Before SIPA

Requirements	Make sure to finish all of your core requirements required to graduate GraSPP in your first year. This will help you to concentrate on requirements at SIPA in your second year. SIPA has a convoluted system of satisfying 1) degree requirements, 2) concentration requirements and 3) specialization requirements. Make sure to satisfy degree requirements at Todai as these credits are easily transferable.
Scholarships	I was lucky to be able to receive scholarships from two institutions (Tobitate Scholarship and Ito Foundation USA FUTI Scholarship) but was very last minute in applying for them. As the financial burden is so huge at SIPA, make sure to plan ahead and apply to a couple of scholarships. Senpais from previous years also obtained loans.
Application Process	SIPA requires a lot of documents including TOEFL scores and GRE scores. Make sure to plan ahead in case you want to retake your exams. In my case I was too last minute in applying for the GRE examination so I only had one chance to take it, but it is a tough test and some people take it a few times.

After SIPA

Pros	Cons
EVENTS The number of events that I can participate in as a Columbia Student is simply amazing. Just in my first month here, I was able to attend UNGA side events, a talk by Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, and attend several meetings with Prime Ministers/Presidents from the African continent.	**WORKLOAD** The workload is extensive, and most students stay for long hours in the library especially on weekdays.
DIVERSITY More than 60% are international students mostly with working experience from diverse backgrounds. Working with them in group projects has been such a new and interesting experience for me.	**COST** Everything is expensive- housing, food, tuition…. Be prepared to spend a lot…

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions!

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