

ARTICLE 2

JACK'S INTERVIEW ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

11th grade LLCE AMC class, March 2021, Carriat High School

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In our English class, there is Jack, who is there to assist the English teacher. He is from the United States and he learned French at school. We have decided to interview him about his life in the USA and more precisely in college. Here is a report on what he told us:

Etienne MICHON & Florian VANN PHIEROM

First of all, we have to talk about the grading system in America where they assess their students with letters which correspond to a percentage contrary to the French system which evaluates students with marks out of twenty. A is higher than 90%, the letter B is between 90% and 80%, C is between 80% and 70%, the grade D is given when the average grade ranges from 70% to 60% and finally, the letter F is the worst grade as it means below 60%.

During their last year of high school, students have to take the SAT and/ or the ACT which are general tests that are accepted by most of the colleges.

A Bachelor's is an undergraduate four-year degree equivalent to our *master 1*. Then to achieve a Master's Degree you need to study two more years. The Doctorate (or PhD) can be likened to our French *doctorat*. To evolve and obtain degrees, in the USA you do get some credits.

Benjamin AUGER & Serkan ERKEKLI

Even if the main subjects are almost the same as ours, the way they are studied is quite different. Depending on the school and university, the way to study varies; all U.S. students have to learn general subjects and take optional subjects.

General subjects in the United States are quite the same as ours as they study mathematics, geography, chemistry, psychology to name but a few but they also study specific subjects such as speech where they train to speak in public. From an early age, Americans get into the habit of presenting their school projects, their various works to the whole class. Health is another specific subject which deals with topics such as sexuality, nutrition, the effects of drugs or alcohol, first aid actions and so on.

Those are the common courses but there is also a lot of optional subjects in the United States like photography, journalism, visual arts, music (instrumental and vocals), drama or mechanics. The goal of these optional courses is to learn different specific and professional skills.

Jeanne RICHARD & Eléonore LE GLOU

First of all, American students mostly have classes just in the morning compared to French students (who generally have classes from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm). In the afternoon, they do extracurricular activities which should involve some concerted effort and contribute to their personal development (playing video games is considered as a hobby, not as an extracurricular activity, except if you want to make it your job later). They can choose a lot of different activities like sport, art, music or writing articles in the school newspaper... according to their preferences. Jack was part of three clubs: swing dance, music and boardgames.

Extracurriculars are very important for students because they amount to 30% in the student's profile to enter colleges or universities. Besides 40% of American families spend more than \$1,000 per year on their children's extracurricular activities.

Marie CHARNAY, Jeanne BESSON & Enes KAYA

Now let's talk about food which creates another inequality between students in America. Here is a thing about American colleges that is really unknown: the food problem. There are obviously several cafeterias on campus with a huge choice of food (vegetables, fruits, meat, junk food) but their price is really expensive, it can go up to 10 dollars a meal!

In fact, most of the students cannot afford a meal at the cafeteria so they have to buy their own food, but it is very difficult. Since the grocery stores are far from the campus and not everyone has a car, they are forced to buy junk food in tiny shops near the college or bring their own lunchbox. Consequently, most of the students eat unhealthy food, most of the time ramen, during their four years of university.

Tino PHAN & Lou JARNET

Most US university campuses are located in separate areas of the city. During their first years, the majority of students choose to live in dormitories. Even graduates sometimes live there. Some institutions actually require first-year students to live in dormitories to become more independent. Yet the cost of accommodation and meals vary from \$8,060 to \$11,890 from one state to another which is incredibly expensive.

The rooms are basic and can have communal kitchens or bathrooms, they can also be mixed but it is very rare. The dormitories are small communities where you can meet other people from your campus. You can also enjoy extra-curricular activities with these same people. You can go out whenever you want, although private schools can have a curfew.

Laura BONNAMOUR & Salomé TARTAGLIONE

Unfortunately tuition fees in college are tremendously expensive and students also have to pay for their own books, that's why there are some options to help people who cannot afford it.

Firstly, students can have a scholarship, which is a financial aid that does not need to be repaid. Scholarships are awarded, and they are an important support for students, so they must be careful about their grades if they do not want to lose it. They can also make a loan from the bank that they will reimburse later with interest, called "student debt". However, this will have an important impact on the future lives of students as they start with a significant debt to pay off.

Lucas CONTI

In conclusion, school in the United States is very different from France. We can see differences as regards grades for example. In America they use letters (A,B,C,D and F) whereas in France we use numbers from one to twenty. At the end of our high school we have a "Bac" while at the end of their high school they have the SAT and/or the ACT.

Differences and some inequalities too. Inequalities about the cost of higher education: even if they can have some financial aid (need-based grants or merit-based scholarships), it is generally not enough to pay for all the studies. Also the dormitories create some other inequalities, you have to allow between \$8,060 and \$11,890 which is very expensive. Likewise the food. You have to allow \$10 for a school lunch in the United States contrary to France where you have to pay \$5 (if we do the conversion).

Moreover, we do not have fraternities in France contrary to America where there is a long tradition of fraternities famed for the partying and drinking rituals. In France we just call that 'parties'.

But we also have some common points like extracurricular activities. Just as in France, it is very rare for students not to do any activities outside school. We think of music clubs, basketball clubs, drama clubs... As for the subjects, you have quite the same in the United States and in France: mathematics, English, history and geography...