**Our families and communities often define us and our individual worlds. Community might refer to your cultural group, extended family, religious group, neighborhood or school, sports team or club, co-workers, etc. Describe the world you come from and how you, as a product of it, might add to the diversity of the University of Washington.\* ( max 300)**

Growing up, I’ve always loved solving math riddles and equations. I appreciated the fact that arithmetics had non-abstract, defined solutions. So when my friend invited me to a competitive programming club called Kokocoder, I was instantly interested. I believe it would allow me to pursue my passion for problem-solving through a computer science perspective. Though initially overwhelmed, with the help of the head coach, Mr. Arnold, and other welcoming members, the alien environment slowly turned to a place of comfort. Anxiety turned into excitement of wondering what new challenges I'd face, and strangers turned into friends that made my experience fun and memorable.

Throughout my journey in Kokocoder, I’ve encountered many people and been taught many lessons. One of the biggest lessons I learned came from Mr. Vale, a senior member of the club. Whenever I felt puzzled by one of the coding problems. He’d always tell me “Start with the most ridiculous solution and see if it works, you can always simplify it later.” He’d write programs intentionally exceeding the memory limit so that I can understand them first and then optimize them to shorter, more complex algorithms, while guiding me through each step. As a result, the concepts were clearer to me. I was also able to apply this philosophy in other activities like cooking, managing events, and even video games.

The community at Kokocoder represents a special place where I first loved programming. It taught me that there was no wrong way of pursuing knowledge, even if it meant using the most random and unconventional methods. At UW, I’m eager to help my peers enjoy programming as I did through hosting hackathons and programming competitions. Moreover, I also want to use my programming experience and contribute to UW’s CompProg and win competitive programming titles.