**The College Application Essay**

Colleges are seeking to get to know the **person** behind all the data on the application; more than just knowing your grade point average and test scores. Colleges seek to learn about your interests, aptitudes, character, and leadership skills. They want to know what you will bring to their campus.

Many, not all, colleges require a personal statement or essay from students. This is a very important part of the college admission process, especially at selective schools. Schools request an essay for several reasons:

* The essay serves as a writing sample. Can this student develop a logical thought? Can they organize their ideas in a rational fashion? Does this student utilize critical thinking skills?
* The essay allows a college to see the person behind all the facts. This is a great opportunity to personalize the entire admission process.
* The essay reveals what is important to you and shows how you think.

**Below are some actual essay questions from college applications. Try your hand at answering these. This would be good practice for you.**

* Briefly describe your extracurricular activities and experiences, then choose the one activity or experience which has been most important to you and explain its significance in your life.
* In an essay, describe your educational and professional goals.
* Why are you applying to our college? Why should we accept you over other candidates?
* In an essay, tell *how* a play, movie, book, piece of art or musical composition has influenced you most. Assume we are familiar with the subject of your essay; do not do a "book report."
* In this space, feel free to tell us more about yourself. Use this space to let us get to know you better.

Many students find this part of the application process to be most difficult. It’s never very easy to write about yourself. Ease your mind. It may be possible to choose a topic that can be tailored to fit more than one college’s essay question.

When students understand that the personal essay serves to allow the applicant to shine through all the college admission statistics, they usually can relax with the process.

Talk it out with someone. You are welcome to set up essay appointments with Dr. Rob in the College & Career Services Center (KeishaMulfort.youcanbook.me)

Use all your resources: teachers (especially your English teacher), counselor and parents/guardians, to name a few.

**Essay Tips**

**Before you begin.** Read the question/prompt carefully. What specifically are you being asked? Pay close attention to the requested length. More is not better; less may weaken your efforts.

**Define your purpose.** What’s the point of what you are writing: to explain your academic performance, to highlight activities, to display your creativity or special interests?

**Add depth to your application.** What do you want the college to know about you that they won’t know from the rest of your application? *Don’t spend time repeating information that you have previously filled in on other parts of the application.*

**Focus on what makes you unique.** Think about a personality trait, an experience, your family situation or a world view that sets you apart from other high school seniors. However, don’t reveal something about yourself that may be inappropriate or offensive to others.

**Strategies to get the job done right:**

* Get your point across quickly and clearly.
* Grab the reader’s attention with your introduction.
* Structure your essay logically – guide the reader from point to point with strong transitions.
* Write in first person. Just be careful not to start every sentence with “I”.
* Use your own voice and vocabulary.
* Use examples and details to make your point.
* Make sure you have someone else read it!

**When you are finished with your essay, make sure you can answer two questions:**

* Was this essay meaningful to me?
* Am I the only one who could have written it?

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| **Key admission counselor quotes regarding essays:**   * “Show, don’t tell.” * “Don’t tell me about Aunt Patricia’s death. Tell me about how her death affected you.” * “Don’t just say that you believe in the social justice movement. Describe the steps it took for you to get to a point to understand your role and what it means to society.” * “Don’t tell me about the action, tell me about your reaction to it. The goal line means nothing—I want to know how you got there.” |