**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?**

When my teacher offered me to interview Edgar Xavier Marvelo, a three-time wushu world champion and the medallist of the Asian Games and Southeast Asian Games, I was over the moon.

As this was my first official interview, I went through numerous articles online to learn proper techniques to conduct an interview from my tone, hand gestures, and even facial expressions. Practising my lines in front of the mirror, it seemed that I looked at my face more than I’d ever done my whole life.

Finally, the interview day came, and reality hit. As an introvert, I struggled to manage awkward-free conversations with others, especially someone that I’d never met.

I thought of every possible worst-case scenario. I was a nervous wreck – terrified that I’d keep on mumbling, rambling, or messing up this interview and embarrassing myself.

Despite my growing uncertainties, I knew that this interview was a chance for me to push myself outside of my comfort zone.

*Ding.* Edgar had entered the meeting.

I told myself, "Okay, just calm down. Act normal and be confident. There’s no backing out now." To ease the tension, I initiated small talks before starting the official interview. I was actually surprised by the seamlessness of the conversation. It was to the point that I felt confident enough to go out of script and improvised some questions based on his answer. For example, when he said “wushu is more than just a sport: it's a way of life”, I followed up by asking if there were any quotes that inspired his mind set. The interview was a success as everything went smoothly. I even received a ‘well-done’ message from a couple of my teachers afterwards.

This experience opened my eyes and made me realise that we won’t ever know our real capabilities unless we put them into action. The interview has allowed me to shed my security blanket and be more confident. Now, I won't be hesitant to accept bigger and riskier challenges in life.

Hi Vic,

What I really enjoy from this essay is your interesting anecdote. Not everyone got to step outside of their comfort zone through a once in a lifetime experience like you, and you’ve utilized your story well in this essay.

To elevate your essay, you can delve into the feeling of enlightenment that you got when the conversation went smoothly. For instance, your worst case scenario of stuttering did not happen at all due to your practice/preparation. By doing so, you can highlight more positive qualities (diligent, confident, and so on) to show that you’re a strong candidate for UCB.

To make your ending more impactful, maybe include the quote that Edgar mentioned? Then relate it to how your newfound confidence makes you eager to utilize your skills to network with more people at UCB/help other shy international students be more at ease with the new environment at UCB.

Best wishes,

Melinda