a "real" job lined up
- B. Look for a "real" job
- C. Go to graduate school
- D. Get a random job

Obviously, everyone wants "A." I had a few breakdowns because "A" didn't happen. So I picked "D" because I was already looking for a job to no avail, and it was my opportunity to have a "fun" job before I got my "real" job.

### **"Managing Oneself" by Peter Drucker**

<http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~peterb/3005-001/managingoneself.pdf>

We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity: if you've got ambition, drive, and smarts, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession – regardless of where you started out. But with opportunity comes responsibility. Companies today aren't managing their knowledge workers' careers. Rather, we must each be our own chief executive officer.

Simply put, it's up to you to carve out your place in the work world and know when to change course. And it's up to you to keep yourself engaged and productive during a working life that may span some 50 years.

## **III. BOOKS**

### ***Choose Yourself* by James Altucher**

The world is changing. Markets have crashed. Jobs have disappeared. Industries have been disrupted and are being remade before our eyes. Everything we aspired to for "security," everything we thought was "safe," no longer is: College. Employment. Retirement. Government. It's all



crumbling down. In every part of society, the middlemen are being pushed out of the picture. No longer is someone coming to hire you, to invest in your company, to sign you, to pick you. It's on you to make the most important decision in your life: Choose Yourself.

New tools and economic forces have emerged to make it possible for individuals to create art, make millions of dollars and change the world without "help." More and more opportunities are rising out of the ashes of the broken system to generate real inward success (personal happiness and health) and outward success (fulfilling work and wealth).

This book will teach you to do just that. With dozens of case studies, interviews and examples—including the author, investor and entrepreneur James Altucher's own heartbreaking and inspiring story—Choose Yourself illuminates your personal path to building a bright, new world out of the wreckage of the old.

### ***Dying to Be Me* by Anita Moorjani**

In this truly inspirational memoir, Anita Moorjani relates how, after fighting cancer for almost four years, her body began shutting down—overwhelmed by the malignant cells spreading throughout her system. As her organs failed, she entered into an extraordinary near-death experience where she realized her inherent worth . . . and the actual cause of her disease. Upon regaining consciousness, Anita found that her condition had improved so rapidly that she was released from the hospital within weeks—without a trace of cancer in her body! Within these pages, Anita recounts stories of her childhood in Hong Kong, her challenge to establish her career and find true love, as well as how she eventually ended up in that hospital bed where she defied all medical knowledge. As part of a traditional Hindu family residing in a largely Chinese and British society, Anita had been pushed and pulled by cultural and religious customs since she was a little girl. After years of struggling to forge her own path while trying to meet everyone else's expectations, she had the realization, as a result of her epiphany on the other side, that she had the power to heal herself . . . and that there are miracles in the Universe that she'd never even imagined. In *Dying to Be Me*, Anita freely shares all she has learned about illness, healing, fear, "being love," and the true magnificence of each and every human being! This is a book that definitely makes the case that we are spiritual beings having a human experience . . . and that we are all One!

### ***Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom**

Maybe it was a grandparent, or a teacher, or a colleague. Someone older, patient and wise, who understood you when you were young and searching, helped you see the world as a more profound place, gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it.

For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor from nearly twenty years ago.

Maybe, like Mitch, you lost track of this mentor as you made your way, and the insights faded, and the world seemed colder. Wouldn't you like to see that person again, ask the bigger questions that still haunt you, receive wisdom for your busy life today the way you once did when you were younger?

Mitch Albom had that second chance. He rediscovered Morrie in the last months of the older man's life. Knowing he was dying, Morrie visited with Mitch in his study every Tuesday, just as they used to back in college. Their rekindled relationship turned into one final "class": lessons in how to live.

*Tuesdays with Morrie* is a magical chronicle of their time together, through which Mitch shares Morrie's lasting gift with the world.

### ***The No Asshole Rule*** by Bob Sutton

When Robert Sutton's "No Asshole Rule" appeared in the Harvard Business Review, readers of this staid publication were amazed at the outpouring of support for this landmark essay. The idea was based on the notion, as adapted in hugely successful companies like Google and SAS, that employees with malicious intents or negative attitudes destroyed any sort of productive and pleasant working environment, and would hinder the entire operation's success.

Now using case studies from these and many more corporations that have had unquestioned success using variations of "The No Asshole Rule," Sutton's book aims to show managers that by hiring mean-spirited employees - regardless of talent - saps energy from everyone who must deal with said new hires.

### ***You Are a Badass*** by Jen Sincero

In this refreshingly entertaining how-to guide, bestselling author and world-traveling success coach, Jen Sincero, serves up 27 bitesized chapters full of hilariously inspiring stories, sage advice, easy exercises, and the occasional swear word, helping you to: Identify and change the self-sabotaging beliefs and behaviors that stop you from getting what you want, Create a life you totally love. And create it NOW, Make some damn money already. The kind you've never made before.

By the end of *You Are a Badass*, you'll understand why you are how you are, how to love what you can't change, how to change what you don't love, and how to use The Force to kick some serious ass.

### ***The Alchemist*** by Paul Coehlo

*The Alchemist* is the magical story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who yearns to travel in search of a worldly treasure as extravagant as any ever found. From his home in Spain he journeys to the markets of Tangiers and across the Egyptian desert to a fateful encounter with the alchemist.

The story of the treasures Santiago finds along the way teaches us, as only a few stories have done, about the essential wisdom of listening to our hearts, learning to read the omens strewn along life's path, and, above all, following our dreams.

### ***The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch**

A lot of professors give talks titled "The Last Lecture." Professors are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them. And while they speak, audiences can't help but mull the same question: What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy.

When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave--"Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams"--wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because "time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think"). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living.

In this book, Randy Pausch has combined the humor, inspiration and intelligence that made his lecture such a phenomenon and given it an indelible form. It is a book that will be shared for generations to come.

### ***Inside a US Embassy: How the Foreign Service Works for America* by Shawn Dorman**

Who works in an embassy? What do diplomats actually do? *Inside a U.S. Embassy* offers an up-close and personal look into the lives of the diplomats and specialists who make up the U.S. Foreign Service, taking readers inside embassies and consulates in over 50 countries, providing detailed descriptions of Foreign Service jobs and first-hand accounts of diplomacy in action.

Gain a sense of the key role played by each member of an embassy team from Paris to Kabul, from Bogota to Beijing, and places in between. Travel into the rainforests of Thailand with an environmental affairs officer, face rampaging militias with a political officer in East Timor, and join an ambassador on a midnight trip into a Macedonian refugee camp to quell a riot.

The book includes profiles of diplomats and specialists around the world serving in Foreign Service positions -- from the ambassador to the security officer, the consular officer to the IT specialist. Also included is a selection of day-in-the-life accounts from 17 different countries, each describing an actual day on the job. The story section includes 26 tales from the field that give a sense of the extraordinary: the coups, the evacuations, the civil wars, the hardships and rewards of representing America to the world.

### ***Who Moved My Cheese* by Spencer Johnson**

With *Who Moved My Cheese?* Dr. Spencer Johnson realizes the need for finding the language and tools to deal with change--an issue that makes all of us nervous and uncomfortable.

Most people are fearful of change because they don't believe they have any control over how or when it happens to them. Since change happens either to the individual or by the individual, Spencer Johnson shows us that what matters most is the attitude we have about change.

Spencer Johnson has created his new book to do just that. The coauthor of the multimillion bestseller *The One Minute Manager* has written a deceptively simple story with a dramatically important message that can radically alter the way we cope with change. *Who Moved My Cheese?* allows for common themes to become topics for discussion and individual interpretation.

*Who Moved My Cheese?* takes the fear and anxiety out of managing the future and shows people a simple way to successfully deal with the changing times, providing them with a method for moving ahead with their work and lives safely and effectively.

### ***What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20* by Tina Seelig**

Major life transitions such as leaving the protected environment of school or starting a new career can be daunting. It is scary to face a wall of choices, knowing that no one is going to tell us whether or not we are making the right decision. There is no clearly delineated path or recipe for success. Even figuring out how and where to start can be a challenge. That is, until now.

As executive director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program, Tina Seelig guides her students as they make the difficult transition from the academic environment to the professional world, providing tangible skills and insights that will last a lifetime. Seelig is an entrepreneur, neuroscientist, and popular teacher, and in *What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20* she shares with us what she offers her students—provocative stories, inspiring advice, and a big dose of humility and humor.

These pages are filled with fascinating examples, from the classroom to the boardroom, of individuals defying expectations, challenging assumptions, and achieving amazing success. Seelig throws out the old rules and provides a new model for reaching our highest potential. We discover how to have a healthy disregard for the impossible, how to recover from failure, and how most problems are remarkable opportunities in disguise.

### ***Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Change* by William Bridges**

Whether it is chosen or thrust upon you, change brings both opportunities and turmoil. Since first published 25 years ago, *Transitions* has helped hundreds of thousands of readers cope with these issues by providing an elegantly simple yet profoundly insightful roadmap of the transition process. With the understanding born of both personal and professional experience, William Bridges takes readers step by step through the three stages of any transition: The Ending, The Neutral Zone, and, in time, The New Beginning. Bridges explains how each stage can be understood and embraced, leading to meaningful and productive movement into a hopeful future. With a new introduction highlighting how the advice in the book continues to apply and is perhaps even more relevant today,

and a new chapter devoted to change in the workplace, *Transitions* will remain the essential guide for coping with the one constant in life: change.

**#YOLOPunkAss**