**UT-AUSTIN ESSAY (REQUIRED)**

**Note: This is the only long essay UT-Austin requires. *We do not require any of the Common App Personal Essays.* Common App Personal Essays will not be used in our holistic review process.**

**Tell us your story. What unique opportunities or challenges have you experienced throughout your high school career that have shaped who you are today?**

**Please keep your essay between 500–700 words (typically two to three paragraphs)**

DRAFT 4

A text message read "Cat, I need to talk about the rubrics and concept of the competition." My smile vanished, and my heart started beating out of my chest.

Being the lead organizer for the school’s 3-day end-of-year event, with each day consisting of different competitions and activities for 1,000 students was challenging. The judge, who was my teacher, called to tell me that she disapproved of the existing rubrics and concepts. With two days remaining, I had to fix the last-minute changes by myself because, previously, I only delegated menial and trivial tasks to my team members. Now, I had to face the consequences of working alone, because there was not enough time to reach out to team members to render instructions. I didn’t sleep during those two days. I was lucky that the miscommunication didn’t impact the event, but this led me to feeling stressed and pressured – a memorable personal struggle for someone who likes working independently.

After the event, I reflected on everything that went wrong. Could it have been prevented if I had delegated more and shared every process with my teammates? This constantly ran through my mind. In all group projects, I was always chosen as the leader, but I prefer working independently because it’s quicker and more efficient. I consider delegating and explaining plans to my members as a setback. With that mindset, things just ended up backfiring. Since then, I remember promising myself that I will start doing things differently by changing how I lead and guide my members.

A few months later in my new school, I organized a Walkathon. It was a fundraising event for underprivileged children to receive access to proper education through the Hoshizora foundation. The goal was to raise $9,000 from students, teachers, and staff encouraging their families and friends to pledge a fixed amount of money for each kilometer they walk.

This time, I knew I wanted to lead in an inclusive leadership style, different from the events I organized before. I began with distributing tasks based on the willingness and skill set of each member, ensuring they knew their tasks thoroughly. Apart from this, I started trusting my members with the hopes that collaboration would reduce each person’s workload and encourage members’ participation.

During the daily meetings, I made it a habit to ask my members for ideas and opinions to encourage team engagement and participation and to seek their unique ideas that I would have never come up with if I was working alone. As a result, I received a suggestion to incorporate interviews with Hoshizora’s children into the promotional video. It was an interesting idea that could significantly encourage participation because it shows the audience, the children who would be benefitting from the fundraiser.

At the end of the event, we had more than 100 participants joining and raised a total of $9,200 which helped transform the lives of 80+ underprivileged children. Although it had been an intensive and energy-draining event, none of my members regretted being a part of this fundraiser. They realized that their hard work helped enact a small positive impact within our community.

From this experience, I learned how to become a leader who respects, listens, delegates, and communicates with their members well. A poorly organized and mismanaged factory would result in poor work output. Like a factory, my exclusive leadership style discourages my members from contributing to the team, which impacts our work output. The bigger picture of leadership is about positively influencing the people around me to reach greater heights. Now, I aspire to become a leader who can help provide guidance, resolve conflicts and establish a clear vision for the team; all components needed to achieve excellent work output.

1 hour