**Our families and communities often define us and our individual worlds. Community might refer to your cultural group, extended family, religious group, neighborhood or school, sports team or club, co-workers, etc. Describe the world you come from and how you, as a product of it, might add to the diversity of the University of Washington.\* ( max 300)**

Growing up, I’ve always loved solving math riddles and equations. I appreciated the fact that arithmetics had non-abstract, defined solutions. So when my friend invited me to a competitive programming club called Kokocoder, I was instantly interested. I believe it would allow me to pursue my passion for problem-solving from a computer science perspective. As I spent hours in the club learning, laughing, and enduring difficulties, the alien environment slowly turned into a place of comfort. And with the help of the coaches and other welcoming members, that comfort led to connections and friends that made my experience fun and memorable.

One of the biggest lessons I learned at Kokocoder came from a senior member of the club. Whenever I felt puzzled by one of the coding problems, he’d always tell me, “Start with the most ridiculous solution and see if it works, you can always simplify it later.” He’d write programs intentionally exceeding the memory limit and then optimize them to shorter, more complex algorithms while guiding me through each step. This allowed me to understand the logic behind the solution first and then translate it to more effective methods achieving the same result. I was even able to apply this philosophy in my studying methods for other subjects and even video game strategies.

The community at Kokocoder represented a special place, where I first loved programming. It taught me that there was no wrong way of pursuing knowledge, even if it meant using the most random and unconventional methods. At UW, I’m eager to use my programming experience to contribute to Udub’s CompProg and win competitive programming titles. Moreover, I want to host community events, hackathons, and mentor programs for others including underprivileged children to help them experience the fun of programming, just as Kokocoder did for me.