Application Essay Workshop

SCC Transfer Center
Room D-104
714-628-4865
www.sccollege.edu/transfer
www.facebook.com/scctransfer
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What Does the Personal Statement Do?

- It’s required to complete the application!
- Adds clarity, depth and meaning to your application
- Lets you explain factors that have enhanced or impeded your academic success
- Distinguishes you from others who may have similar academic records
- Often used for awarding scholarships
A Personal Statement Essay Does Not...

... prevent you from being admitted.

... make up for academic deficiencies.
A Good Personal Statement Essay...

- *Is personal; there is no perfect template to follow!*
- Is thoughtful, honest, and reflective
- Complements your application without repeating it
- Is about quality, not quantity
A Good Personal Statement Essay...

- Conforms to guidelines
  - Answer the questions
  - Adheres to word/character count
- Is well-designed
  - It’s not an academic essay, but should follow good structural guidelines
- Transforms negatives into positives
- Demonstrates knowledge of the school/major
- Exudes confidence, not arrogance
The UC Essays:

- Two Questions
- Overall length up to 1000 words
  - Similar lengths for each:
    - No more/less than 750/250 words each
    - Your choice which is longer & which is shorter
- Don’t come up too short:
  - A 600 word total looks bad
- Do not go over:
  - The online system will reject essays that are too long
UC 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.

*Break this down into the key questions and words that should be addressed and will guide your writing.*
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, employment, or participation in student organizations and activities—and what you have gained from your involvement.
What is UC prompt #1 asking?

- How did your interest develop?
  - A great class
  - An experience or moment in time
  - Inspired by someone

- What experience do you have in this field?
  - Classes, volunteering, jobs, co-curricular activities, personal reading, lectures, etc., etc.

- What have you gained from your involvement?
  - How has it motivated/inspired you to pursue this field?
  - What do you want to do in the future?
UC 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?

*Can you spot the two key words that simplify this question?*
UC 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?
What is UC prompt #2 asking?

- What is the nature/source of your passion, motivation, priority, leadership, persistence, service to others, or experience with other cultures?
- Why is this significant to you?
- What experiences have you had that exemplify the qualities listed above?
- What is your potential to succeed?
The Common Application
Common App Personal Statement

• This essay goes to all schools!
  • May be edited 3 times between submissions
• Shows you can write clearly and concisely
• Distinguishes you
  • What do you want readers of your application to know about you besides courses, grades, and test scores?
Common App Personal Statement

- Enforced **650** word count max
- Text-entry
  - Can copy and paste from word processor (highly recommended) or compose in app (a really bad idea!)
  - Don’t upload documents
- Formatting
  - **Bold**, *italics*, **underline**, and accented characters will show
  - Paragraph breaks show; indenting does not
  - Copy and paste to retain formatting
Please provide a statement that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve.
Common App Writing Supplement

• Additional short answer or essay responses as requested by the university
  • May be different questions, lengths, etc. for each school
• Uploads permitted for requested documents like:
  • Resumes, research papers, and graded assignments
• Covers questions not asked elsewhere in the Common Application
• Fine/Performing Arts questions may be collected via Slideroom
There are four prompts in the Chapman Writing section of the Common Application with a strict 200 word limit. You will be unable to paste or type more than 200 words.

If you have attended more colleges or universities than you were able to list in the Common App tab, please include additional schools here and include both start and end dates for each institution listed (e.g. Chapman University 8/2011 - 5/2012). (200 words or fewer) *

Please explain your interest in your selected academic program(s). (200 words or fewer)*

There are thousands of universities and colleges. Please share with us why you are choosing to apply to Chapman. (200 words or fewer)*

Drawing from your past experiences and considering your future goals, how do you expect to contribute to the Chapman community? (200 words or fewer)*

This section varies from school to school. The Chapman writing supplement includes these plus 15 questions requiring brief responses, such as ‘Please list three words to describe yourself’ and ‘What is a super power you wish you had?’
USC Supplemental Questions

“In a short paragraph, please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences.”

“Describe your academic interests and how you plan to pursue them at USC. Please feel free to address your first- and second-choice major selections.”
Other Supplemental Questions

**New York University:**
What are your academic interests and how do you plan to explore them at NYU?

**University of San Diego:**
How does USD stand out amongst all of the other colleges to which you are applying?

**Pepperdine University:**
Students, faculty, and staff members of all faith traditions are welcome to become part of the Pepperdine University community. Please tell us a little bit about how faith has influenced your life.

Consider the following scenario: You’ve been given the unique opportunity to create a brand new course to be offered at Pepperdine University. You have complete autonomy over the course topic, as well as how and where the course curriculum will be presented. What course would you create and how will it contribute to the academic and co-curricular experience at the University?
Explanations

*(found on some applications)*

- May be conditionally required based on responses to questions about:
  - Education interruptions
  - Veteran discharge status
  - School disciplinary records
  - Criminal history
Additional Comments Sections
(found on many applications)

- Optional - Don’t use unless you have to!
- Use only to explain or clarify info presented elsewhere
  - i.e. irregular academic history
  - Interest/experience in an alternate major
- *If you use it, keep it brief*

*This should not be used as a “bonus” essay!*
All Essays: Frequent Mistakes

- Essays that don’t answer the questions
- Essays that don’t support the writer’s theses
- Grammatical errors; lack of proofreading
  - Distracts from message and looks like you procrastinated
- Telling the university about itself
  - Ex: “Acme University has an excellent film department”
- Too general or theoretical
  - Stick to facts and specifics you want them to know about you
All Essays: Frequent Mistakes

- Repeating what’s already in other parts of your application
  - Essays will be read with the application; no need to repeat, except to introduce a narrative
- Listing accomplishments without context and details
- Complaining about your circumstances
  - Talking about obstacles you’ve overcome is good; complaining about them is not.
- Use of clichés and quotes
- Creative writing (poems, scenes, etc.)
- Beware using humor, sarcasm, social media lingo, etc.
All Essays: Tips for Success

- Start early and take your time
- Think about how you want to present yourself
- Consider your audience
  - Treat the essay like an interview
- Be yourself – it’s a personal statement
  - Don’t overreach trying to distinguish yourself
- Proofread, and get others to proof
- Get the right feedback
  - People who can be objective and/or understand university requirements
  - Don’t have too many people read for you
All Essays: Tips for Success

• Be specific and give examples
  • It’s usually better to expand on a specific concept than to try to summarize broad topics
  • Explain “what” statements with “why” and “how” details

• Be concise
Transfer Center
Reading & Feedback

We are happy to read your essay(s) and provide feedback on the following:

- Overall structure
- Did you answer the questions?
- Are your statements supported with details?
- Did you repeat content already in the application?
- Grammar & Spelling
- Use of slang/colloquialisms
- Conciseness
- Originality & Personal Content
Questions?

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Monday - Wednesday: 8:00-6:00
Thursday: 8:00-5:00
Friday: 8:00-12:00