Finding Your Unique Self: The Importance of Diversity in the College Admission Process

Session E
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Ways in Which Diversity Presents itself in the College Application Process

- Identifying information on college applications: Race, Ethnicity, Gender Identity, Religion, Citizenship, Country of Origin, Language Spoken, Socioeconomic status
- Supplemental Essays
- Scholarships
- College Fly-In Programs
- Recommendations
Diversity Themed College Essays

“We all exist within communities or groups of various sizes, origins, and purpose; pick one and tell us how it has shaped you.”  
Brown U.

“Describe the environment in which you were raised, and how it has influenced the person you are today.”  
Tufts U.

“…everyone belongs to many different communities. Describe a community to which you belong and your place within it.”  
U. of Michigan

“Every student has a unique life experience and a set of circumstances by which they are shaped and influenced. Reflect on your unique background…”  
U. of Colorado-Boulder

“Our families and communities often define us and our individual worlds. Describe the world you come from and how you, as a product of it, might add to the diverse student body at U. of Washington”
University of Michigan

- Public Institution with ~29,000 undergraduates (~45,000 total students)
- Moved to a holistic app. review process in 2003
- Utilize qualitative factors (essay prompts, rec. letters) in the application process
University of Michigan – Application Selection

- Comprehensive, holistic, and individualized review
- Academic Preparation
  - Grades/Test Scores/Quality of Curriculum
- Extracurricular Preparation
- Recommendations
- Essays
“Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it.”
2016 University of Michigan Essay Prompt #1 (Continued)

- This is a “You” question
- Community is broad category and not limited to race/gender
- The University of Michigan is committed to enrolling a group of broadly diverse students
- We believe that students learn best in a classroom with students from different backgrounds
2016 University of Michigan Essay Prompt #1 (Continued)

- Students should utilize this essay as a platform for who they are and what they can contribute to the campus community
- Looking for insight into the personality of a student
- Assessing the match between the student and the school
- Students should be encouraged to let their voice be heard and be authentic
“Diversity and equal opportunity support an academic community that reflects a diverse range of interests, abilities, life experiences and worldviews that will enhance the exploration of ideas vital to our academic mission.”

“University of California, Office of the General Counsel
Guidelines for Addressing Race and Gender Equity
In Academic Programs in Compliance with Proposition 209
July 2015
Application Selection at the University of California

We evaluate applicant academic achievements in light of the opportunities available to them and their demonstrated capacity to contribute to the intellectual life at UC.

Note: Proposition 209 prohibits the use of race/gender/ethnicity in our decisions.
Holistic Review Process

- Holistic Read
- Creating a Class
- Personal Fit
- Diversity on Campus and in Programs
- Resources on Campus
Comprehensive Review
14 Factors

More than Test Scores and Grades
1. Academic grade point average in all completed "a-g" courses, including additional points for completed UC-certified honors courses.

2. Scores on the following tests: ACT with Writing or the SAT Reasoning Test.

3. Number of, content of and performance in academic courses beyond the minimum "a-g" requirements.


5. Identification by UC as being ranked in the top 9 percent of your high school class at the end of your junior year (Eligible in the Local Context, or ELC).
6. Quality of your senior-year program as measured by the type and number of academic courses in progress or planned.

7. Quality of your academic performance relative to the educational opportunities available in your high school.

8. Outstanding performance in one or more specific subject areas.

9. Outstanding work in one or more special projects in any academic field of study.

10. Recent, marked improvement in academic performance as demonstrated by academic GPA and the quality of coursework completed or in progress.
11. Special talents, achievements and awards in a particular field, such as visual and performing arts, communication or athletic endeavors; special skills, such as demonstrated written and oral proficiency in other languages; special interests, such as intensive study and exploration of other cultures; experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership, such as significant community service or significant participation in student government; or other significant experiences or achievements that demonstrate the student’s promise for contributing to the intellectual vitality of a campus.

12. Completion of special projects undertaken in the context of your high school curriculum or in conjunction with special school events, projects or programs.

13. Academic accomplishments in light of your life experiences and special circumstances, including but not limited to: disabilities, low family income, first generation to attend college, need to work, disadvantaged social or educational environment, difficult personal and family situations or circumstances, refugee status or veteran status.

14. Location of your secondary school and residence.
Allowing all Applicants to share their uniqueness

Via

Personal Insight Questions
1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.

2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?
The questions can be approached through many angles

The questions are open ended

Students choose four questions
The questions allow students from varying experiences and backgrounds to share through their perspective

*Cultural
*Neighborhood or Region
*Academic
*Artistic and Creativity

The choice is yours. Take an approach that works for you!
If by sharing about unique challenges the university gains insight into the context of your achievement, then sharing them may be helpful.
If you have an academic, creative or other non challenging experience, that is just as valuable to share

Remember: You are not penalized for not having a challenge
Students should focus on him or herself, not others

Students need to be sure to share information that is not presented elsewhere in the application

Students need to pick questions that speak to him/her and not pick ones they think we are hoping will be answered
Diversity Essay Workshop

- Created by our Diversity Coordinator, Dana Gonzalez
- Present at our Summer College Counseling Institute
Components of Diversity

Age
Ability/Disability
Education/Literacy Level
Learning Style/Difference
Ethnicity/Culture
Gender
Expression
Language/Accent
Race
Religion/Spirituality
Sexual Orientation
Socioeconomic Status
Introvert/Extrovert
Values
Political Affiliations
Place/Location/Geography
Passions/Clubs/Hobbies
Immigration Status
Marital/Relationship Status
Family Composition/Birth Order
Adoption/Transracial Adoption
Biracial/Multi-racial
Military Affiliation

Values
Political Affiliations
Place/Location/Geography
Passions/Clubs/Hobbies
Immigration Status
Marital/Relationship Status
Family Composition/Birth Order
Adoption/Transracial Adoption
Biracial/Multi-racial
Military Affiliation
Questions to Consider:

- What unique qualities will I bring to a college campus?
- What communities am I currently a part of?
- How was I raised and how has that shaped the person I am today?
- What interests (academic/extracurricular/social/political) do I have?
- What experiences have I had that make me unique?
- What is my family story and what makes my family unique?
- Was there ever a time when I felt like I didn’t “fit in”?
Exercise for Students: Who Am I?

- Write down 2 or 3 of your most important identities
Components of Diversity

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We are all individuals with unique perspectives who contribute to a variety of communities in different ways.
Share your tips and advice!