**Prompt 1: Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.**

I’m the president of GenDigital Academy, a student-led NGO. We were preparing for our biggest record-breaking event. However, I realized that all I hear are crickets during the meetings. No one wants to talk unless called and this is worsened as the meetings are held online. As a result, meetings became ineffective, producing minimal outcomes.

So instead of calling them out, I tried loosening up in conversations to break the ice by derailing to work-unrelated topics and casually joking around. Over time, without even calling them out, they would intuitively unmute their mics and shoot their ideas, and sometimes they would even respectfully tease me. Here I knew they’ve found comfort in sharing their ideas. Since this was all based on my assumptions, I distributed a check-in form to evaluate whether they feel valued or heard. All the responses show they’re already comfortable and quoting one of the additional comments, “I can express my opinions freely”.

Through the same questionnaire, I found one aspect that’s not yet satisfactory, how GenDigital drives individual growth. So I decided to trust members in leadership roles to further enhance motivation as it allows them to cultivate their leadership and communication skills, a form of individual growth. I assigned PICs for different sectors, such as those in charge of preparing the presentations or those working on the marketing collaterals. I also let them plan and organize, as far as giving them the freedom to delegate tasks to others.

The results were reflected through the execution of our record-breaking event as the event ran hassle-freely, and we broke a record, nationally recognized by the official agency, MURI, for the biggest simultaneous social media digital literacy training that has ever been done.

From this experience, I learned that a leader needs to create a comfortable and unjudging working environment so members can perform more productively. I realized that participative leadership works best for me as I try to take a step back and allow members to be more involved in decision-making and discussions making them feel valued as they know they’re making bigger contributions to the team.

**Prompt 3: What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?**

I was one of the "gifted pianists", my teacher would say. My teacher would compliment me on my ability to play expressively and musically.

However, as my piano progresses, I find it hard to express myself as I was too focused on mastering the new and complex techniques. My piano teacher was aware of my difficulties and he told me that the easiest way to play expressively and shape the piece into a story is to think of personal experiences in life that could fit well with the piece. I practiced this when playing Chopin Nocturne Op 27. I decided to make this piece a story of how life brings happy moments, but also agonizing events that corner one to a feeling of desperation. I started by calmly playing the introductory melodies by gently touching the keys while picturing the smiles of the people I love in my head.

In the climactic parts of the song, I tightly closed my eyes as I try to recount the regrets I have from the past, vividly picturing the fights I had with my parents, all the yelling and slamming. I showed how agonizing it was for me by striking the keys hard, trying to make every note of the melody articulate and bold. I wanted these mournful melodies to penetrate the listeners’ hearts, triggering them to recount the regrets they may have experienced in their lives. When the strong melodies started to die down I constructed a feeling of desperation. I would no longer bang the keys or gracefully touch the keys, but push down the keys gently and let the piece flow creating an atmosphere of desperation while trying to slowly erase the regretful memories of the fights I had imagined in my head, letting the piece die down.

Since then on I don’t perform for the sake of playing a piece as precisely as written or how it’s originally played but making a piece personal with an authentic story. I’ve grown to become a recording and stage performance pianist who continues to tell stories to others through this magical instrument.

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

I’ve acquired strong interpersonal and communication skills that can influence and mobilize people. I strongly believe that speaking isn’t only about having charisma, and confidence. It’s speaking with purpose. In order to achieve this, I empathize with the audience and understand their needs.

This was demonstrated through my experience as president of the student council. During discussions, I would fit in morale boosters to increase motivation and a sense of purpose for my workmates, such as giving compliments and reminding them that they’re part of the most prestigious student group at school and are agents of change. I seldom felt burdened even though loaded with multitudes of responsibilities, because I believe that everything we do helps bring a positive impact to the target audience we serve. I instill this personal motivation mindset of mine in the rest of the team: since everyone is doing voluntary work and there isn’t any form of compensation, the motivation needs to come from aligning our hearts to the strong vision of the organization. These little motivational reminders motivate them to increase their performance as I speak from heart to heart.

Aside from influencing people in groups, I also utilized my communication skills to deal with different people in distinct ways through a more personal approach. I’ve dealt with members who slack off. I would open short one-on-one with them as they’ll be more open and honest about personal matters that may be harming their performance. I would first ask them simple questions to know what’s been going on in their life like “how has school been treating you?”. This process is empathizing with the audience, as I try to find out the root causes behind their underperformance. Then, we would find a common ground where I would ask them how I could help them get around their difficulties and how they could assure me they’ll improve.

A powerful speech moves people and their minds toward new destinations. I believe that at UC, I can continue being the communicator I am now, who can empathize with others and positively influence them to take greater action.