**Prompt 1: Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

Under the blazing sun in Oman, I was greeted with blasts of scorching heat. Sweat leaked from my head and sizzled as it collided with the asphalt road. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a thin figure. I turn to see a malnourished dog limping down the road. Its hunger was apparent from its rib cage protruding out of its body. Its crusted tongue dangled from its withered mouth. “Should I give it food?” I thought. But before I could attempt to move, the stray dog became aware of my presence and bolted out of sight. The reality set in that I was unable to help. My heart sank. If only I could do something to help them…

Seeing Rimba, my golden retriever, at home made me feel heartbroken for the strays. Unlike them, he is protected from the threat of getting shot by the police and is provided with food. With so many strays roaming around, I yearned to help improve the standard of life of these less fortunate animals. I knew I needed to find a solution to create a positive change for them.

After brainstorming, I opted to build an automatic animal feeder because it would feed strays whilst eliminating human presence so they do not feel threatened. This was vital considering their poor treatment from residents. It was also the most practical option because it would lead them away from the city. I felt like I finally found a purpose because my engineering skills could be harnessed to help countless lives.

The first prototype I constructed was a feeder with a plywood base and a remote food dispensation feature. It took advantage of the abundant sunlight in Oman through the use of a solar panel. After a trial run with Rimba, I started to question whether the machine was operating at its full potential because it only dispensed a small amount of food distributed in a small area.

Not long after, I saw a post from BAWABALI, one of the biggest animal rescue shelters in Indonesia, about donating and volunteering to help stray animals. I witnessed how hard the volunteers worked to give them a better life. So, I thought it would be a good opportunity to show them my device as I was going back to Indonesia that summer. I got in contact with them and, with their guidance, I developed a plan to build a new prototype for their main shelter.

During my time in Indonesia, I designed the second prototype using computer-aided design. I followed up on their advice of incorporating a more rectangular shape for stability and increased the food capacity. I showed them my latest design and they were able to visualize the best place for the feeder. Upon their approval, I started building.

Days of struggling followed, the whirring of motors and the clanging of food pellets against the metal bowl echoing through the night. It could only mean one thing: the feeder was working. Bursting with joy, I observed the machine operate expeditiously. The upgrades had enhanced the feeder so the staff don’t have to refill it often. I was proud that I completed it, yet anxious to see how the stray animals would react.

The following morning, I donated the feeder to BAWABALI along with dog food. A sense of relief washed over me when I saw that the animals were not fighting over the food. Their wagging tails insinuated their gratitude. Although I was pleased with my journey, I began to contemplate about the future designs I could be working on and how it can be altered to help more stray animals.

I was delighted to be able to help these animals. I’ve reached a new milestone in my engineering skills development. I’m more motivated than ever to reach greater heights in my journey. Finally, I vow to use my engineering skills to help not only animals, but also the environment and humanity.

Hi Abian,

This is a good draft that you have come up with! I’m very impressed by how you invented an actual device that could help stray dogs.

To make your essay even better, there are a few things that you will need to pay attention to. Firstly, the prompt is asking you to share your background/interests/talents that could be a meaningful part of your application. However, you spent most of the essay sharing your interest but not how it is a meaningful part of your application. Maybe you could spend some time sharing how this interest ties into your major or study plans.

Secondly, at the beginning of your essay, you mentioned the issue in Oman and carried on with your solution, which was your invention. However, that solution was not applied in the place where the issue originated—making your story somewhat of a cliffhanger. I think you should somehow add a resolution to that part of your story to make your essay cohesive and the story flow better.

Best wishes,

Johana