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Sample College Application Essay 1

You Be the Judge

Read the following application essay. See if you can figure out this essay's strengths and weaknesses. Then keep reading to see our critique.

The Essay

From the time I was able to realize what a university was, all I heard from my mother's side of the family was about the University of Michigan and the great heritage it has. Many a Saturday afternoon my grandfather would devote to me, by sitting me down in front of the television and reminiscing about the University of Michigan while halftime occurred during a Michigan Wolverines football game. Later, as I grew older and universities took on greater meaning, my mother and uncle, both alumni of the University of Michigan, took me to see their old stamping grounds. From first sight, the university looked frightening because of its size, but with such a large school comes diversity of people and of academic and non-academic events.

In Springfield High School, non-academic clubs such as the Future Physicians and the Pylon, both of which I have belonged to for two years, give me an opportunity to see both the business world and the medical world. These two clubs have given me a greater sense of what these careers may be like. In Future Physicians, I participated in field trips to children's hospitals and also participated in two blood banks.

Currently I hold a job at Maas Brothers. This lets me interact with people outside my own immediate environment. I meet different kinds of people, in different moods, with different attitudes, and with different values. This job teaches me to be patient with people, to have responsibility, and to appreciate people for what they are.

In the community I am active in my church Youth Group. As a high school sophomore, I was our church's representative to the Diocesan Youth Fellowship. I helped organize youth group events, the largest being "The Bishop's Ball," a state-wide event for 300 young people. I also played high school junior varsity soccer for two years. As a senior I will be playing varsity soccer, but in the off-season. As a junior I coached a girls' soccer team for the town. This gave me a great deal of responsibility because the care of

twenty-four girls was put into my custody. It felt very satisfying to pass on the knowledge of soccer to another generation. The girls played teams from other parts of Florida. Though their record was 3-8, the girls enjoyed their season. This is what I taught them was the greatest joy of soccer.

The past three years of my life have given me greater visions of my future. I see the University of Michigan as holding a large book with many unread chapters and myself as an eager child who has just learned to read. I intend to read and probe into all the chapters. The University of Michigan offers me more than the great reputation of this fine school, but a large student body with diverse likes and dislikes, and many activities, both academic and non-academic, to participate in. With the help of the University of Michigan, I will be successful after college and be able to make a name and place for myself in our society.

Sample College Essay 2

The Critique

Admission officials consider how you write your essay, not just what you write about. Try to critique your own essays in the same way this sample essay is critiqued below.

The Introduction

The introduction seems to have a lack of focus: Where's the writer going with this paragraph? Where's the writer going with this essay? Also, the writer needs to tighten the phrasing (e.g., "while halftime occurred" to "at halftime" or "From first sight" to "Immediately").

The Body

There is a very abrupt transition from the first paragraph to the second: How did we get from Michigan's diversity to the writer's clubs? The second paragraph also includes general statements with little evidence: How did these activities reveal career paths?

Can the writer be more specific? What does "participated in two blood banks" mean? Did he drive volunteers from across town, sign people in all day on three Saturdays every month except August or spend 15 minutes one Thursday afternoon in the nurse's office giving blood?

In the third paragraph, we have to ask: What does the writer do at Maas Brothers? "Interact" needs definition. What here shows that the writer has thought about the time spent at Maas Brothers? Also in this paragraph, there is a misspelling of different ("diffrent"): The writer did not proofread thoroughly.

The information in the fourth paragraph (as well as the previous two paragraphs) appears elsewhere in the application. Essays that simply run down your accomplishments don't add to your application. And does the reader need to know that "the girls played teams from other parts of Florida"?

The writer would be better off focusing on one of the things discussed in this essay, such as working with the girls' soccer team. What he did to make Jennifer and Gretchen and Courtney enjoy soccer even though they won only three of their games would be more vivid and focused than a lot of talk about passing things on to future generations.

The Conclusion

The conclusion returns to the earlier idea of diversity at Michigan, but this idea was not developed in the body of the essay. It's not necessary to mention "the great reputation of this fine school." Instead, the writer should give specific, programmatic reasons Michigan offers the kind of education he needs.

Overall

This essay seems full of information and demonstrates basic essay organization, but it lacks focus and proof. The reader gets a laundry list of activities rather than a clear sense of who the writer is and what he cares and thinks about.

The writer also repeats some phrases. He mentions the "University of Michigan" six times and repeats "academic and non-academic" twice.