College Application Advisory

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Presentation available online at paly.net/college

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Agenda

- Application updates
- Strategies for writing the UC “personal statements”
- Resources for writing the UC essays
- Common topics for college application essays
- Some college essay “Don’ts”
- Tips for writing essays for professional schools, scholarships, EOP programs
- Upcoming Events

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Though some of the information about essays is UC specific, other information can apply to other college essays (application and scholarship).

The UC essay topics are direct. It is more important to the UCs that you answer the prompt rather than tell a story. Keep in mind your audience--strangers; the admissions office at UC is processing thousands of applications and doesn’t have a lot of time to read your essay so don’t make them work to hard. Of course, engaging the reader will be a plus!

Application Updates on paly.net/college

- UC Application Information
  - UC Campus Policies for Reviewing Freshman Applicants (ELC guarantee, applying Undeclared vs. Declared dis/advantages, impact of Alternate majors)
  - Tips for Completing the UC Application Online
- CSU Application Tips
  - CSU Mentor tutorial
  - Tips for Completing the CSU Application Online
  - CSU GPA calculation
- Personal essay tips (including the “Why college X?” topic)
- Interview tips

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Why are the UC Personal Statements so Important?

- They reviewed by both the Admissions and Scholarship offices
- They are used to:
  - Discover and evaluate distinctions among applicants whose academic records are similar
  - Gain insight into your level of academic, personal, and extracurricular achievement
  - Provide information that might not be evident in other parts of your application

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Remember to check for scholarships on paly.net/college (updated weekly). Scholarships from educational institutions and more.

It's your own letter of recommendation!

Instructions for the UC Personal Statements

There are two questions.

- Students respond to both questions.
- Students choose length of each response.
  - A maximum of 1,000 words total
  - If they choose to respond to one prompt at greater length, UC suggests the shorter answer be no less than 250 words.
  - Choose length based on themes that emerge that will complement the application

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Students should stay within the word limit as closely as they can. A little over—1,012 words, for example—is fine.

UC Writing Prompts

Freshman Applicants

Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community **or** school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

- Choose one topic (family, community, or school) or choose one theme to connect all three topics.
- The majority of your response should be the description of your world but put more emphasis on the second half (dreams and aspirations).
- Explain how your world has influenced your development as a student, or as a person.

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How do your dreams and aspirations relate to what you will do in college?

UC Writing Prompts

All Applicants

Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution **or** experience that is important to you. **[and]** What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

- Think about answering this prompt first; doing so might help you set the context you wish to describe in prompt #1.
- Choose a topic that has not been addressed in detail in another section of the application.
- Keep the information relevant to your personal experience.

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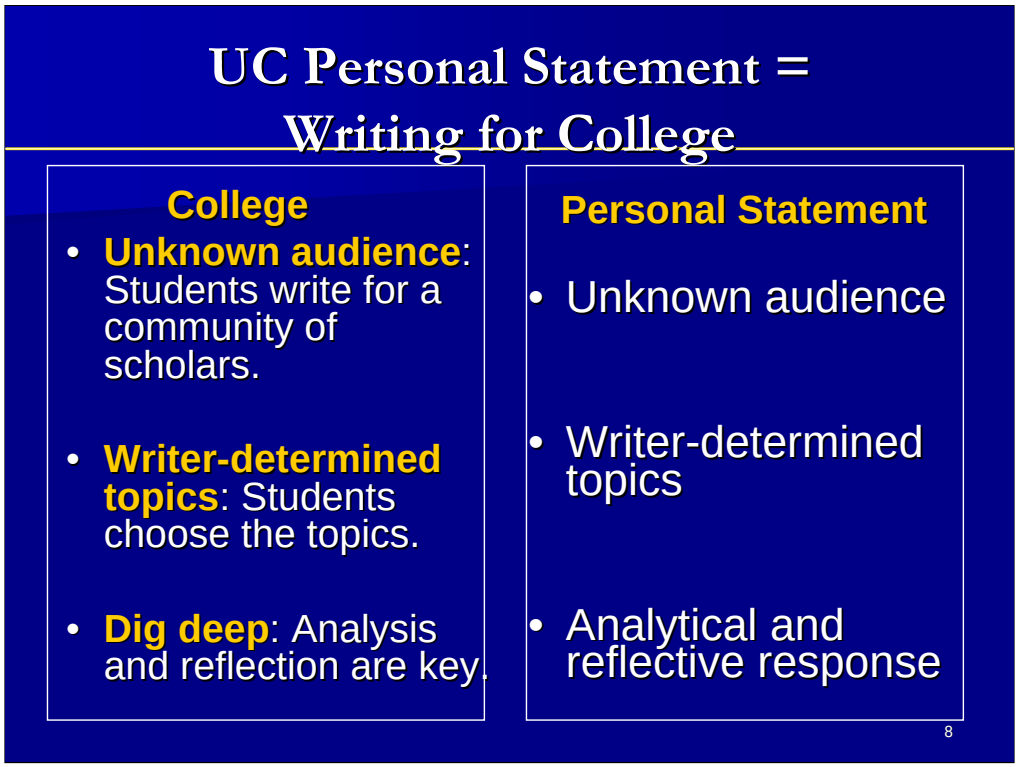

Remember the admissions officers are strangers!

Important Strategies for UC Essays

- Students are encouraged to write about special circumstances that have influenced their educational experience:
  - Small or alternative learning environments
  - Learning and/or physical challenges
- Use a writing process.
  - Gather information

    application, transcripts, test scores, list of extracurriculars
  - Read critically; think analytically

    Notice themes that emerge; this will help you develop a point of view
  - Develop Topic (theme) and Thesis
  - Draft, get feedback, and revise.

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For feedback, find readers that resemble your target audience = strangers!

Some Suggested Topics

- Personal triumphs or challenges overcome (explain what you learned or achieved in spite of them)
- Leadership opportunities
- Disabilities (talk about them in the context of your ability to succeed)
- Experiences outside the classroom that have made an impact on you
- Culture, as it has influenced who you are

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Resources for Help with the UC Personal Statements

- UC Application Case Study -
  Oct. 17 at 7 p.m. in the ERC, 1st 50 students
  R.S.V.P. via email to scernobori@pausd.org

- Online tutorial:
  www.californiacolleges.edu > Admissions > University of California > Applying for Admission > Tips on Writing the UC Personal Statement
  http://www.californiacolleges.edu/admissions/university-of-california-uc/personal-statement.asp

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Additional Comments Sections on UC Application

- Use Additional Comments box for clarification, expansion on important details:
  - Additional names
  - Visa issues
  - Additional tests taken but not reflected in app
- (**New**) Describe anything else that you have not had the opportunity to include elsewhere in your application.
  - **500-word limit**
  - **This is NOT a default 3rd essay**

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E.g. School offered a class but it conflicted with your schedule. I was not recommended by math teacher for pre-calc and stats class was canceled. French 5AP only offered after school and it conflicted with sports.

It is okay to leave these sections blank!

The University of California gives priority consideration to **qualified** veterans who apply for admission. Applicants are encouraged to use the personal statement to:

(1) describe how military service has been instrumental in developing their educational plans

(2) indicate if s/he is entitled to educational benefits as a result of military service or the service-connected death or disability of a parent or spouse, or

(3) indicate if applicant is affiliated with the military ~~such as, but not limited to, the spouse or dependent of~~ someone who is on active duty or a current participant in an ROTC-type program

Common College App Essay Topics

Some essay topics are very common:

- Traveling abroad
- Death of relative
- Sports involvement
- Community service

In order to stand out, you must be very specific about your personal experience, and how you were affected by it. You do not want to want to sound like everyone else!

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Some Don’ts

- Don’t try to be hilariously funny or wildly creative--it’s difficult to do and may not achieve the effect you are seeking
- Avoid clichés, generalities, lots of quotes
- Don’t experiment with varied fonts and formats--keep your personal statement easy to read
- Don’t mistake a list of accomplishments for an essay; a list repeats information found elsewhere in the application. Instead, an essay adds to the understanding of you as an individual and *supports* your application.

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What if you are applying to a professional school or college?

It is important to discuss:

- Your intended field of study
- Your interest in your specific major
- Any school or work-related experience

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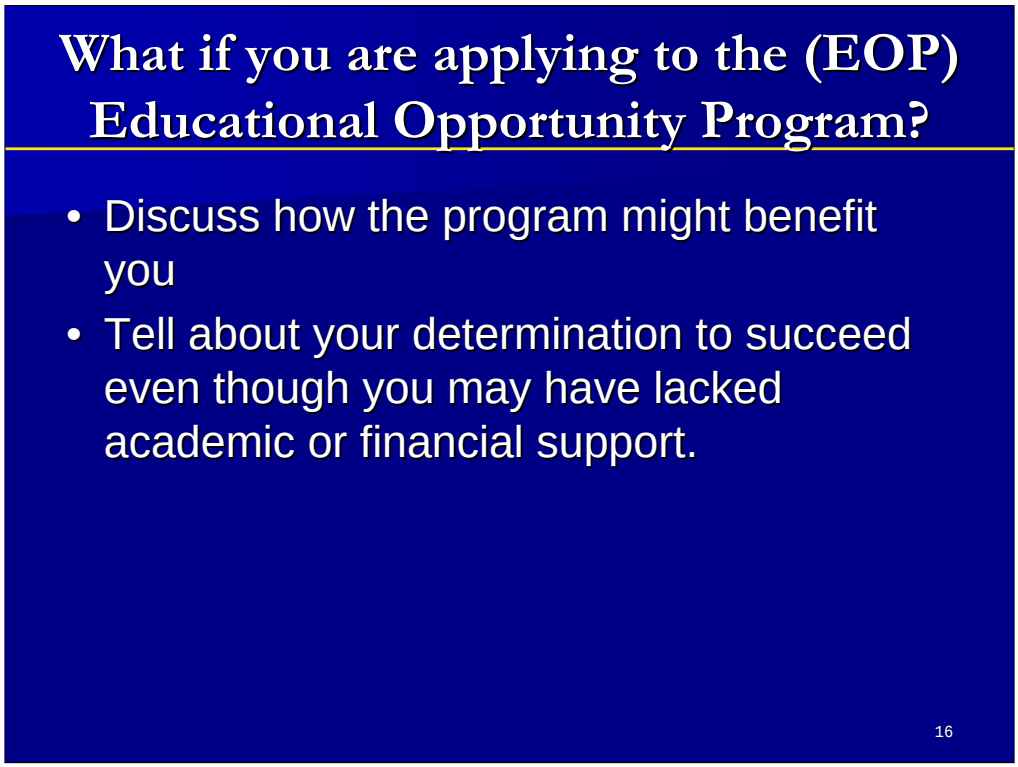
Professional school (e.g. College of Engineering)

A college within the university (e.g. College of Chemistry)



The program offers low-income, first-generation (neither parent completed a college degree) college students with orientation to campus program and services, academic advising, tutoring, transition support, and grants. The EOP department reviews applicants and collaborates with the admissions office to make decisions.

Application:

You must submit your undergraduate application to a campus via CSU Mentor before you can apply for the EOP program at that campus. There is no fee to apply to EOP.

The EOP application supplement is also available on CSU Mentor and works like the undergraduate application; information you enter is stored electronically and populates subsequent applications you create to save you time.

You must write 2 short essays. There is no word limit; be honest and explain both strengths and weaknesses; they are used to determine which EOP program services you might benefit from—not hurt your CSU application!

Resources and Upcoming Events

- College Interview Presentation
  Thurs., Oct. 11th, lunch in SSRC
- College Fair
  Mon., October 15th
  Paly, 6:30 - 9 pm, big and small gyms
    Financial Aid presentation 7:30 - 8:30, dance studio
- UC Essay Case Study
  Wed., October 17th - 7pm in ERC
- College Essay-Writing presentation – TBD
- CSU Application Workshop
  Wed., Nov. 14 – Computer lab 1 (near library), after school

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Workshop during the college fair (general info); FAFSA wokshop in January.

Questions?

- "Drop in" the C&CC during brunch and lunch
- Schedule an appointment with a college and/or career advisor
- Ask your TA
- Email an advisor

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Advisors are happy to review your essays! Send them via email.