# Essays and extra curricular

Created: October 11, 2021 12:53 AM

## Your Story

**Please describe a topic that is of importance to you, and how it is a reflection of who you are. Why is this topic important to you? (Maximum 300 words)**

I love being first. Not a first-placer-on-a-competition sense, but being the first to try out new things; being the first to explore an area with my friends; trying out a new kind of food for the first time. I am a pioneer by nature because curiosity compels me to try out new things. While that sounds like a nice and optimistic life, the main driving force I fail to acknowledge is boredom. I hate being bored, but boredom helped me move, it was and is essential for my growth.

I am keen on using "boredom": a word usually paired up with negative meanings, as the topic that reflects my being. This is because I am a product of its potential. For instance: I was bored during quarantine, so I joined hackathons to keep myself busy—this gave me the skills and opportunities I needed to start pursuing my career in product design and development.

Being bored means getting time on your hands to explore and finally realize your true passion. The best part is: this phenomenon happens to everybody. This gives everyone an equal opportunity to reflect and work on self-development—or they could turn to Netflix.

Though a double-edged blade, boredom and its potential to change your lives with deliberate decision-making can help people find their true calling. I know it did with mine.

I created a website to complement my essays. This website was made to help UBC paint a picture of me holistically. Perhaps me doing this is proving my point on being the first—the first to provide a supplementary website:

[https://www.carlkho.com](https://www.carlkho.com/)

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**The International Scholars program takes pride in its community. What does community mean to you? How do you contribute to the well-being of your community? (Maximum 300 words)**

I believe everyone should be given easy access to quality education. Reality, however, advocates for otherwise; it has opened a wider chasm between students who can afford, and students who can only afford to dream. Fortunately, I am surrounded by selfless individuals who bear the same beliefs as I do. The community I strongly resonate with is the volunteers I work with to ensure that students—especially the impoverished ones—successfully achieve their goals in life.

Actions speak louder than words. I am involved with two pro-access-to-education initiatives. The first is called One Gadget One Child where I volunteered to be the creative marketing lead. It involved donating gadgets to select students according to financial need. During the initiative’s wrap-up, me and my fellow volunteers could not help but tear up when we received multiple handwritten letters from our dependents. We helped 70 families continue their studies during the pandemic.

Inspired by One Gadget One Child, the second initiative--now founded by yours truly--is a platform that curates ongoing scholarships for Filipinos in a website. It lists the major details such as the qualifications, requirements, and benefits. With the site, are three teams of volunteers I have put together. Currently, the site is live and is constantly being updated while I look for opportunities to spread the word. We get an average of 40 visitors per day.

I aspire to embody the saying of Mother Teresa, "When you cannot help many, help one.". Apart from initiatives, I have also raised funds totaling approximately $2,500 for a student raising his siblings after the recent loss of both of his parents. These were examples of how I contributed to the well-being of disadvantaged students with my community. Not for, nor to, but with. I hope to continue creating ripples of change.

## Your Vision

**How do you envision your chosen program of study at UBC helping you reach your long-term career and personal goals? What drives you to achieve your goals? (Maximum 200 words)**

My technology skills have exposed me to the world of computers and startups at a young age. It has taught me to love research and the creation of new technologies to solve the problems of today. One thing I have noticed with years of experience, however, is how most startups and hackathons only result in band-aid solutions. This led me to a realization: to progress, humanity must work closely together with Science and target the root of the problem at a foundational level. Thus, my desire to study Engineering Physics was born.

Studying at the University of British Columbia would make up for the lack of manpower, experience, and facilities in the Philippines. My experience during the World Robotics Olympiad 2019 taught me this: even without the right resources, my team managed to self-learn and apply a calculus concept—P.I.D. Control Systems—and land a spot in the worldwide competition; imagine the possibilities if we were given access to proper parts and education.

I wish to enter UBC so that I may contribute to the world, and show other equally-talented, but restricted students that this attainment is possible, by being a self-driven research scientist in emerging technologies.

**Optional: UBC’s collective vision strives to inspire the local and global community to advance sustainability and climate change goals, and shape a campus environment that supports human well-being and equity and inclusion. How does your vision and your chosen program of study relate to this? We are interested in hearing from students who share these interests as they relate to UBC’s vision. *This question is optional and there will be no impact to your application if left blank.* (Maximum 200 words)**

Even before I dreamed of being an Engineering Physics student, I have engineered a mobile app concept called Dump.Waste. This solution provides a crowdsourced data map of identified trash hotspots within a city to help in creating data-driven decisions against illegal dumping. The very same app also enables citizens to initiate and nurture a culture of clean-ups. This idea was born out of a simple 15-minute walk, out in the streets where piles of fly-tipped face masks, shampoo sachets, and bottled waters littered a local beach.

I wish to turn the climate dilemma around in the near future. Hopefully, with the knowledge I get to attain soon, I can get to work with like-minded scientists and lawmakers to finally implement a fool-proof anti-trash system.

## **Extracurricular activities and/or community involvement**

### C**ommunity involvement**

* Padayun.Ko - Scholarships for Filipinos

Service to Others (Initiative)

10/2021

**How many hours do/did you participate in this activity?**

3 hours/week

Founded and organized Padayun,Ko, a website containing curated scholarships in 2021 for Filipinos. The name comes from the Visayan expression "I will continue".

This initiative was born to break the culture of students needing to rummage through the internet search of up-to-date opportunities.

Currently, I spend three hours per week to plan, update and improve the quality of the site. I also seek partnerships with education platforms.

* One Gadget One Child

Volunteering for an Initiative

6/2020 - 3/2021

**How many hours do/did you participate in this activity?**

2 hours/week

One Gadget One Child was an initiative by a group of volunteers in Cebu aiding students to transition to online learning by acquiring pre-loved devices and giving them to those deemed deserving.

I was the marketing creative who was in charge of the branding, posts, and videos. The initiative was featured in multiple news outlets. We helped 70 families receive gadgets for online learning.

* World Robotics Olympiad

Sports (Lego League & Robot Soccer)

8/2016 - 11/2019

**How many hours do/did you participate in this activity?**

264 hours/year

Leader and pioneer of Marigondon National High School's (A secondary institution of 5,000 students) robotics team. Started with zero knowledge and at the bottom of the ranking list in 2016, successfully led the team and represented the Philippines during the World Robotics Olympiad 2019 in Hungary.

I was the team captain and programmer of the team. To make it to the nationals, me and my members self-learned the P.I.D. control system and omniwheels usage.

### **Significant awards or achievements**

* Designers Prize & Master Prize

First-time photo manipulation piece Simala Sanctuary de Cebu bagged the skill-based Designers Prize (6th place) & popularity-based Master Prize (3rd place) in the Overwatch SEA Map Design Contest by Blizzard.

During the event, I organized a group with my friends to help me promote. I was featured in the country's biggest news outlets and newspapers. As a result, I was told stories of how I inspired the youth to pursue the arts.

Blizzard Entertainment

06/2020

* Grand Champion for the Science Research Video

When my classmate and her mother could not physically tend to their diseases because of COVID-19, Stat: Your Virtual Clinic created.

Stat was my first app concept. It introduced and gave me a career in product design. Stat has won multiple awards like the National Science and Engineering Fair PH. It also gave me a job as a product designer at Symph, a tech company in Cebu.

National Science and Engineering Fair

11/2020

* Challenge Winner - Student Track

The Financial Literacy Innovation Challenge by PhilDev and Cebuana Lhuillier Foundation challenged innovators across the country to answer the question, “How might we increase the level of financial literacy in underserved communities in the Philippines?”

I led Team Centavion, composed of six students, to ideate, develop, and publish Plutus: The Money Game. An offline game based on Dumb Ways to Die but for financial literacy. This game will raise financial literacy and awareness with the help of four concepts: earning, spending, saving, and donating.

PhilDev and Cebuana Lhuillier Foundation

05/2021

## **Tell us which activity, award, or achievement was the most meaningful and why.**

(Maximum 100 words)

One Gadget One Child sent me emotional waves of relief and a peace of mind. Knowing how we managed to help 70 families breath easier inspired me to do more for the world. However, getting to the international stage after being the team always at the bottom of the list every year in the Robotic Olympiads is closer to my heart. It was growth in action. The efforts involved in multiple tries, retries, and iterations will always be a core memory. It showed me that humanity can achieve anything if they put their heart and mind inside of it.