

Harvard College Admissions in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain

These figures represent applications received from students *studying* in these regions—not applications from students with passports from these countries. A Mexican citizen applying from a Costa Rican high school is an applicant from Costa Rica; an Argentinean applying from Florida is an applicant from Florida—and hence would not be captured in the figures below. We admit many students with foreign passports (or dual citizenship with the US and another country, or US permanent resident status) from schools in the US and other countries around the world.

Class	Total Applicants	Latin America and the Caribbean	Puerto Rico	Spain
2014	30,489	339	60	25
2015	34,950	430	71	36
2016	34,285	383	71	56 ¹

Students are admitted without regard to their ability to pay, and the College has **no quotas** or targets for how many students to admit from a country, city, state, or school. Our goal is to admit the most promising students regardless of where they are studying. For this reason, the number of admitted students from these regions varies from year to year. Recently, Latin America and the Caribbean have seen 10-20 applicants admitted per year from high schools in the region, Puerto Rico 4-8, and Spain 0-2.

Students applying from Brazil and Mexico represent approximately 40% of applicants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Aside from very small countries (St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Belize, etc.), most other Latin American countries send us 10-20 applicants per year.

Students studying in the following countries may write to local alumni interviewers to request an admissions interview: Argentina, Bahamas, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Spain, Venezuela. For students applying from other countries, the Admissions Office identifies strong candidates and asks a local alumnus/a to interview them. When no local interviewer is available, an admissions officer conducts a phone or Skype interview.

Alumni recruitment of talented candidates varies from country to country, though most alumni do not visit high schools (but would be welcome to do so). Because the Admissions Office has a limited travel budget, only rarely can an admissions officer visit a given country. Alumni often ask, “What can I do to see more students admitted from my country?” The answer is usually,

¹ As you can see, application numbers fluctuate from year to year—usually with no simple explanation for the change from the previous year. In general, the growth in applications in the past ten years has been higher from students studying in high schools outside of the United States than it has been from high schools in the United States. As for the jump in applications from Spain this year, I have no easy explanation for it; we did not make a recruiting trip there this year.

“Spread the word about Harvard and its generous financial aid, and encourage strong students—from a young age—to think about studying in the US.” This may require students to hone their English skills, because a lack of English fluency remains a hurdle to admission for many Latin American applicants.

In response to this advice, in 2008 several College alumni in Brazil (along with undergraduate alumni from several other selective US universities) created an exciting program to find talented Brazilian students at high schools that do not traditionally send students to the US to study. Through **ILRIO** (O Instituto de Liderança do Rio, or The Rio Leadership Institute), promising students are paired with a US university graduate who acts as a mentor through the college selection process—and beyond. With much help from a full-time intern (whose salary is paid for by donations from the alumni), these students receive assistance with many aspects of the college application process: crafting a viable list of schools to apply to, essay writing, SAT preparation, translation of official documents, and more.

The program has seen some of its participants accepted to Harvard College, but the program does not have a Harvard focus; students have been accepted to a wide range of American college and universities, most of which the students had not heard of before working with ILRIO. You can see their website here: <http://www.ilrio.com.br/leadership.html>. Obviously, this is a program that cannot be duplicated in every country (and need not be), but it provides an excellent case study of how Harvard alumni can help increase interest in US universities in their home countries.

ILRIO works closely with the **EducationUSA** offices located throughout Brazil to help students apply to US universities. EducationUSA is a service supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. One of its functions is helping foreign students study (at the undergraduate and graduate level) in the United States. They have approximately 400 offices around the world: <http://educationusa.state.gov>. I encourage all alumni interested in reaching out to prospective students to contact their local EducationUSA office to learn more about the programs they offer. EducationUSA counselors are often happy to hear from alumni of US universities who can be of assistance to potential applicants to US universities.