**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 medalist 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. Practicing 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 with someone 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.

However, at the moment, I don’t quite see how this answers the prompt, perhaps because it’s still lacking some context and elaboration.

First, I would tell the reader why you had been selected for the interview. This is an opportunity to show off a little bit.

Second, since the trait that you want to highlight here is your courage to step outside your comfort zone, you want to tell us why exactly doing an interview was outside your comfort zone. When you realised you were doing well in the interview, how did that feel? And how did this experience guide your decisions afterwards? Have you said yes to some other new, scary experiences?

In the last paragraph, you want to really highlight why this trait makes you a strong candidate for admission to the UC. You might want to look up what the UCs look for in students and match it to that.

Best wishes,

Melinda & Chiara