

COLLEGE ESSAY WORKSHOP

With Ms. Zabinski

Our objectives:

- Define values that describe me and what matters to me well for a college admissions audience
- Clarify expectations and requirements for a college admissions essay

ESSAY PROMPTS & REQUIREMENTS

Common App:

- 1 essay, 650 word limit
- May need supplemental essays, depending on the school

UC's:

- 4 “mini essays”, 350 word limit for each

Coalition:

- 1 essay, 500-550 word range, similar prompts to Common App
- May also need supplemental essays, depending on the school

ADJECTIVES AND VALUES

A value is a **personal standard or principle**, in other words what YOU believe is most important in life.

What values do you want college reps to associate with you?

- Creative
- Reliable
- Loyal
- Committed
- Open-minded
- Consistent
- Honest
- Reflective
- Innovative
- Confident
- Good-humored
- Compassionate
- Adventurous
- Motivated
- Optimistic
- Passionate
- Respectful
- Mindful
- Courageous
- Educated
- Resilient
- Balanced
- Considerate
- Strong-willed

THROUGH YOUR ESSAYS, YOU SHOW HOW YOU EMBODY THESE VALUES WITH YOUR ACTIONS, THOUGHTS,
AND REFLECTIONS.

ESSAY STRUCTURE: NECESSARY PARTS

- Intro or set-up:

Common App/Coalition= Hook your reader in, provide context for your main story

UC= Hook reader in or* answer the prompt with a clear claim and rationale

**Since word count is very limited for UC essays, sometimes these essays don't allow for a standard "introduction".*

ESSAY STRUCTURE: NECESSARY PARTS

- Specific example(s) or story:
 - Specific story told from your POV that highlights how you embody your values.
- For example...
 - Values: **Committed, Compassionate, Resilient**
 - The story of how you pursued becoming a team captain in a sport you play or club you are part of
 - The story of how you helped a younger sibling/family member/friend by becoming their mentor/tutor despite having many responsibilities already
 - The story of how you are pursuing an education that your parents/older siblings/family members have not had the privilege to pursue

GOOD COLLEGE ESSAYS

- A personal story that has shaped the student's life in an important way.
- An established main idea; what you want the reader to take away about you and your values. It may be stated towards the end as part of the reflection.
- Includes some of the student's internal monologue during the events of their "story"
- Descriptive details to bring the main story to life

GREAT COLLEGE ESSAYS

- A personal story that has clearly shaped the student's life in a **meaningful** way.
- An **embedded main idea**; what you want the reader to take away about you and your values. It's not explicitly stated, it's actually built throughout.
- A balance between the **student's thoughts as they lived the "story"** and their **thoughts about their actions/thoughts in retrospect** (what you think about it now).
- Details that **enhance their perspective**— these details connect to the main idea too.
- **Narrative techniques**: strategic repetition, imagery, flashbacks, foreshadowing, figurative

NEXT STEPS

- Write complete essays drafts, if you haven't done so already. Push yourself to meet the word count.
- Share your drafts with at least one peer and one knowledgeable adult (teacher, staff member, parent, older sibling, friend already in college, etc.) and give them 2-3 specific questions or areas for feedback.
- When in doubt, read sample essays... there are many “essays that worked” posted by publications like *The New York Times*.