THE COLLEGE ESSAY

This is your voice This is your opportunity to tell the colleges something of significance that they cannot see anywhere else in your application e original thoughtful and try to engage the reader by creating some type of "hook"

Remember the following tips when starting your essay

- Select a topic that is important to you and that will grab the reader's attention
- resent strong examples within your essay
- e specific about the impact the experience had on you
- on't go overboard using excessive vocabulary
- ake sure your counselor reads the essay for content
- sk an nglish teacher to make grammatical corrections revisions
- on't rush to get to the final draft This is a process that will take multiple drafts

The attached college essays were collected from various websites for the sole purpose of helping students to understand the importance of a strong college essay Relax sit back and let the creative process begin...

n the following pages you will find many sample essays and tips on writing your essay uidance epartment is always here to assist you in in your college journey

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The Bay Shore Guidance Department

THE COLLEGE ADMISSION ESSAY: TIPS AND ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS at http://www.essayedge.com WRITING YOUR COLLEGE ADMISSION ESSAY: STEP-BY-STEP

It may be only 500 words, but the admission essay portion of a college application can mean the difference between acceptance and rejection. How you write your personal essay shows the admission committee why you are different from everybody else. It provides information about you that test scores, grades, and extracurricular pursuits simply cannot. You can use the essay to describe a favorite activity, to tell a story about yourself, or even a story about your dog, but make sure to really use it in a way that captures the reader's attention and shows that you are exceptional.

t p n r instorming

The most important part of your essay is the subject matter. You should expect to devote about 1-2 weeks simply to brainstorming ideas. To begin brainstorming a subject idea consider the following points. From brainstorming, you may find a subject you had not considered at first.

- What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to accomplishments you have been formally recognized for since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have been trite at the time but become crucial when placed in the context of your life.
- Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
- What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
- · Have you ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond?
- Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?
- What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends characterize you? What would they write about if they were writing your admissions essay for you?
- What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?
- What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular university fit into your plans for the future?
- Ask for Help from Parents, Friends, Colleagues, etc.
 If you cannot characterize yourself and your personality traits do not automatically leap to mind, ask your friends to write a list of your five most salient personality traits. Ask your friends why they chose the ones they did. If an image of your personality begins to emerge, consider life experiences that could illustrate the particular traits.
- Consider Your Childhood While admissions officers are not interested in reading about your childhood and are more interested in the last 2-4 years of your life, you might consider events of your childhood that inspired the interests you have today. Interests that began in childhood may be the most defining parts of your life, even if you

recently lost interest. For instance, if you were interested in math since an early age and now want to study medicine, you might incorporate this into your medical school admissions essay. Analyze the reasons for your interests and how they were shaped from your upbringing.

- Consider Your Role Models
 Many applicants do not have role models and were never greatly influenced by just one or two people.
 However, for those of you who have role models and actually aspire to become like certain people, you may want to incorporate a discussion of that person and the traits you admired into your application essay.
- Read Sample Admissions Essays

Before you sat down to write a poem, you would certainly read past poets. Before writing a book of philosophy, you would consider past philosophers. In the same way, we recommend reading sample admissions essays to understand what topics other applicants chose.

- Goal Determination
 Life is short. Why do you want spend 2-6 years of your life at a particular college, graduate school, or
 professional school? How is the degree necessary to the fulfillment of your goals? When considering
 goals, think broadly. Few people would be satisfied with just a career. How else will your education fit
 your needs and lead you to a fulfilling life?
- If after reading this entire page you do not have an idea for your essay, do not be surprised. Coming up with an idea is difficult and requires time. Actually consider the questions and exercises above. Without a topic you feel passionate about, without one that brings out the defining aspects of you personality, you risk falling into the trap of sounding like the 90 percent of applicants who will write boring admissions essays. The only way to write a unique essay is to have experiences that support whatever topic you come up with. Whatever you do, don't let the essay stress you out. Have fun with the brainstorming process. You might discover something about yourself you never consciously realized.

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Having completed step one, you should now have a rough idea of the elements you wish to include in your essay, including your goals, important life experiences, research experience, diversifying features, spectacular nonacademic accomplishments, etc. You should also now have an idea of what impression you want to make on the admissions officers.

We should remark that at this stage, undergraduate applicants have a large advantage over graduate school applicants. Whereas nobody questions a high school student's motivation to attend college, graduate and professional school applicants must directly address in their essays their desire to study their selected field.

You must now confront the underlying problem of the admissions essay. You must now consider topics that will allow you to synthesize your important personal characteristics and experiences into a coherent whole while simultaneously addressing your desire to attend a specific institution. While most admissions essays allow great latitude in topic selection, you must also be sure to answer the questions that were asked of you. Leaving a lasting impression on someone who reads 50-100 essays a day will not be easy, but we have compiled some guidelines to help you get started. With any luck, one or two topics, with small changes, will allow you to answer application questions for 5-7 different colleges, although admissions officers do appreciate essays that provide convincing evidence of how an applicant will fit into a particular academic environment. You should at least have read the college's webpage, admissions catalog, and have an understanding of the institution's strengths.

Consider the following questions before proceeding:

- Have you selected a topic that describes something of personal importance in your life, with which you can use vivi p rson I xp ri n s as supporting details?
- Is your topic a gimmick? That is, do you plan to write your essay in iambic pentameter or make it funny. You should be very, very careful if you are planning to do this. We recommend strongly that you do not do this. Almost always, this is done poorly and is not appreciated by the admissions committee. Nothing is worse than not laughing or not being amused at something that was written to be funny or amusing.
- Will your topic only repeat information listed elsewhere on your application? If so, pick a new topic. Don't
 mention GPAs or standardized test scores in your essay.
- Can you offer vivid supporting paragraphs to your essay topic? If you cannot easily think of supporting paragraphs with concrete examples, you should probably choose a different essay topic.

- Can you fully answer the question asked of you? Can you address and elaborate on all points within the specified word limit, or will you end up writing a poor summary of something that might be interesting as a report or research paper? If you plan on writing something technical for college admissions, make sure you truly can back up your interest in a topic and are not merely throwing around big scientific words. Unless you convince the reader that you actually have the life experiences to back up your interest in neurobiology, the reader will assume you are trying to impress him/her with shallow tactics. Also, be sure you can write to admissions officers and that you are not writing over their heads.
- Can you keep the reader's interest from the first word. The entire essay must be interesting, considering admissions officers will probably only spend a few minutes reading each essay.
- Is your topic overdone? To ascertain this, peruse through old essays. However, most topics are overdone, and this is not a bad thing. A unique or convincing answer to a classic topic can pay off big.
- Will your topic turnoff a large number of people? If you write on how everyone should worship your God, how wrong or right abortion is, or how you think the Republican or Democratic Party is evil, you will not get into the college of your choice. The only thing worse than not writing a memorable essay is writing an essay that will be remembered negatively. Stay away from specific religions, political doctrines, or controversial opinions. You can still write an essay about Nietzsche's influence on your life, but express understanding that not all intelligent people will agree with Nietzsche's claims. Emphasize instead Nietzsche's influence on your life, and not why you think he was wrong or right in his claims.
- In this vein, if you are presenting a topic that is controversial, you must acknowledge counter arguments without sounding arrogant.
- Will an admissions officer remember your topic after a day of reading hundreds of essays? What will the officer remember about your topic? What will the officer remember about you? What will your lasting impression be?

t p hr riting th ss y ips for u ss

Even seemingly boring topics can be made into exceptional admissions essays with an innovative approach. In writing the essay you must bear in mind your two goals: to persuade the admissions officer that you are extremely worthy of admission and to make the admissions officer aware that you are more than a GPA and a standardized score, that you are a real-life, intriguing personality.

Unfortunately, there is no surefire step-by-step method to writing a good essay. However, we have compiled the following list of tips that you should find useful while writing your admissions essay.

Answer the Question

You can follow the next 11 steps, but if you miss the question, you will find it tough to get admission to any institution.

Be Original

Even seemingly boring essay topics can sound interesting if creatively approached. If writing about a gymnastics competition you trained for, do not start your essay: "I worked long hours for many weeks to train for XXX competition." Consider an opening like, "Every morning I awoke at 5:00 to sweat, tears, and blood as I trained on the uneven bars hoping to bring the state gymnastics trophy to my hometown."

Be Yourself

Admissions officers want to learn about you and your writing ability. Write about something meaningful and describe your feelings, not necessarily your actions. If you do this, your essay will be unique. Many people travel to foreign countries or win competitions, but your feelings during these events are unique to you. Unless a philosophy or societal problem has interested you intensely for years, stay away from grand themes that you have little personal experience with.

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etter arbie

don't have any alumni ties to rown though it's possible could be the long lost granddaughter of ames S iller ever have sailed the acific cean on the back of a humpback whale nor can wrap sushi with the skill of former ron hef asaharu orimoto haven't done much research regarding podiatry and chances are will never win the ichigan ega illions lottery am however the proud owner of a ittle ermaid dition arbie

t some point in almost every little girl's life she becomes engrossed in the epto ismol pink world of arbies a place entered at the age of seven y sister annah and decided to take our collection of inch plastic friends for a dip in the pool one sweltering summer day ours of giggling resulted from tossing the arbies as high as we could into the air and watching them dive gracefully into the waves Three... two... one launched my ittle ermaid doll in the same fashion as pollo. We watched her rocket into the sky glanced at my sister who was scrambling through her scorecards to make sure she had the well deserved "" ready y eyes returned upward anticipating the gymnastic stunts arbie would undoubtedly deliver to her enraptured audience. Where was she The crowd was growing restless ad she landed on the moon

Utterly bewildered we combed through the freshly mown grass and woods but unfortunately our search bore no fruit fter a moment of sorrow our tiny attention spans directed us to a different game and our minds fluttered away

ver the years encountered many of my own quirky adventures s a field biologist intern camped for days on an uninhabited island purified my own water surveyed the endangered iping lover tested the water quality of lakes and found my way out of acres of northern ichigan wilderness y view of the world broadened through travels and encounters with the osta Rican erman rench and ustralian cultures won varsity letters had my poetry published and volunteered at a local hospital and as grew older the mystery of the once beloved ittle ermaid dition arbie faded into a misty memory

ne recent fall day rainbow colored leaves swirled through the air and the chilly breeze carried its pleasant scent an amalgamation of bonfire and pumpkin. Upon the rooftop was not good Saint ick but rather my dad cleaning the leaves off our house. Tied to the branch of an ancient oak tree the tire swing moved my body in a pendulum motion y dad approached with something dark in his hands "h... does this belong to you or annah" he said with a look of perplexity painted on his face couldn't believe my eyes t was the ittle ermaid dition arbie. The poor girl – she was an absolute disaster affirmed my ownership of the traveler and took her battered body in my hands

ine years had passed since had seen the almost world renowned lympic diver recalled that summer day and smiled as memories flooded my mind She looked as though she'd been struck by lightning a few times weathered heavy monsoons and held onto the gutter for dear life during tornados er mangled arm appeared to have been mistaken for a worm by a ferocious momma bird eaves dirt and other debris were entwined in her once shiny cherry locks er attire was tattered – she seemed to have fashioned herself a Tarzan esque ensemble er ingenuity was impressive it reminded me of an experience in which had to craft socks out of a garbage bag and medical tape then wear them for three days in pouring rain evertheless one thing stood out as ogled my long lost friend her face She wore a radiant smile a look of contentment self confidence and accomplishment With head held high and a positive attitude she had battled life's unexpected challenges. She knows now what it means to strive and succeed realized the world of pink doesn't fit someone with so much potential so much passion for learning so much heart independence and creativity. Looked at her and saw myself reflected in her sapphire eyes

ike her my dreams lie far beyond those of a Stepford wife and with the ability to bend and not break am ready to step out of my plastic box society through the Van Winkle gates and into a world of endless possibilities crave the works of Thoreau and merson not mall directories or grocery lists desire adventure and the opportunity to study new cultures long to write what want and voice my opinions with my whole heart behind them nd as the ittle ermaid dition arbie sits on my shelf next to musical and athletic trophies behind silly pictures of friends and alongside books by aya ngelou and ewis arroll she reminds me of myself or this ambitious girl pink is not enough she is ready to dive into rown

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n the South where grew up pork is a vegetable ctually it's used as a "seasoning" but so commonly that it's almost impossible to find salad without bacon greens without fatback white beans free of pinkish shreds of ham t was difficult for me then when decided to become a vegetarian The decision itself made for the usual reasons of health ethics and ecological conservation was easy putting it into practice however was another matter t every restaurant every school lunch every church potluck every family gathering there was meat—in the entrée the sides the condiments suspected even innocent seeming pie crusts of secretly harboring lard

ventually worked out a system brought my own lunches to school asked servers about the broth used in the soup of the day avoided the usual suspects of beans and greens. This system worked well enough in public but at home faced the challenge of respecting my parents and harmoniously sharing meals with them. They were excellent cooks both of them and had always enjoyed the country fried steaks burgers and ribs they'd served to me for so many years—how could now say "no" to those delicacies without angering or inconveniencing them or worse hurting their feelings.

couldn't nd so backslid 'd manage to live a pure meatless life for a few weeks subsisting on pasta and salads Then ad would grill an especially juicy teriyaki marinated flank steak look at me hopefully and offer a slice—and would accept 'd mend my ways steam rice and stir fry snow peas with mushrooms and crumble at the first whiff of the Thanksgiving turkey roasting in the oven and the proud smile on my mother's face y noble goals it seemed were doomed

ut then found a role model one who demonstrated to me that could live without meat and still be a functioning member of society eschew my parents' pork chops and fried chicken without giving offense wish could say that was inspired by one of history's great artists like eonardo da Vinci or a leader and inventor like enjamin ranklin but no y inspiration was isa Simpson

et me pause here to acknowledge how absurd it is to be inspired by an animated sitcom character albeit one as smart and together as isa Y et it was the very absurdity of feeling somehow moved by isa's resolve and strength of character her refusal to compromise her beliefs that convinced me could follow her example n the pivotal episode isa is tortured by visions of the lamb whose chops provide her family's dinner "lease isa don't eat me" the imaginary lamb implores her She is moved by ethics yet almost breaks her resolution when omer prepares a pig roast and is hurt by his daughter's refusal to partake ike me isa is torn between her convictions and her fear of disappointing her father not to mention the undeniable deliciousness of pork ut she manages to explain her beliefs to omer and show him that her rejection of meat is not a rejection of him—that she can share his table and his love while still living according to her principles

gain admit—as inspirations go this one is a little ridiculous o imaginary lamb conscience spoke to me and unlike isa was not able to celebrate my vegetarian lifestyle by triumphantly singing with uickie art manager pu and guest stars aul and inda c artney ut seeing the very obstacles that stymied me being overcome by a yellow skinned spiky haired caricature was so silly that my difficulties too seemed silly "Well heck " thought "if isa Simpson—a cartoon character for heaven's sake— can stick to her guns then so can "

So did told my parents that had decided to really commit myself to vegetarianism that this was not a passing phase that was not judging or seeking to convert them but that this was simply something had decided for myself. They agreed perhaps a bit patronizingly but as the months went on and continued to forego the chicken in my fajitas and the sausage gravy on my biscuits they became more supportive. We worked together on compromise took on a larger role in preparing the meals and reminded them to please use vegetable stock in the potato soup and to reserve a separate pot of plain spaghetti sauce before adding the ground beef. When we attended a potluck we made sure that one of the dishes we brought was a meatless entrée so that would be guaranteed at least one edible dish at the pork laden table.

did not tell my parents or anyone else that isa Simpson had helped me say no forever to eating meat oing so would cast the decision one that many teenagers passionately make for a few months and then abandon in the light of well intentioned immaturity ut isa did help me live a more healthy ethical and ecologically sound life—to say no to pork in all its guises

Student Teacher

nthony was neither a leader nor a role model n fact his teachers and his parents were constantly chastising him because he was disruptive ate too much and had a hard time staying focused on a task met nthony when was a counselor at a local summer camp The counselors had the usual duties of keeping kids from smoking drowning and killing each other We made od's eyes friendship bracelets collages and other clichés We rode horses sailed boats and hunted snipe

ach counselor also had to teach a three week course that was supposed to be a little more "academic" than the usual camp fare created a class called "Things that Iy" met with fifteen students for an hour a day as we designed built and flew kites model rockets and balsawood airplanes

nthony signed up for my class nthony stood out from my other students for many reasons e was larger and louder than the other middle school kids e was also the only frican merican in the class. The camp was located in a well to do and predominately white neighborhood n a questionable effort to promote economic and racial diversity the camp organizers developed a strategy of busing inner city kids out to the burbs ut despite the best efforts of the organizers and counselors the inner city kids and suburbanites tended to stick to their own groups during most activities and meals

nthony was not a good student e had been kept back a year at his school e talked out of turn and lost interest when others were talking n my class nthony got some good laughs when he smashed his kite and threw the pieces into the wind is rocket never made it to the launch pad because he crumpled it in a fit of frustration when he couldn't get the fins to stay on

n the final week when we were making airplanes nthony surprised me when he drew a sketch of a sweep wing jet and told me he wanted to make a "really cool plane" ike many of nthony's teachers and perhaps even his parents had largely given up on him ow he suddenly showed a spark of interest didn't think the interest would last but helped nthony get started on a scale blueprint for his plane worked one on one with nthony and had him use his project to demonstrate to his classmates how to cut glue and mount the balsawood framework. When the frames were complete we covered them with tissue paper. We mounted propellers and rubber bands nthony with all his thumbs created something that looked a bit like his original drawing despite some wrinkles and extra glue.

ur first test flight saw nthony's plane nose dive straight into the ground is plane had a lot of wing area in the back and too much weight in the front expected nthony to grind his plane into the earth with his boot e didn't e wanted to make his creation work. The class returned to the classroom to make adjustments and nthony added some big flaps to the wings ur second test flight surprised the whole class s many of the planes stalled twisted and nose dived nthony's flew straight out from the hillside and landed gently a good yards away

'm not writing about nthony to suggest that was a good teacher wasn't n fact had quickly dismissed nthony like many of his teachers before me t best had viewed him as a distraction in my class and felt my job was to keep him from sabotaging the experience for the other students nthony's ultimate success was a result of his own motivation not my instruction

nthony's success wasn't just his plane e had succeeded in making me aware of my own failures ere was a student who was never taken seriously and had developed a bunch of behavioral issues as a result never stopped to look for his potential discover his interests or get to know the kid beneath the facade had grossly underestimated nthony and am grateful that he was able to disillusion me

like to think that 'm an open minded liberal and non judgmental person nthony taught me that 'm not there yet

http collegeapps about com od essays a student teacher htm

rom the time was able to realize what a university was all heard from my mothers side of the family was about the University of ichigan and the great heritage it has any a Saturday afternoon my grandfather would devote to me by sitting me down in front of the television and reminiscing about the University of ichigan while halftime occurred during a ichigan Wolverines football game ater as grew older and universities took on greater meaning my mother and uncle both alumni of the University of ichigan took me to see their old stamping grounds rom 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

n Springfield igh School non academic clubs such as the uture hysicians and the ylon both of which 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 n uture hysicians participated in field trips to children s hospitals and also participated in two bloodbanks.

urrently hold a job at aas rothers This lets me interact with people outside my own immediate environment 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

n the community am active in my church Youth roup s a high school sophomore was our church s representative to the iocesan Youth ellowship helped organize youth group events the largest being The ishops all a state wide event for young people also played high school junior varsity soccer for two years s a senior will be playing varsity soccer but in the off season s a junior 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 t felt very satisfying to pass on the knowledge of soccer to another generation The girls played teams from other parts of lorida Though their record was the girls enjoyed their season This is what taught them was the greatest joy of soccer

The past three years of my life have given me greater visions of my future see the University of ichigan as holding a large book with many unread chapters and myself as an eager child who has just learned to read intend to read and probe into all the chapters. The University of ichigan 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 ichigan will be successful after college and be able to make a name and place for myself in our society.

The itter and the Sweet

The candy's smooth wrapper crinkles as trace its edges with my fingertips imagining its contents. The wrapper tears like a fine fabric revealing a corner of dark chocolate break off a piece and take pleasure in its creamy essence have always had a sweet tooth but it is not just sugary snacks that crave eing raised by a single parent has been a bittersweet experience but one that has given me resilience and ambition

When was young my mother would tell me that the racks of candy in the store's checkout line belonged to the cashier She said this not to confuse me avoid spoiling me or even to teach me a lesson about earning rewards though she inevitably did She said it because she didn't want me to worry because she could not afford a cent chocolate bar evertheless saw through her tactic and made a promise to myself that would grow up to be prosperous enough to buy

my family all the ersheys on the stand

nstead of focusing on our economic instability my mother selflessly pushed me to strive for success so that could lead a more comfortable life than hers. She worked long hours every night and struggled to pay the minimum due on her bills. Still she would find time to read and snuggle with my sister mily and me om taught me the value of perseverance education and moral fiber. It hough did not have two parents was loved and nurtured just as much

ot all of life's milestones were easy some left an insurmountably bitter taste in my mouth omestic abuse divorce and homelessness for example dealt with these when my mother married a man in aryland and moved us several states away from our roots in eorgia. The first few months were great baseball games family trips to the mall dinners together and movies t felt like we were the perfect. If merican family Then things changed aseball games were too expensive and trips to the mall were replaced with days mily and spent isolated in our rooms on his orders. Screaming matches between my stepfather and my mother interrupted dinners and he swapped movie tickets for vodka

We spent five years living in a family setting that had turned into a war zone remember the verbal spats became so routine that would no longer rush to my little sister's room to cradle her in my arms and wipe away the tears spilling down her cheeks mily and grew so used to this lifestyle that we just turned on the televisions in our rooms to drown out the screams. We became immersed in the world of sugar coated sitcoms pretending the spiteful cursing matches downstairs were normal

Then one evening an argument erupted y sister and had begun to predict the start of these altercations. We called our system T stimated Time of ight named for its accuracy mily joked about patenting it some day ut on this night my mother swung open my bedroom door and told me to pack – we were leaving and not coming back could hear mily sobbing in her room

We loaded our things into om's ord my stepfather barking hatefully all the while We drove for a long time before om pulled into the parking lot of a large store gazed out the window watching people carry bags to their cars and head off to their warm homes They were oblivious to our bittersweet tears They had no idea how relieved and traumatized we felt all at the same time was my sister school was still in session and we were homeless

"We're not the first people to go through this and we won't be the last " om assured us

friend of my mother's let us stay with her ach day om would wake us before dawn so we could commute from Virginia to aryland for our last three months of school remember looking out at the gleaming Washington onument from the otomac bridge wondering how many others in the nation had suffered in silence ow many had packed up and moved on

We eventually relocated to Texas where om is still working to re stabilize her life nd now as compose this essay with some dark chocolate – my favorite candy – close at hand realize my family and are at the best point in our lives have triumphed here both academically and personally satiate my hunger for knowledge by remaining dedicated to my intellectual pursuits – for example the istinguished raduation lan with its rigorous course of study and community service and the learning opportunities it offers

savor the fact that am not a bitter product of my environment am not a person who lets trying times interrupt her focus for know that they are learning experiences also Success like candy can be the sweetest treat of all

ailing Successfully

y day in the sun had arrived – my magnum opus would be revealed had just delivered a memorized speech that had labored over for weeks and was about to learn how the panel judged my performance. The polite but sparse audience leaned forward in their folding chairs hush fell across the room. The drum rolled in my mind anyway

The contest organizer announced the third place winner las the name was not mine. Then he read the second place winner and once again it was not me tlast the moment of truth came ither was about to bask in the warmth of victory or rue the last several months spent preparing. While neither of these came to pass my heart felt closer to the latter

osing is a part of life and have dealt with the emotional baggage that travels shotgun with it on more than one occasion owever it was an indescribably underwhelming feeling to drive Saturday morning and yet still finish fourth out of four contestants reportedly said "felt like the year old boy who stubbed his toe yeah could relate

had spent many hours in front of a computer and in libraries doing research for the incoln icentennial Speech ontest s pored over several biographies one notion stood out incoln was handed many sound defeats but he never allowed them to permanently hinder his spirit or ambition While believe many history lessons can be applied to modern life hadn't considered "the agony of defeat" as a historically valuable learning experience never dreamed could relate to incoln president no less and the greatest at that thought "failing successfully" was a very appropriate topic given the many letdowns incoln experienced and so this became the title of my speech

fter not placing in the first year of the speech contest really wanted to compete again incoln had been the epitome of persistence so was not going to give up on a contest about a historic individual who did not give up reworked my speech for the following year and while did not come in last again did not place. Some days you're the dog and some days you're the hydrant and this was definitely a hydrant day that brought me down for a while

couldn't accept the fact that had failed twice in something that had worked so hard on until contemplated the individual whom 'd spent so much time learning about ever mind the lost prize money ouch major and praise ouch minor – had learned really learned about a great man who had experienced failure and disappointment and had many chances to give up We remember incoln because he didn't take this route he didn't throw lavish pity parties and he persevered to become according to many the greatest merican president

While did not earn monetary awards as a result of this contest did gain a new perspective Through learning about incoln discovered that can fail successfully and that it is possible to glean applicable wisdom from the lives of those who have come before us ow whenever 'm faced with a setback remember what incoln said after his unsuccessful Senate race "The path was worn and slippery y foot slipped from under me knocking the other out of the way but recovered and said to myself 't's a slip and not a fall '"

Power Tools

n the summer of worked alongside my dad at Radial uto a orean owned garage where he has spent years working with other immigrant men The men who didn't know what make of me gave me tasks that they thought could handle organizing boxes weeding sweeping y dad however treated me as if were one of them even giving me a blue collared shirt to wear which did proudly With his guidance adjusted tire pressures performed oil changes replaced brakes fixed the lifter and did other jobs that would make my arms ache and my mom frown

The ride home would be a quiet one because would sleep in the back seat completely exhausted from the day s work my legs feeling like metal oars remember dinner tasting heavenly each night that week don't remember exactly what ate those nights but the menu did not matter ven plain white rice the same white rice that had every night tasted like fine dining realized that every bite had had been the result of my dads tired muscles and coarse hands

Since then have asked my dad many times when can work at the garage again very time he replies You did such a good job last time dont have anything for you to do anymore Wed all have no jobs if you worked full time While laugh to placate him have been secretly heartbroken because miss power tools and working by his side ut get it e knows that have learned that there is no limit to hard work that there is nothing more gratifying than earning and providing with your own strength e reminds me that must be strong in my own way While he uses drills and wrenches to provide must find my own power tools in the classroom

y father who looks enviously upon my books takes to his own readings finishing volumes of newspapers each night occasionally reading a orean novel Sometimes he asks me how it feels to read Shakespeare or Tolstoy in nglish but cannot explain the experience of reading While he has asked me many times to help him learn nglish he is always too worn to learn a language he has struggled with for more than twenty years is mechanics shoulders simply ache too much when he sits hunched over small desks reading through my old notebooks

When my dad learned that began earning essay awards and high marks on my writing assignments he suggested Save all your writing and make a book With his words in mind stopped throwing out drafts or notebooks even napkins with half finished sentences ooks have become my bedside buddies and my teachers absorb pages and pages and feel empowered feel like have been given the fuel to contribute my voice in this world to speak up for those who can t especially for those who provide without breaks and holidays without a doubt that his daughter could discover her own power tools

Hiking to Understanding

Surrounded by thousands of stars, complete silence, and spectacular mountains, I stood atop New Hampshire's Presidential Range awestruck by nature's beauty. Immediately, I realized that I must dedicate my life to understanding the causes of the universe's beauty. In addition, the hike taught me several valuable lessons that will allow me to increase my understanding through scientific research.

Although the first few miles of the hike up Mt. Madison did not offer fantastic views, the vistas became spectacular once I climbed above tree line. Immediately, I sensed that understanding the natural world parallels climbing a mountain. To reach my goal of total comprehension of natural phenomena, I realized that I must begin with knowledge that may be uninteresting by itself. However, this knowledge will form the foundation of an accurate view of the universe. Much like every step while hiking leads the hiker nearer the mountain peak, all knowledge leads the scientist nearer total understanding.

Above tree line, the barrenness and silence of the hike taught me that individuals must have their own direction. All hikers know that they must carry complete maps to reach their destinations; they do not allow others to hold their maps for them. Similarly, surrounded only by mountaintops, sky, and silence, I recognized the need to remain individually focused on my life's goal of understanding the physical universe.

At the summit, the view of the surrounding mountain range is spectacular. The panorama offers a view of hills and smaller mountains. Some people during their lives climb many small hills. However, to have the most accurate view of the world, I must be dedicated to climbing the biggest mountains I can find. Too often people simply hike across a flat valley without ascending because they content themselves with the scenery. The mountain showed me that I cannot content myself with the scenery. When night fell upon the summit, I stared at the slowly appearing stars until they completely filled the night sky. Despite the windy conditions and below freezing temperatures, I could not tear myself away from the awe-inspiring beauty of the cosmos. Similarly, despite the frustration and difficulties inherent in scientific study, I cannot retreat from my goal of universal understanding.

When observing Saturn's rising, the Milky Way Cloud, and the Perseid meteor shower, I simultaneously felt a great sense of insignificance and purpose. Obviously, earthly concerns are insignificant to the rest of the universe. However, I experienced the overriding need to understand the origins and causes of these phenomena. The hike also strengthened my resolve to climb the mountain of knowledge while still taking time to gaze at the wondrous scenery. Only then can the beauty of the universe and the study of science be purposefully united. Attaining this union is my lifelong goal.

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