



www.THESHORTLIST.org

THE PANDEMIC YEARS  
2020 — 2022

Meet  
Some  
of Our  
Clients

THE SHORT LIST'S  
success stories:  
St Andrews  
(Scotland)



## Client Empowerment: *Elizabeth '21*

### The Test Optional



Elizabeth spent her high school years in a Connecticut boarding school's Global and Environmental Studies program. She studied French and Arabic and earned the Honors Tea Award for "Best Student in a Language Class." She joined Model UN, became an officer in her school's UNICEF club, and was awarded the "Norton Center Initiative — Charitable Blend."

The Short List helped Elizabeth plan summer programs, including a dual-immersion French and Arabic trip to Morocco and a photojournalism trip to Vietnam and Cambodia. The crowning moment was a chance to study in Jordan her 2019 — 2020 junior year. Then COVID disrupted everything in the spring, and she quickly boarded one of Jordan's last flights out of the country.

We hoped good test scores would offset Elizabeth's incomplete transcript, so our test prep division worked closely with her. She improved with each mock test and was ready to perform well...before her test site cancelled the test, and each of the next five tests she registered for.

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# Greetings from THE SHORT LIST

## Letter from Our Founder

The **worldwide pandemic** has forever altered U.S. college admissions. We wanted to use this newsletter to highlight how **our students successfully navigated the process**. See the more than 225 acceptances our clients have achieved during this challenging period.

High schools and colleges went into **lockdown in March 2020** just as high school seniors were receiving admissions decisions. Almost immediately, many college-bound seniors deferred their acceptances. **International enrollment dropped by 43%** as travel restrictions and an inability to secure F-1 visas prevented students from traveling to the USA. We helped students like **Yul (page 2)** **appeal and take advantage of deferral options**.

Although enrollment was decreasing, **testing sites worldwide closed**, forcing universities to implement **test optional policies** that generated a **24% increase in 2021 applications**. We quickly recognized testing could make a difference and encouraged students like **Philip (page 3)** **to prep for and take the test**. While only **44% of applicants submitted test scores**, **77% of students accepted** to the most selective schools **had submitted scores**.

Without test scores to provide data, teachers were challenged to **give recommendation letters greater weight**. We **worked** with students like **Ailbhe (page 4)** **on recommendation strategies** that would help them stand out.

**Extracurricular activities were being altered or eliminated worldwide**. We emphasized how admissions would be looking for the exceptional and not the exception. We **brainstormed ways** students like **Elizabeth (page 1)** and **Jason (page 3)** **could reinvent** their activities in meaningful ways.

**Visiting campuses** became almost **impossible**, so we helped students like **Yoong (page 2)** **research schools remotely** and **communicate their findings in essays, interviews, and auditions**.

Pandemic shifts particularly affected less-advantaged students. We completed our **19th year of pro-bono work** guiding students at **Humanities Preparatory Academy (page 4)** remotely.

Please take the time to read how our **students discovered silver linings** in the **most unpredictable admissions seasons ever**. And please reach out to **learn more** about our **college counseling, academic tutoring, or test prep services**.

We wish everyone a safe year ahead!

— Bill Short, Founder



► See a video of TSL client **Yoong** in a holiday dance performance.

## Siblings — 2020 & 2022

ASIA



Yul '20 and Yoong '22 were no strangers to The Short List. We had worked with two of their cousins, including Wonjai who was featured in our 2018 Newsletter. Although brothers, the pandemic impacted them differently, especially when it came to visiting schools.

THE SHORT LIST'S

### success stories: Brown

Hong Kong



## Yul '20

### The In-Person Visit

We met Yul while giving an admissions overview presentation in Hong Kong his



freshman year. Starting early with The Short List helped Yul stay focused in his academics, extracurriculars, and summer programs. He joined a rock band that performed regularly at school and Hong Kong conventions. He auditioned and became one of three finalists out of 1,000 for a K-pop band. Yul also co-founded a student-led A Capella group.

We introduced Yul to New York University's prestigious Clive Davis Institute Summer High School Program, where he explored producing music. Spending the summer

in the USA gave Yul an opportunity to visit colleges.

Yul loved writing, performing, and producing, but his college visits showed him there were compelling business opportunities outside of music. We helped him reduce his college list and focus on schools that would allow him to pursue music and business. Yul's Brown visit helped him articulate why their open curriculum and supportive community of musicians and entrepreneurs motivated him to apply.

Brown waitlisted Yul just as COVID put his school into remote learning. His

counselor told him, "It is unlikely you will come off the waitlist, so we won't be able to support you." We told Yul's family we believed otherwise and showed Yul how to appeal the waitlist decision. Brown eventually accepted Yul and gave him the option of starting online or postponing his entry until the following May when they hoped to resume in-person learning. Yul opted for the latter so he could continue producing his music during COVID's most challenging year. His father wrote, "Thank you again for not giving up and encouraging Yul! That made all the difference!"

THE SHORT LIST'S

### success stories: NYU

Hong Kong



## Yoong '22

### The Online Audition

When we first met Yoong, he was already a member of Hong Kong's Youth Arts Foundation and was regularly cast in their theater productions. He was the lead singer in a school Pop Rock band, actor in the annual 48-hour Film Festival, and dancer in the school's K-pop dance group.

Yoong had previously attended Michigan's world-renowned Interlocken Center for the Arts, where he was surprised to discover he was the only Asian student in their Summer Theater Program. Nonetheless, he joined the program with

confidence, deciding to be "just like the other kids." That earned him a small 16-second solo. We encouraged Yoong to return to Interlocken the following summer and be himself. During a dance rehearsal, he showcased his K-pop talents, and the directors cast him as one of the leads in *Sweeney Todd*.

Yoong was unable to return to the USA in 2021 due to COVID travel restrictions and missed the opportunity to visit colleges. We introduced him to online research tools to investigate programs that matched his interests. We coached him for his Zoom auditions, reminding



him to continue being himself as he performed from his bedroom. We also encouraged Yoong to remain engaged at school and were delighted when he sent a **video of a dance he choreographed** for a holiday recital. We advised him to send it to the universities to which he was applying.

In the end, Yoong was accepted to NYU, USC, and UCLA, the three most prestigious theater programs in the country. He always dreamed of living in New York City, the theater capital of the world, and will be enrolling at NYU this fall.

**Siblings — 2020 & 2022**

EUROPE



We were introduced to Philip and Jason by a former client. Their parents had studied in Greece and the United States. They wanted their sons to study at a USA college where a liberal arts and science curriculum would be emphasized.

THE SHORT LIST'S

**success stories: Columbia University**

Greece

**Philip '21****The Core Curriculum**

Philip approached The Short List as a sophomore wanting to discuss whether he should continue following the Greek national curriculum or move to an International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum for his final two years of high school. That was not the last time we would discuss curriculums with him.

The Greek refugee crisis dominated Philip's high school years. He co-founded Make A Difference with some high school friends and organized a basketball fundraiser featuring a game between his basketball team and a refugee team. He liked being a leader and expressed an interest in

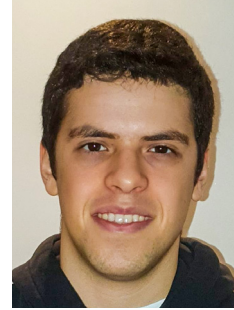
touring USA colleges with strong business programs. We got him involved in test prep, believing top scores would open opportunities, and we helped map out a college tour that included a stop in New York City to visit Columbia.

On his return to Athens, Philip wanted to make a more lasting impact in the refugee crisis, so he joined The Home Project, an organization hiring math tutors to work with young refugees. The Short List also helped Philip explore organizing a summer math camp for refugees, but COVID prevented his plan from moving forward.

We began brainstorming alternative summer initiatives,

including a webinar series, applying for a prestigious online research program, and securing an internship with a national bank. His thinking began to shift that summer as he explored COVID's economic impact on the European Union while working on the research project.

That fall, Philip said he no longer wanted to focus on a narrow pre-professional business curriculum. He began seeing himself as a social



scientist and decided to apply Early Decision to Columbia for their renowned economics program and Core curriculum.

We brainstormed responses to Columbia's supplemental questions and

encouraged him to share how writing his research paper and his direct experience with the refugee crisis had shaped his concern for humanity. Philip was thrilled when Columbia made him an offer in a year their acceptance rate dropped below 4% for the first time in the school's history.

THE SHORT LIST'S

**success stories: Northeastern**

Greece

**Jason '22****The Co-op Curriculum**

Jason was a strong student who saw himself as an entrepreneur and business leader. He enjoyed problem-solving, even designing a solar scooter to lessen his commute to school. His love for experiential learning would influence his final college list.

Jason lost his childhood friend in a boating accident when he was 10 years old. Witnessing such a tragic accident had a huge impact on his life. At first, he struggled. His late friend's family approached him to join Safe Water Sports to help raise awareness for

water safety. He began with simple clerical work and assisted on various projects.

In high school, his brother introduced him to The Home Project, an organization that supported refugee minors. He couldn't stop thinking of the refugees' isolation when Greece went into COVID lockdown. He proposed a Zoom series co-hosted by Safe Water Sports and The Home Project. Jason felt he was the perfect person to



introduce "safe water sports" to refugees who lost loved ones to the sea, having lost his own friend years earlier. He held his first one-hour Zoom meeting on Christmas Day 2020. As an experiential learner himself, he kept the refugees engaged with interactive games. The Ministry of Health learned about his efforts and cast him in a national PSA focused on the health of teenagers during the pandemic.

COVID prevented Jason from traveling to the USA for a college tour, but he knew he

was looking for a business program with an emphasis on entrepreneurship. We researched schools with unique interactive curriculums that would satisfy his interests. In April 2022, as travel restrictions relaxed, his family was finally able to plan a college tour of his accepted schools. Jason knew before he arrived that Northeastern, with their global experiential co-op program, was his top choice. Visiting the school affirmed his decision, and he will move to Boston—popularly known as College Town, USA—this fall.



## THE SHORT LIST'S success stories: *Elizabeth '21*

Continued from page 1

Once we knew Elizabeth would be applying test optional, we encouraged her to focus on her extracurricular activities senior year. She became an Environmental Proctor, UNICEF Club President, Residential Advisor, and Tour Guide, all of which showcased her desire to create community.

St Andrews in Scotland, with their dual program in Art and Middle East and Islamic Studies, became Elizabeth's top choice. We brainstormed ways to share her international background and interests in her essays and interview. Thankfully, St Andrews accepted her after focusing less on a complete transcript or test scores and more on how Elizabeth viewed other cultures and communities. Her international journey continued when she moved to Scotland last fall.



## The Short List College Fund

Founder Bill Short has been a **volunteer college counselor at Humanities Preparatory Academy**, a small public NYC high school, **since 2003**. He just started counseling **his 20th class**. **The Short List College Fund** helps cover college visit transportation costs, standardized testing and application fees, and textbook costs for **every student** during their **four years of college**.

The pandemic introduced new challenges once NYC public schools went into lockdown. Bill attended

a **2020 virtual Zoom graduation**, guided **2021 grads entirely by Zoom**, and **alternated between Zoom and in-person meetings** with the class of 2022.

**Students struggled without computers, lacked privacy** in small apartments with siblings and parents working from home, and were **unable to visit colleges**. Still, **they persevered** and were accepted to amazing schools: **Middlebury, Kalamazoo, Villanova, Trinity, Lafayette, Lehigh,**

**Wesleyan, Connecticut, and San Francisco**, just to name a few.

Your **generous contributions** to The Short List College Fund make a difference in the lives of students who might otherwise not have the same **opportunities to attend college**. All donations are **100% tax deductible**.

Please email us at [fund@theshortlist.org](mailto:fund@theshortlist.org) to learn more about **The Short List College Fund** or to learn how to make a **tax-deductible contribution**.

## THE SHORT LIST'S success stories: Scripps College

Hong Kong



### *Ailbhe '21* — The Relationship Builder

We started working with Ailbhe at the beginning of her junior year. Seeing how naturally shy and soft-spoken she was, The Short List encouraged her to seek out opportunities to pursue her concern for the environment while building her confidence. She took a leap of faith and volunteered to organize the interviews for a school-wide environmental sustainability project.



We felt it important that Ailbhe not lose momentum when COVID disrupted international travel during spring of her junior year. We helped her reimagine and deepen her extracurricular interests and showed her ways to continue building academic relationships remotely so her teacher recommenders would be able to write detailed and persuasive letters.

As the year progressed, we urged Ailbhe to dive deeper into colleges and programs that would best suit her academic interests. We introduced ways for her to connect meaningfully with admissions

officers, professors, and current students despite her inability to visit campuses.

We helped Ailbhe craft a balanced list of schools and introduced her to the supportive dynamics of a few distinctive all-women colleges where she could continue to develop her self-confidence and powerful voice. By January 2021, she was ready to apply Early Decision II to Scripps College and was overjoyed when she received word in mid-February that she had been accepted. Ailbhe moved to Southern California last fall.

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