### DRAFT 2:

### **Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.**

No.

There is so much power in a two-letter word. It’s the cause of despair. A lover’s greatest fear when confessing. And, for me, a daughter’s greatest fear when she wants to go out.

As a first-born daughter in a strict family with high expectations, a simple hangout with friends on a weekend is a luxury.

“No is no. Stop asking why.” It seemed impossible to persuade my mom. If I appealed to her differently, I thought, maybe she would let me. I put on my thinking cap as I thought of ways to change her mind.

Eventually, I learned I needed three simple steps: observe, set the mood, and then persuade.

I would tell funny stories about my friends at school or be attentive to her needs. The first time she said yes to my request, I was thrilled. Eventually, the habit of finding new, innovative ways to persuade my mom trained my creativity, especially in influencing and bargaining.

This skill expanded to other aspects of my life. On UN Day, some friends and I were selling Ghanaian food for fundraising. Many people were curious about the food, but not interested enough to buy.

I noticed people carrying only heaps of food, so I decided to approach them from a different perspective.

“Ms, I see a lot of food but no drinks. Are you sure you don’t want to try our special drink, Bissap Sobolo, for only IDR10,000?”

Realizing I was right, they stopped to buy our drinks. More people started coming to our stand to try our “unique, refreshing, and special drink” the way I marketed it. Seeing my hands working constantly to serve people drinks, I persuaded them to buy our snacks as well.

Our stand sold out not long after that. We ended up gathering IDR 3 million and donating all of it to rebuilding two kindergartens in Garut. I learned that I enjoyed finding different ways to approach and connect with people—

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### **Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?**

Who knew just being 15 cm shorter than the average height would make me feel like I was living in a different dimension?

Looking straight at people’s shoulders instead of their heads, fearing getting stepped on during concerts, and worst of all—–being looked down on, both literally and figuratively.

It all started in seventh grade, when it felt like all my friends turned into skyscrapers overnight.

“Bek, why are you so short now?” At first, it was just a joke that I found funny. However, the taller my friends grew, the more they looked down on me. Height-related insults were thrown at me whenever I tried doing something or when I gave my opinion in a discussion with my friends. Even when I was right, they would disregard my statements and continue talking. However, when someone else expressed the same opinion that I had, they were much more understanding and were willing to change their minds. Things like this made me feel small and insignificant.

Eventually, being shut out and made fun of every time I did anything made me sick. I wanted to show them that I can do big things, too. I started to reflect on my own strengths and weaknesses to see how I can emphasize the things I’m good at: music. With my violin skills, I decided to join the strings orchestra at my school, wanting to be more visible in the school’s musical landscape. Being selected to perform in various recitals and concerts boosted my self-confidence.

With time, the confidence that emerged from my musical endeavors also pushed me to excel academically especially in STEM subjects. I jumped with joy as soon as I got the best student award in robotics class. Receiving a predicted IB 40 and winning various competitions helped me realize that I can do whatever I put my mind to. Although I haven’t fully embraced the disadvantages of my physical features, I’m grateful for where it has brought me today. I now know that despite being 150 cm, I can still reach for the moon.

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### **Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.**

Who knew that randomly playing with a calculator would greatly impact my life?

It all started with a problem in my primary school math club’s entrance test. What looked like an easy addition problem turned out to be a difficult feat: I had to add all numbers from 1-100. Luckily, I remembered the number that popped up after doing just that on my calculator one day when I was bored: 5050! Being accepted to this highly selective math club marked the beginning of my math journey.

Through this club, I realized that being good at math was more than just calculating accurately. Logical reasoning and efficiency are also crucial. I decided to take extra math lessons to train my deductive reasoning skill. The more challenging the problem, the more passionate I became.

I started training and joining math competitions to challenge myself further. After multiple participation awards, I finally won a bronze medal in the 2015 American Mathematics Olympiad. Solving logical problems was now a hobby. Day and night, I would solve questions from the Math Olympiad Problems book that I bought from a local bookstore. At school, I explored different formulas beyond what was taught in my classroom. Over time, I discovered that math could be applied in other fields too. Amongst these interdisciplinary fields, computer science instantly captivated me.

The baffling algorithms found in this field quenched my thirst for logical challenges. In addition to simplifying the algorithms taught by my teacher, I started exploring coding in my free time. My interest culminated in the successful development of my first ever website that allowed users to calculate their BMI and recommend their diet. I got to experience first-hand how developers felt—from planning, designing, coding, up to debugging. Although it gets stressful, the satisfaction I felt when my code works is what kept me going.

Applying mathematical concepts such as discrete math and linear algebra in my coding algorithm helped me discover another facet of math that I love. I can’t wait to explore even more applications of mathematics at the University of California.

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### **What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?**

3.49 out of 5: Indonesia’s 2021 digital literacy rate according to Indonesia’s Ministry of Communication and Information Technology.

It wasn’t until my grandma lost IDR10 million from clicking a link on a text scam that I realized how much that rate can be improved.

The need for digital literacy really became apparent when the pandemic hit. Underage children were behaving unethically on social media platforms, students didn’t know how to utilize basic cloud services for online school, and people became more vulnerable to hoaxes. Witnessing this alarming phenomenon around me inspired me to take action. When I came across the recruitment post of Gendigital Academy’s (GenD), an organization that teaches digital skills to underprivileged children, I knew this was one way I could help.

At GenD, I curated technology-related topics for underprivileged kids that I mentored: Shella, Ilma, and Syirla. In class, they had to complete tasks based on the material that day: code a line, make posters in Canva, create their first Google Sheets spreadsheet. At first, I had to constantly check up on them to see their progress. I positioned myself as a friend and told them it’s okay to not understand everything the first time. As time passed by, they started proactively texting me questions and asking for help in understanding the topic.

As my relationship with the kids deepened, I became more passionate to help them, even doing things I wouldn’t do, like making teaching videos. Watching them grow from knowing nothing about Python to completing their first calculator app gve me joy. The kids not only experienced growth in their skills and knowledge, but also in their love for learning.

The GenD team received a MURI (Indonesian Museum World Record) award for implementing the largest digital literacy training for over 4000 kids all over Indonesia through Zoom. Even so, I felt like the weekly Saturday tutoring created more impact for the kids. I was able to pay attention to each of their strengths and weaknesses. I was also able to watch them grow as an individual, and no award can ever replace that.

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