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

For Values Week at my school—themed ‘finding your passion!’—my teacher offered me to interview Edgar Xavier Marvelo, a three-time wushu world champion and medallist of the Asian Games and Southeast Asian Games. Eager for a new experience, I accepted the offer.

As this was my first official interview, I went through numerous articles online to learn how to conduct an interview, from tone, hand gestures, to facial expressions. Practicing my lines in front of the mirror, it felt like I’d looked at my face more than I’d ever done my whole life.

Finally, interview day came, and reality hit. As an introvert, I struggled to manage awkward-free conversations with others, especially with someone I’d never met. I was a nervous wreck—terrified that I’d mumble, ramble or mess up the interview. Despite my uncertainties, however, I knew that this interview was a chance for me to push myself outside of my comfort zone.

I took a deep breath.

Ding. Edgar has entered the meeting.

*Calm down,* I told myself. *Be confident. There’s no backing out now.*

To ease the tension, I initiated small talk before starting the interview. I was surprised by how seamless the conversation felt. I had practiced so much that I knew my questions like the back of my hand, and I felt confident enough to go off script and improvised some questions based on his answers.

Afterwards, although my heart was thumping a hundred miles per second, I genuinely felt proud of myself. I realized that I could indeed accomplish goals I had previously thought impossible with a dose of self-confidence and a willingness to try.

Hence, when invited to speak at an event for A.M.M. Matriculation Higher Secondary School, one of Chennai, India's top schools regarding academic activities and study tips, I didn’t even hesitate; I immediately accepted.

Just like the interview allowed me to shed my security blanket and become more confident, I won't be afraid to use these skills while facing bigger challenges, like engaging with UC's diverse communities or seizing the chance to further hone my public speaking abilities.