

# APPLICATION ESSAY WORKSHOP

SCC TRANSFER SUCCESS CENTER

ROOM D-104

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@SCCTransfer



# WHAT ARE THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS?

- What is the UC saying about the NEW personal insight question:



- Think of it as your interview with the admissions office. Be open. Be reflective. Find your individual voice and express it.

# WHAT ARE THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS?

- These questions are about getting to know you better- your life experience, interests, ambitions, and inspirations.
- It is like an interview with the admissions office.
- Be authentic.
- Reflect on experiences

# WHAT DO THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS DO?

- Completes the application – it's required!
- 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

# THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS DO NOT...

... prevent you from being admitted.

... make up for academic deficiencies.

# A GOOD PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTION IS...

- *Is personal; there is no perfect template to follow!*
- Is thoughtful, honest, and reflective
- Complements your application without repeating it
- Has quality, not quantity

# A GOOD PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTION ANSWER...

- 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 BASICS OF THE PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS

- There is one required question
- You will need to answer 3 out of the 7 additional questions.
- Each response is limited to 350 words.
- The three you choose to answer of the seven are up to you.
- All questions are given equal consideration in the application process.



## REQUIRED QUESTION:

Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university.

# WHAT IS THE REQUIRED QUESTION IS ASKING?

- How have classroom experiences shaped your interest in your major?
- What experiences outside of the classroom have helped you develop this interest?
  - What have you done to develop/explore this interest? i.e. volunteer, work, clubs
- What other influences have steered you toward this major?
  - i.e. culture, community, family
- How is your intended major tied to your long-term goals?
  - Future goals or plans
  - Career

# EXAMPLES...

- (Sample responses for Prompt #1)\*
  - “I consider myself blessed to have had access to such exceptional learning opportunities. I recognize that interactive skills are important to me, and I expect to pursue science in a context that combines science and communication. Medicine and physical anthropology appeal to me, and a background in biology serves as a good foundation for either venue. Ultimately, I intend to teach anatomy at the college level.” (Student summarized experience with father, class at community college, and being teaching assistant)
  - “Through my community college career, I have gained the insight that specializing in history will be my goal during my undergraduate education...I have found that I simply love the subject of history, and I am really looking forward to broadening that knowledge. As a major, I believe that it will be the perfect step to achieving my ultimate goal of becoming an attorney.”

\*Wald, M. (2005). *Nothing can stop me: An open book on transfer application essays*. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company: Dubuque, Iowa.

# ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Must choose 3 of the following 7 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.
  - What is question 1 asking?
    - How do you define a “leader”? Think of words that describe a leader
    - Do these words apply to you? Is there a time in your life when you displayed these traits?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTION #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.
  - What is question 2 asking?
    - Think of a time a viewpoint was unique compared to others
    - What was the issue or problem from your perspective?
    - Now think of the same situation from the perspective of another person who was there with you.
    - How was your approach different from that other person's?
    - Was there ever a problem where your imagination and intuition guided you to the solution?
    - Do you have a passion for music, theater, visual art, dance, etc.? What have you gained from it that has affected other parts of your life?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTION #3

- What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
- What is question 3 asking?
  - Were those talents or skills the same a few years ago?
  - What changed?
  - What improved?
  - Which one of these talents or skills you listed is the most meaningful to you and why?
  - Is it a natural talent or do you have to work hard to develop the skill?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTION #4

- Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced
- What is question 4 asking?
  - Feel free to speak about either an opportunity or a barrier. It's ok if you've experienced one and not the other.
  - Mention educational opportunities such as educational programs or additional classes that have prepared you for college.
    - How did you find out about these programs or classes? How did you take what you learned and apply it to your schoolwork or other aspects of your life.
  - Mention educational barriers
    - Have you faced any barriers or any challenges related to school? How did you overcome them? List 3 characteristics or skills to overcome this challenge?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTION #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?
- What is question 5 asking?
  - Have you had a difficult experience in your life?
  - How did you get through it?
  - What did you learn going through this experience?
  - If you're currently working your way through a challenge, what are you doing now and does that affect different aspects of your life?



# ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS #6

- What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
  - What is question 6 asking?
    - Did you contribute a positive change in your school or in your community?
    - What steps have you taken to accomplish this?
    - What did you learn from your effort?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTION #7

- What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?
  - What is question 7 asking?
    - Don't be afraid to brag.
    - There's only one you and that's what makes you, you
    - There are many influences- family, experiences, interests.

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# THE COMMON APPLICATION



# Common App Core Essays:

The screenshot shows the Common App interface for a transfer applicant at Santiago College. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Instructions, My Colleges, Search for Colleges, Common Application, Future Plans, Applicant, Demographics, Family, Education, Academics, Activities, Writing (highlighted), Signature, Supplements, Payments, and School Forms. The main content area is titled 'Writing' and contains three sections:

- Short Answer:** Prompt: "Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below (1000 character maximum)." A note states: "\*\*YOUR RESPONSE MAY BE CUT OFF. LEARN MORE.\*\*"
- Personal Essay:** Prompt: "Please provide a statement (appr. 250-500 words) that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve." A note states: "Note: The Common Application essay should be the same for all colleges. Members that wish to review custom essay responses will request them on their Supplement form. Your essay will appear on a separate sheet at the end of the application." Below the prompt is an 'Upload Document' button.
- Additional Information:** Prompt: "Please upload a document here if you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application." Below the prompt is an 'Upload Document' button.

## Short Answer:

- 1000 characters
- Paste directly into app

## Personal Essay:

- 250-500 words
- Upload document

## Additional Information:

- No word/character count
- Upload document

# COMMON APP CORE PROMPTS:

## Personal Essay:

Please provide a statement (appr. 250-500 words) that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve.

## Additional Information (Optional)

Please provide an answer below if you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application.

*These are basically asking the same thing as the UC prompts*

# COMMON APP CORE PROMPTS:

- The core goes to all schools to which you will apply
  - Do not write campus-specific essays!
- Once you submit an app to any school, these sections cannot be edited

## Common App

Supplements usually include short-answer questions

- Note word/character length limits
- Use Print Preview function to make sure answers are not cut off

The screenshot shows the 'Essay' submission page. It features two questions with text input areas. The first question has a character count of 350. The second question includes an 'Upload Document' button. At the bottom, there are three buttons: 'Check Errors & Save', 'Print Preview', and 'SUBMIT'. Arrows from the text on the left point to the character count, the second question, and the 'Print Preview' button.

**Essay**

• Please respond to the following question (50 words or less).

If you were to write a book about your life, what would be the title?

Characters available 350

• Please respond to the following question (500 words or less):

**Pepperdine University is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. How are you prepared to contribute to Pepperdine's mission and community of faith, learning, and service?**

To upload a document in response to this question, please click the 'upload' button below. If your upload is successful, you will see a 'view document' button and a 'delete' button appear next to the question.

Upload Document

*Pepperdine University does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of any status or condition protected by applicable federal or state law in the administration of its educational policies, admission, financial assistance, employment, educational programs, or activities.*

Check Errors & Save    Print Preview    **SUBMIT**

# CHAPMAN SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

- 1) How have you learned about Chapman University?
- 2) Please explain your interest in the major(s) you selected.(200 words or fewer)
- 3) There are thousands of universities and colleges. Please share with us why you are choosing to apply to Chapman. (200 words or fewer)
- 4) The 'I Am Chapman' campaign on our campus was created to foster an appreciation and awareness of diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice for all. We celebrate our students' individuality in all of its forms including their race, ethnicity, interests, ability, geographic background, experiences, culture, religion and opinions. Given the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of our community, the admission committee would like to know what makes you 'Chapman?' (200 words or fewer)



# USC Supplemental Questions

- Essay/Short answer prompts, letters of recommendation, portfolio materials, etc., vary greatly by major.

# 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***

# 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

# 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
  - Also repetitive and offers no depth
- 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.)
  - This is not a creative writing assignment – it's about you
- Beware using humor!
  - Not everyone will get it

# 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 know the current UC requirements
  - Don't have too many people read for you

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Be specific and give examples
  - It's better to expand on a specific concept than to try to summarize broad topics
  - Explain “what” statements with “why” and “how” details
- Be concise
- Formatting doesn't matter
  - Bold, italics, indents, etc. go away

# TRANSFER CENTER READING & FEEDBACK

- 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
- Authentic & Personal Content

# Questions?



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Fall Hours:

Monday-Tuesday: 8:00am-6:00pm

Wednesday: 8:00am-7:00pm

Thursday: 8:00am-5:00pm

Friday: 8:00am-12:00pm