**Prompt 1: Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time. – 337 words**

Being a leader is in itself a challenge, let alone during a global pandemic. As the president of GenDigital Academy, a student-led NGO, my organization had to organize its biggest record-breaking event. However, there was nothing but silence during our online meetings as no one wanted to talk unless called. As a result, the meetings were ineffective, producing minimal outcomes.

Instead of calling them out during Zoom sessions, I tried breaking the ice by talking about viral topics and casually joking around. Over time, without prodding, the members would unmute their mics and shoot ideas, and sometimes they would tease me back jokingly. Finally, they were comfortable sharing their ideas with others, so to double check, I distributed a check-in form to evaluate whether they truly felt valued or heard. All the responses revealed they were indeed content. To quote one comment, “I can express my opinions freely.”

Through the same questionnaire, I found one aspect that could be improved: how GenDigital could support their individual growth. I decided to appoint members in leadership roles to motivate them. By having a specific role, they could cultivate their management and communication skills. I assigned PICs for various sectors, such as preparing the presentations or working on the marketing collaterals. I also let them plan and organize, giving all PICs the freedom to delegate tasks to others.

The results were reflected in the execution of our main event, which ran smoothly, and we even broke a record! The pinnacle of our success was being nationally recognized by the official agency, MURI. Our NGO was awarded for holding the biggest social media digital literacy training ever.

From this momentous experience, I learned that a leader needs to create a comfortable and liberal working environment to encourage members to perform productively. I realized that participative leadership works best for me. Taking a step back and allowing members to be more involved in decision-making and discussions would make each of them feel valued, knowing that they’re making valuable contributions to the team.

**Prompt 3: What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time? 304 words**

“He’s a prodigy,” my piano teacher would say fondly as he generously praised my ability to play expressively and musically.

However, as my piano progressed, I found it harder to express myself. I was too focused on mastering the new and complex techniques. Aware of my difficulties, my teacher told me that to bring the songs to life, I should come up with an anecdote befitting each piano piece.

I decided to put his method into practice for Chopin’s Nocturne, Op. 27. I wanted to tell a story of how life had happy moments but also agonizing events that could drag someone into a feeling of desperation. Calmly playing the introductory melodies, I gently touched the keys while picturing the smiles of the people I loved.

During the climax, I tightly shut my eyes as I recounted the regrets I had from the past, vividly picturing the fights I’d had with my parents, all the yelling and slamming. I showed how agonizing it was for me by striking the keys hard, trying to make every note of the melody articulate and bold. I wanted these mournful melodies to penetrate the listeners’ hearts, triggering them to recount their own anguish. When the strong melodies started to die down, I would no longer bang nor gracefully touch the keys, but I pushed each key gently to let the piece flow. Trying to slowly erase the regretful memories of the fights I’d imagined in my head, the *diminuendo* signified the end of my tumult.

Since then, I’ve refused to perform for the sake of playing a piece as precisely as it’s written or originally played. I wanted to make each song personal by telling an original story. Now, I excitedly walk my own path as a recording and stage performance pianist, sharing stories through this magical instrument.

**Prompt 8: Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California? 344 words**

“If you can speak, you can influence. If you can influence, you can change lives.”  This quote by Rob Brown deeply resonates with me. To influence and mobilize people, one needs strong interpersonal and communication skills. I strongly believe that speaking isn’t just about having charisma or confidence: it needs a clear purpose. In order to achieve this desired effect, I’ve learned to empathize with the audience and understand their needs.

I honed my communication skills through my experience as the president of the student council. During discussions, I would boost the morale of my workmates by complimenting them. To give them a sense of purpose, I would remind them that they’re part of the most prestigious student group at school. All of us were agents of change. I seldom felt burdened despite having multitudes of responsibilities because our mission was to bring a positive impact to the target audience we served. I instilled this positive mindset in the rest of the team since all of us joined the council voluntarily. Without any form of compensation, our motivation needed to come from aligning our hearts to the vision of the organization. These little reminders motivated them to improve their performance as I always engaged in heartfelt discussions.

Aside from public influence, I’ve also utilized my communication skills to deal with people through a more personal approach. For members who slacked off, I would initiate a short one-on-one with them as they’d be more open and honest about the circumstances that had hindered their performance. I would start with simple conversations about their daily lives, such as “how has school been treating you?” By relating to them, I could find the root causes behind their underperformance. Then, we would find common ground: I could help them with their difficulties, and they could assure me they’d improve.

A powerful speech moves people and their minds toward new destinations. I believe that at UC, I can continue being the communicator I am now: someone who can empathize with others and positively influence them to take greater actions.

Hi Jove,

I’ve revised all of the intros to make each of your essay more memorable, as well as rephrasing some of your content to avoid repetition and ensure fluidity.

Wishing you the best on your application!

Melinda