**1. Explain, in detail, an experience you've had in the past 3 to 4 years related to your first-choice major. This can be an experience from an extracurricular activity, in a class you’ve taken, or through something else. (150 words)**

Starting in middle school, I knew I wanted to major in finance because I was keen on learning how companies are structured–mainly on how they make money and how they become profitable. In Grade 9, I asked my father to teach me about the stock market and it propelled me to follow the current financial news as those were moments when I felt more passionate about finance. In addition, I read a lot about biographies and memories of successful entrepreneurs and business leaders and how they started. When an opportunity for a finance accountant internship in a hotel came, I didn’t think twice before accepting it.. Within 2 years, there were countless tasks I was assigned but the main tasks include utilizing different tools/platforms for analyzing operational data, inputting the hotel’s market performance, helping with the KPI benchmarking report, participating in cafe projects to increase the hotel’s profitability, and assist in preparing monthly/quarterly/annually analysis reports and presentations. Throughout the internship, the scope of finance and accounting that I learned was way more than detailed compared to the 2 years of studying IB Business HL

**2. Describe your personal and/or career goals after graduating from UIUC and how your selected first-choice major will help you achieve them. (150 words)**

After graduating, I plan to continue advancing my education with a master’s degree and earn a certification in finance like CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst) and CIMA (Certified Investment Management Analyst) to further develop my analytical skills, and expertise in quantitative methods, financial reporting, and investment analysis. Furthermore, getting a master’s degree and certifications in finance can help strengthen my credentials for my specialized field of work and set me apart from other individuals aiming for the same job position. I believe that knowledge is limitless, and graduating from UUIC with my selected first-choice, finance major can help provide the right foundation for me to achieve my personal goal of getting certifications.

**3. You have selected a second-choice major. Please explain your interest in that major or your overall academic or career goals. (150 words)**

My second-choice major is strongly correlated to another Finance major that UIUC offers, and that is Consumer Economics and Finance. This major focuses on developing knowledge and skills to help and understand how consumers make choices in their daily lives. As an individual who likes to communicate and interact with new people, as shown by the Student Council Presidency, tutoring, fundraising organizer, etc, this major is a good basis for complimenting my soft skills. The major focuses on important aspects that can be beneficial for me in the long run, e.g. understanding credit and debit, savings and investments, insurance, retirement, estate planning, etc. Furthermore, being an IB Business and Economics HL student, I’ve touched upon a few of these topics which helps me understand the overall structure and importance of the major.

Dear Catherine:

I can see that you’re very passionate about finance! It’s great that you have a lazer-sharp focus and are building your credentials towards that goal.

Every experience you go through and every reasoning you have for your goals above are all valid. My suggestions as mentioned above would be to dig deeper towards your aspirations. Do you have a long-term dream? What about finance do you find intriguing? What about your goals would set you apart as an applicant?

All the best!

Thalia