The Personal Statement

WRITING COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

ELAC TRANSFER CENTER 2012
TOPICS

- Understanding the role of the college admissions essay
- Examples of essay questions
- Preparation before you write the essay
- Tips
- Mechanics of writing
- Helpful websites
As a transfer student, the essay is an important part of your admission application for the University of California and most private and out-of-state universities.

The essay is not read in isolation but with all the information you provide in your application.

It's your one chance to explain to college admissions readers why you are a good fit for their school.

This is where you become more than just another name; it's where you become an individual, and where you can share your personality, your goals, your experiences, and where you can explain any opportunities or obstacles that have affected your academic record.
ROLE OF THE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

- Is an opportunity to provide information that gives readers a context for your accomplishments

- Offers you a chance to contribute your voice to the admission process.

- The readers are looking for insight into you as a person

- As a writer; the reader will also evaluate your writing style, language usage, organization, and content
ROLE OF THE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

- Allows you to add information that you couldn't work into the other parts of the application
- Adds clarity, depth, and meaning to information collected in other parts of your college application
- Enables you to make the best possible case for admission
Please provide a statement (250 words minimum) that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve, and attach it to your application before submission.

+ NOTE:
- Do not customize it in any way for individual colleges.
- This will be in ADDITION to any supplemental application components.
You will write two essays in response to these prompts. The length of each response is up to you, but neither one should be less than 250 words and the combination of both responses should not exceed 1,000 words.

+ Prompt #1. What is your intended major? Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe any experience you have had in the field — such as volunteer work, internships and employment, participation in student organizations and activities — and what you have gained from your involvement.

+ Prompt #2. Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?
Additional Comments (500 word maximum)

- Prompt – Describe anything else that you have not had an opportunity to include elsewhere in your application.

- You can use the Additional Comment section to clarify or expand on important details. Some possible information:
  - Your family’s socio-economic, cultural, educational history.
  - Specific challenges/obstacles that you encountered and overcame on your educational journey.
  - Explain reason’s for poor academic performance or sub-standard grades.
WHERE DO I START?

- Start with the preparation work before you begin to write your essay.
- • Two Key Areas of Preparation:
  + – Investigate and explore your audience.
    ✗ • Find out as much as you can about the universities you are applying to and their admissions process.
    ✗ • What do the admissions officers want to find out about their applicants through the personal statement.
    ✗ • This information can usually be found in the application instructions and also on the university’s website (click on Admissions).
  + – Explore Yourself!
    ✗ • The more you know about yourself the easier it will be to write your essay
WHERE DO I START?

- Before you write your personal statement, complete the application.

- By completing the application instead of jumping right into the essay you can identify key patterns in your academic record and extracurricular choices and anticipate the inferences that readers will make about your academic profile.

- Use the application to help you:
  + - Think critically about the application's content. Your life story is so familiar to you, it's hard to have perspective on it without analyzing it.
  + - See your personal and academic experiences as worthy of reflection and analysis.
  + - Connect the issues raised by the application to the responses provided in the personal statement.
  + - Find the questions that your readers might ask. This will help you fulfill the reader/writer pact. You as the writer have a responsibility to try to answer your readers questions.
Resume
Previous letters of recommendation
Interest list
Brag sheet
Strengths inventory
Unique experiences
Goals
What are the essential characteristics of someone who has your ideal career?
What sparked your interest in your career goal/major?
What are my strengths?
Do I have any special skills?
What is special about me?
What kind of person am I?
What do I care about?
Why is (BLANK) more important to me than (BLANK)?
What is it like growing up in (BLANK)?
What is it like going to school at ELAC?
What are my career/educational goals?
What am I passionate about?
What am I most proud of?
How has my life affected my decision to pursue this major and/or a Bachelor’s Degree?
What do I look forward to?
TIPS FOR WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

✶ **Start early:**
Allow time for reflection, thoughtful preparation and revision.

✶ **Choose a topic for both essays.**
Look critically at the information in your application: your grades, awards, activities and work experience, family and income. Anticipate questions an admissions evaluator will have after reading your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to answer those questions.

✶ **Compose your personal statement in a word-processing program.**
Don't type it directly into the application. This way, you will have the opportunity to print copies for review.

✶ **Write persuasively.**
Present your information and ideas in a focused, deliberate and meaningful manner. Provide specific, concrete examples to support your point. A personal statement that is simply a list of qualities or accomplishments usually is not persuasive.
TIPS FOR WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

- **Proofread.**
  In addition to checking your spelling, be sure your grammar is correct and your essays flow smoothly.

- **Solicit feedback.**
  Your personal statement should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone, but others — family, teachers and friends — can offer valuable suggestions. Ask advice of whomever you like, but do not plagiarize from sources in print or online and do not use anyone's published words but your own.

- **Additional instructions . . .**
  Because UC is interested in knowing about your or a family member's military service, you may wish to use the personal statement to communicate the following:
  - Describe how your military service has been instrumental in developing your educational plans.
  - Indicate if you are entitled to educational benefits as a result of your own military service or the service-connected death or disability of a parent or spouse.
  - Indicate if you are affiliated with the military, such as the spouse or dependent of someone who is on active duty or a current participant in an ROTC-type program.
TIPS FOR WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

ESSAY FORMAT
+ Introduction- try to come up with a catchy opening to gain the reader’s attention.
+ Detailed supporting paragraph- address the question from the application. Make sure you will be able to back up your examples and qualities.
+ Conclusion- should be brief and it should not be a repetition but a summary of the content of your supporting paragraph.

WHAT TO DO
+ Make sure you answer the questions asked.
+ Be honest and confident in your personal statements.
+ Think of the essay as an opportunity to introduce yourself to the admissions committee.
+ Be specific and to the point.
+ Do some research about the institution/program or major you will be applying under.
+ Make sure your essay reflects proper grammar and writing style.
+ Avoid clichés, humor, or controversial topics.
+ Proofread, get feedback from counselors, professors, friends and family

WHAT NOT TO DO
+ Write what you think the admissions committee wants to hear.
+ Overwrite or overstress a minor point about yourself.
+ Repeat information directly from the application form, unless you use it to illustrate a point.
+ Do not try to be funny.
+ Do not make up hardships
+ Write the essay the night before
MECHANICS OR WRITING THE ESSAY

- Be original - be yourself.

- Tell a story – your story.

Remember to put things in the words and language with which you are comfortable. Don’t use big, fancy words normally not used to communicate, especially if you are not sure of the meaning of the words.

A simple style is best. Good writing sounds like speech rather than a vocabulary review lesson.

- Use clear, vivid prose.

- Don’t summarize in your introduction.

- The body of each paragraph must relate to the first sentence of the paragraph.

- Use transitions.

- Your Conclusion is crucial.

- Revise, Revise, Revise!

- Make corrections in sentence construction, grammar punctuation, and spelling. Read aloud what you have written to help you locate any rough spots you will need to rework.

- Put your draft aside for twenty-four hours and read it again.
### Review Your Personal Statement with the Following Checklist

**Does Your Personal Statement Do the Following Things:**

- Assist the reader in learning about you as an individual?
- Assist the reader in gaining an understanding of your experiences, accomplishments, and point of view that you would bring to the University’s undergraduate body?
- Assist the reader in gaining an understanding of your attributes and experiences that are not evident through a review of your academic record?

**In the Personal Statement Did You:**

- Describe any unusual circumstances or challenges you have faced?
- Discuss how you responded to your unusual circumstances or challenges?
- Discuss your interest in your intended major?
- Discuss how your interest in your academic field developed?
- Describe any related work or volunteer experience you’ve had?
- Discuss your long-term goals after the Bachelor’s degree?
HELPFUL WEBSITES

- http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/
- http://www.admissions.ucla.edu/prospect/PerStmt.htm
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/
- http://www.collegeboard.com/apply/essay_skills/
- http://collegeapps.about.com/od/collegeessay/a/brainstorm.htm
- http://www.west.net/~stewart/beste.htm
- http://fastweb.monster.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/102002?id
HAPPY WRITING!