***Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

Throughout junior high, I was always consistent in two things: being both the shortest and smallest in my basketball team. My skinny, 5’2” stature meant that I lacked power and my opponents could easily swat away my shots. As a result, I ended up getting benched for most of the games. But my passion for basketball never faltered. This led me to question myself: Why do I like playing basketball? Is it because of the thrill? The sweat? Or is it because I relished the triumphance of a victory?

As the pandemic struck, I felt a budding desire to look for the answer. Every afternoon, I would listen to the loud, mocking thumps of dribbling from outside my house as I stayed confined in lockdown. As days passed, I grew more and more uneasy, yearning for the times when basketball was part of my daily life.

I chose a quiet time to sneak out and play basketball alone. In a small basketball court near my house, I took a couple of shots and practiced some moves. It gave me a sense of relief, yet something still felt lacking. I realized then that my attachment towards basketball wasn’t just something physical, but something of a deeper philosophical sense.

At home, I proceeded to scour through old photos of my basketball team when I came across one that stood out: a pregame photo of my team before the championship finals. There, kneeling next to me was Bobbie, my closest teammate, a talented shooter who was quick on his feet and one of the team's core playmakers. Standing behind me was Rayner, the Dennis Rodman of our team. Though not the tallest or the biggest, his dedication to putting his own body on the line makes him an exceptional defender. Next to him was Dillon, the heart and soul of our group. A great leader who trusts his teammates and who motivates us with his positive optimistic spirit.

Looking at the pictures made me realize that it wasn't the game that I fell in love with.  Neither was it the thrill, the sweat, nor the victories. What mattered most were the connections I established with the incredible individuals in my team, getting to know them alongside their strengths and weaknesses, and making up for one another's shortcomings while developing together as a team. I loved basketball because it allowed me to connect with people.

Upon discovering the answers to my questions, I proceeded to search for alternative activities to fill in the void left by being unable to play basketball as a team. I gravitated towards school organizations like the student council and school event committees, starting as a member but gradually earning the respect of the group as I invested my time and efforts. In the following years, I was entrusted with leadership positions which allowed me to connect with more people. Afterwards, I started approaching organizations out of school and participated in social activities to satiate my prevailing appetite for a community.

Upon re-immersing myself in community, I was finally able to feel complete again. Being part of different organizations allowed me to meet and connect with more people than basketball. I was able to learn about different cultures and their perspectives, observe their ways of living, and concurrently, adopt the ones I find most beneficial and righteous. Ultimately, this shaped me into a more insightful and open-minded person and allowed me to build a positive network of friends throughout Indonesia.

I came to understand how this had improved me as a person and helped me find purpose to connect with diverse people from around the world. Thus, I aspire to study abroad at an institution with a diverse student body where I can learn more new things from the people I encounter, while developing myself as an individual.

Hi Samuel,

Very interesting story about discovering your longing for community! I think you have the lesson of the story here, and your exploration shows your eagerness to discover new things. Below is my recommend structure for the essay:

1. Benched a lot during time in basketball team, still enjoyed it. Why?
2. Pandemic/quarantine, felt isolated and longing for basketball
3. Played basketball alone but still felt something missing
4. Looking through photo books, realized what was missing was community
5. Pandemic eased up, started joining clubs/organizations
6. Found social belonging and comfort
7. Found purpose to connect with people. Another important lesson you can include is that there is connection with everyone, you just have to find it

C.G.