##### Current Drafts

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 co-founded my school’s Investment Club the semester we returned from the pandemic. I wanted to share my fascination for business and promote financial literacy, especially after observing the financial market volatility during the pandemic. I also felt determined to do meaningful work and leave a lasting legacy.

I got a head start in the weeks before school. My co-founder and I assembled a team, established lines of communication, and divided up responsibilities. I created a list of potential club sponsors, a mission statement and a logo, and planned topics for the first few meetings. All this work paid off when the school year started and the formation of the club went smoothly. The club netted a full classroom of tentative ears at our debut meeting.

After a couple weeks of things running smoothly, clubs were allowed to start promoting using fliers. One flier promoting a club with a suspiciously similar name was brought to my attention by my concerned club co-founder. A few other officers were also uneasy about this club, and so I decided that we should pay them a visit. We discovered that whereas my club was dealing with broader strokes, entry level topics for a wider audience, this club would delve more deeply into the analysis of the performance of a single stock. We reached an agreement with their officers to stay in our respective areas of focus.

Our minds were set at ease knowing that the clubs had no interference. Instead, they synergized well to give broader financial education to students. Even if only slightly, my classmates now had more real-world knowledge they could utilize in day-to-day life.

The rest of the year went on without a hitch. I am glad that I was able to spread my passion for business and finance to a room full of eager ears. I am proud that this success is a direct result of the work I put in throughout the entire journey. I am sad to have to one day leave behind this project, but confident that I can apply what I’ve learned to my future endeavors.

(345)

1. **Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.**

When my struggles in my AP Language and Composition class were threatening my spotless transcript with a B, I thought it was the end of the world.

I was extremely stressed. My parents gave me a stoic “try harder”, so I asked my friends how they were handling the class. To my surprise, not all of them got As. Even more surprising, the ones that got Bs weren’t stressed over their grades. However, I still couldn’t shake the burden of an A.

To me, the whole point of going to school was getting good grades. I realized that this mindset was unhealthy, so I reflected on my environment to make sense of it. I attended a competitive merit-based school, I was surrounded by peers who were seemingly infallible geniuses, and my parents reinforced from elementary school that Bs were equivalent to Fs. By high school, I internalized that getting anything less than an A was failing.

After understanding the root, I wanted to rewrite how I saw my education. I connected with what I truly wanted to gain from the class: to appreciate literature and to improve my own writing. I did something I hadn’t done in years—read recreationally. I started with *Life of Pi,* and the vivid imagery leapt from the page, creating a world filled with deep blue oceans and a mystical living island. When I had to read *The Canterbury Tales* for class, I dived into the author’s world and recognized how it changed my view on perspectives, tone, and methods of storytelling.

I started feeling excited to write. Inspired by Jack London’s *To Build a Fire*, I wrote a few stories that I shared with my friends. My English teacher had taught me techniques that gave me confidence in my writing. I noticed that I gained skills from my English class that I could apply to my own life, and that was far more valuable than taking the class for an A or for validation. The semester blew by, and reveling in all that I had learned, I hardly noticed the grade I ended up with.

1. **Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.**

Although both of my parents are accountants, I didn’t develop an interest in the profession until 8th grade math. Studying taxes to learn about percentages, and pyramid schemes to explore exponents, I found practical usage of a subject I loved in a new field that fascinated me.

My parents were delighted to hear about my interest, answered my lingering questions, and encouraged me to follow in their footsteps.

Since then my passion for accounting has only grown, and this past summer I was invited to work on the finance team of the church I’ve volunteered at for 4 years. I was mentored by a CPA and a college intern, learning basics such as expense reimbursements, managing invoices, bank reconciliation, and payroll.

I simultaneously enrolled in Financial Accounting I at a community college to further explore the field. The internship and class complemented each other well. I learned terms like credit, debit, account, and general ledger, and how to practice proper procedure and internal control, enabling me to get more hands-on with the church’s accounting systems.

A few days after doing the June bank reconciliation for church, I had a test on reconciliation in class. When reversing or posting journal entries, understanding the financial statements, or even just managing the petty cash, I could rely on the knowledge I gained in class, with the textbook as a fallback.

Last summer was one of the most educational times of my life. I enjoyed doing the work, and my mentors gave me great insight into career options. To further explore my newfound interest, I signed up for Financial Accounting II.

Furthermore, the church offered an extension of the internship after the summer, allowing me to continue the work year-round. Working hard and being a relied-upon team member made the work feel more than a job to me. Finding joy at work and gaining invaluable experience that fueled my curiosity confirmed my conviction to study accounting in college.

(346)

1. **What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?**

At first, I felt hesitant as I led ice breakers on the first day of summer day camp. I was worried I’d miss the chance to bond with the campers as I had to step back and smoothly facilitate our games and activities. But I soon noticed the merits of my role: I was able to watch over all our groups’ interactions.

Before long, I noticed a five year old named Ethan seemed to be getting left out of the cliques that were developing. During ice breakers, he was louder, pushier, and more animated than others, which seemed to make him unpopular with other kids. I made an effort to befriend him.

I understood what it was like to be left out just because you were misunderstood. I had trouble making friends at around Ethan’s age and most friends I did make, I could not keep. I did not know how to approach people and so I eventually became complacent with my isolation. It took me a while to open up and form closer connections, and once I did I felt sorry for all those years I spent alone.

Spending more time with Ethan, I saw a heartfelt, soft spoken side to him that the other campers were unable to see. Ethan was very kind, but could get carried away and forget other people’s boundaries. For example, he could be loud and barge into the other kids’ conversations. So I spoke to him calmly and clearly, and responded positively when he matched my tone. Ethan noticed that others were more responsive when he was milder, and they became more comfortable with him.

They grew to bond with Ethan as I did, and were friends with him for who he was. On the last day of camp, I could not hold back my tears when seeing the kids so happy together for maybe the last time in a while. After hugging Ethan one last time, I took solace in the fact that, even if for a short while, I gave my best effort to make someone feel more included.

(347)

#### Fourth Drafts

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 co-founded my school’s Investment Club the semester we returned from the pandemic because I wanted to share my interest in business and fill the gaps of basic financial literacy that school glossed over. Five different business and finance clubs sprung up that semester, which made me determined to stand out, to try my hardest and leave a lasting legacy.

I decided to get a head start in the weeks before the start of the school year. My co-founder and I assembled a team, established a line of communication, and assigned responsibilities. Before too long, I had a list of potential club sponsors, a mission statement and logo ready to go, and even the first few meetings planned out. All this work paid off when the school year started and the formation of the club went smoothly. The club netted a full classroom of tentative ears for the debut meeting, and showed no signs of slowing down.

After a couple weeks of things running smoothly, clubs could start promoting using fliers. One flier promoting a club with a suspiciously similar name was brought to my attention by my concerned club co-founder. A few other officers were also uneasy about this club, and so I decided that we should pay them a visit. Attending the meeting was a relief to be sure. Whereas my club was dealing with broader strokes, entry level topics for a wider audience, this club would delve more deeply into the analysis of the performance of a single stock.

Our minds were set at ease knowing that the clubs had no interference. Instead, they synergized well to give broader financial education to students. Even if only slightly, my classmates now had more real-world knowledge they could utilize in day-to-day life.

The rest of the year went on without a hitch. I am glad that I was able to spread my passion for business and finance to a room full of eager ears. I am proud that this success is a direct result of the work I put in throughout the entire journey. I am sad to have to one day leave behind this project, but confident that I can apply what I’ve learned to my future endeavors.

(370)

4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

English has challenged me throughout school. I would perform poorly in English classes, which would demotivate me, causing me to do poorly, demotivating me more, with no apparent break in the cycle. I had barely kept my head afloat in middle school and first couple years of high school when I was faced with my greatest academic challenge yet: AP English Language and Composition.

The first hurdle to get over was the multiple choice questions. I struggled with reading and analyzing the passages quickly, and thought the best practice was just to read more. But I hadn’t read a book of my own volition in nearly four years, and didn’t know where to start. After watching *Life of Pi* I checked the novel out and rekindled my love of reading.

Every day I read more and for longer. Multiple choice passages became more digestible. I started the year going 10 minutes overtime on practice multiple choice, but finished the AP exam multiple choice with 15 minutes to spare.

The second, and much taller hurdle, was essay writing. I had to write three essays in a relatively short amount of time. Each was unique in its own aspect, but I discovered to do well, I needed reading comprehension and time management skills, and essay writing practice with clear feedback. Reading comprehension and time management overlapped with multiple choice practice, so my focus turned toward essay writing. I was not fit to judge my own writing, and so I got a writing tutor to give feedback on my practice essays. We went over famous speeches, we went over rhetorical strategies, we went over analyzing devices, we went over effective structure; we left no stone unturned. Over time, I picked up on more subtle details, refined my analytical skills, and discovered my unique voice in writing. That is why when I received a 5 on the AP exam and an A in the class, the moment felt earned; I had finished the race.

Thankfully, I no longer consider reading just a dry pastime others gab about over tea time. Instead, I’ve embraced the exciting and dynamic worlds to which it gives me access. Reading lets me feel the amazement of a floating acidic island or the heart-crushing desolation of Shawshank better than the silver screen ever could.6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

(384)

English has challenged me throughout school. I would perform poorly in English classes, which would demotivate me, causing me to do poorly, demotivating me more, with no apparent break in the cycle. I had barely kept my head afloat in middle school and first couple years of high school when I was faced with my greatest academic challenge yet: AP English Language and Composition.

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Thankfully, I no longer consider reading just a dry pastime others gab about over tea time. Instead, I’ve embraced the exciting and dynamic worlds to which it gives me access. Reading lets me feel the amazement of a floating acidic island or the heart-crushing desolation of Shawshank better than the silver screen ever could.

(384)

Possible rewrite

**4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.**

When my struggles in my AP Language and Composition class were threatening my spotless transcript with a B, I thought it was the end of the world. To me, the whole point of going to school was to get good grades, so I thought getting a B would be equivalent to wasting my entire school experience. This was reinforced by my parents’ expectations, the competitive nature of the merit-based school I went to, and my seemingly infallible genius, wunderkind friends, which all contributed to me thinking anything less than an A was a failure.

The only thing that spared me from this supposed catastrophe was my teacher deciding to move a grade-breaking assignment to the next semester. Knowing I could not rely on such a miracle to repeat itself again, I thought hard about what I could do better. My parents told me the typical “buckle down and give it your all”, so I asked my friends how they got through the class. To my surprise, they didn’t. Some of them got Bs, and more surprising than that was hearing them not be stressed over it. They tried their best, and reassured each other that it wasn’t a big deal. Instead, they were glad they had the opportunity to pursue subjects they had genuine interest in. I then remembered the whole reason I enrolled in the class in the first place: to understand what made writing good and improve my own writing, not for any grade or validation.

The first step I took in my new outlook on the purpose of education was to do something I haven’t done in years: read recreationally. Feeling reinvigorated to examine great works of literature, I read the novels that some of my favorite films were adapted from, starting with *Life of Pi*. I also sought more help from the teacher. I realized her act of pushing back the assignment wasn’t a random act of benevolence, but rather a deliberate de-stresser attempting to emphasize class material over grades. I contacted her more both inside and outside of school for help on in-class essays and writing advice.

As I grew to understand the material more, I found more purpose and joy in studying for the class. I practiced using College Board’s AP Daily videos and their previous years’ released FRQs. My school’s library had a never ending supply of great reading material. The semester blew by, and reveling in all that I had learned, I hardly noticed I earned an A in the class.

(419)

1. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

Although both of my parents are accountants, I didn’t develop an interest in the profession until 8th grade math. Studying taxes to learn about percentages, and pyramid schemes to explore exponents, I found practical usage of a subject I loved in a new field that fascinated me.

My parents were delighted to hear about my interest, answered my lingering questions, and encouraged me to follow in their footsteps.

Since then my passion for accounting has only grown, and this past summer I was invited to work on the finance team of a summer camp I’ve volunteered at for 4 years. On the finance team I worked alongside a CPA and a college student learning basics such as expense reimbursements, managing invoices, bank reconciliation, and payroll.

I simultaneously enrolled in Financial Accounting 1A at a community college to further explore my interest. While initially worried that the internship and class would create time conflicts, they complemented each other well. I learned terms like credit, debit, account, and general ledger, and how to practice proper procedure and internal control, enabling me to get more hands-on with the camp accounting systems.

A few days after doing the June bank reconciliation for camp, I had a test on reconciliation in class. When reversing or posting journal entries, understanding the financial statements, or even just managing the petty cash, I could rely on the knowledge I gained in class, with the textbook as a fallback.

Last summer was one of the most educational experiences of my life. I enjoyed doing the work, and my mentors gave me great insight into career options in the field. I also enjoyed and did so well in Accounting 1A class that I’ve already enrolled in Accounting 1B.

Furthermore, the summer camp has offered an extension of the internship, making the experience into an afterschool program for me. I may not have been in the forefront of the kid’s lives, but working hard and being a relied-upon team member made the work feel more than a job to me. My experiences confirmed my conviction that I want to study accounting in college so that I can do what I love year round.

(362)7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

People are almost never what you expect of them. This was made clear to me when I worked as a counselor for my church’s summer day camp.

As I was leading the first day’s ice breaker activity. At first, I was hesitant because it meant that while the rest of counselors could bond with the kids, I had to step back and make sure the activity was running smoothly. But a while into the activity, I noticed its merits: I was able to watch over all the kids’ interactions.

On the first day a 5 year-old named Ethan seemed to be getting left out of the cliques that were developing. During ice breakers, he was louder, pushier, and more animated than others, which seemed to make him unpopular with other kids. I made an effort to befriend him.

I understood what it was like to be left out just because you were misunderstood. I had trouble making friends at around Ethan’s age and most friends I did make, I could not keep. I did not know how to approach people and so I eventually became complacent with my isolation. It took me a while to open up and form closer connections, and once I did I felt sorry for all those years I spent alone.

Spending more time with him, I saw a heartfelt, soft spoken side to him that the other campers were unable to see. Ethan was very kind, but could get carried away and forget other people’s boundaries. For example, he could be loud and barge into the other kids’ conversations. So I spoke to him calmly and clearly, and responded positively when he matched my tone. Ethan noticed that others were more responsive when he was milder, and they became more comfortable with him.

They grew to bond with Ethan as I did, and were friends with him for who he was. On the last day of camp, I could not hold back my tears when seeing the kids so happy together for maybe the last time in a while. After hugging Ethan one last time, I took solace in the fact that, even if for a short while, I gave my best effort to make someone feel more included.

(374)

### Third Drafts

Combo of UC 1 drafts:

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 co-founded my school’s Investment Club the semester we returned from the pandemic because of my interest in researching and discussing the topic with other students. Five different business and finance clubs sprung up that semester, which made me even more determined to create a worthwhile experience that others would want to join. . .

I decided to get a head start in the weeks before the start of the school year. My co-founder and I assembled a team, established a line of communication, and assigned responsibilities. Before too long, I had a list of potential club sponsors, strategies on how to promote, a mission statement and logo ready to go, and even the first few meetings planned out. All this work paid off when the school year started and the formation of the club went relatively smoothly. The club netted a full classroom of tentative ears for the debut meeting, and showed no signs of slowing down.

After a couple weeks of things running smoothly, clubs could start promoting using fliers. I noticed a flier was promoting a club with a name suspiciously close to Investment Club’s. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, I attended their debut meeting hoping the similarities began and ended with the name. Attending the meeting was a relief to be sure. Whereas my club was dealing with broader strokes, entry level topics for a wider audience, this club would delve more deeply into the analysis of the performance of a single stock. With my club meeting just one day before theirs, there was clear synergy and potential for collaboration.

The rest of the year went on without a hitch. I felt glad knowing that the club was able to thrive because of taking action sooner rather than later. Being a leader meant that I could not put off my responsibilities. It may seem tough at the time, but you are all the better for it in the long run.

324 rough cut

Edited to 350:

1. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

English has challenged me throughout school. I would perform poorly in English classes, which would demotivate me, causing me to do poorly, demotivating me more, with no apparent break in the cycle. I had barely kept my head afloat in middle school and first couple years of high school when I was faced with my greatest academic challenge yet: AP English Language and Composition.

The first hurdle to get over was the multiple choice questions. I struggled with reading and analyzing the passages quickly, and thought the best practice was just to read more. But I hadn’t read a book of my own volition in nearly four years, and didn’t know where to start. After watching *Life of Pi* I checked the novel out and rekindled my love of reading.

Every day I read more and for longer. Multiple choice passages became more digestible. I started the year going 10 minutes overtime on practice multiple choice, but finished the AP exam multiple choice with 15 minutes to spare.

The second, and much taller hurdle, was essay writing. Three essays needed to be conceived, planned, drafted and fully fledged in just 45 minutes each. Each was unique in its own aspect, but I discovered they all needed reading comprehension, time management, and practice with clear feedback. Reading comprehension and time management overlapped with multiple choice practice, so my focus turned toward practicing. I was not fit to judge my own writing, and so I got a writing tutor to give feedback on my practice essays. We went over famous speeches, we went over rhetorical strategies, we went over analyzing devices, we went over effective structure; we went over the final hurdle. And at the end of the finish line waiting for me was an A in the class and a 5 on the exam.

Thankfully, I no longer consider reading just a dry pastime others gab about over tea time. Instead, I’ve embraced the dynamic and exciting worlds to which it gives me access.

Doing my own writing has given me a newfound appreciation for those books I can be so easily lost in.

Edited <350:

1. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

Although both of my parents are accountants, I didn’t develop an interest in the profession until 8th grade math. Studying taxes to learn about percentages, and pyramid schemes to explore exponents, I . . . .fell in love with the field. . .

My parents were delighted to hear about my interest, answered my lingering questions, and encouraged me to follow in their footsteps. Since then my passion for accounting has only grown, and this past summer I was invited to work on the finance team of a summer camp I’ve volunteered at for 4 years.

On the finance team I worked alongside a CPA and a college student learning basics such as expense reimbursements, managing invoices, bank reconciliation, and payroll.

I simultaneously enrolled in Financial Accounting 1A at my local community college to further explore and confirm my interest.

While initially worried that the internship and class would create time conflicts, they complemented each other well.

I learned terms like credit, debit, account, general ledger, and single source of truth, and taught me proper procedure and internal control, enabling me to get more hands-on with the camp accounting systems. A few days after doing the June bank reconciliation for camp, I had a test on reconciliation in class. When the camp needed to open or replenish the petty cash, I could study the petty cash section in the class textbook.

Thanks to all of the above, last summer was one of the most educational experiences of my life. I enjoyed doing the work, and my mentors gave me great insight into career options in the field. I also enjoyed and did so well in Accounting 1A class that I’ve already enrolled in Accounting 1B.

Furthermore, the summer camp has offered an extension of the internship, making the experience into an afterschool program for me. It felt good to be a part of a team that made people’s summer better, and my experiences confirmed my conviction that I want to study accounting in college so that I can do what I love year round.

**Cut to <350 words:**

1. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

People are almost never what you expect of them. This was made clear to me when I worked as a counselor for my church’s summer day camp.

As I was leading the first day’s ice breaker activity. At first, I was hesitant because it meant that while the rest of counselors could bond with the kids, I had to step back and make sure the activity was running smoothly. But a while into the activity, I noticed its merits: I was able to watch over all the kids’ interactions.

On the first day a 10-year old named Ethan seemed to be getting left out of the cliques that were developing. During ice breakers, he was louder, pushier, and more animated than others, which seemed to make him unpopular with other kids. I made an effort to befriend him.

I understood what it was like to be left out just because you were misunderstood. I had trouble making friends at around Ethan’s age and most friends I did make, I could not keep. I did not know how to approach people and so I eventually became complacent with my isolation. It took me a while to open up and form closer connections, and once I did I felt sorry for all those years I spent alone.

Spending more time with him, I saw a heartfelt, soft spoken side to him that the other campers were unable to see. Ethan was very kind, but could get carried away and forget other people’s boundaries. As I helped him learn to do this, the kids met him halfway.

They grew to bond with Ethan as I did, and were friends with him for who he was. On the last day of camp, I could not hold back my tears when seeing the kids so happy together for maybe the last time in a while. After hugging Ethan one last time, I took solace in the fact that, even if for a short while, I gave my best effort to make someone feel more included.

## Second Drafts

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.

Being a leader comes with many responsibilities. I faced many of these first hand when I co-founded the Lowell Investment Club during the summer entering my freshman year. I knew that demand for business and finance education was skyrocketing, met with an equally abundant supply of ambitious student educators. To stand out among the rest, I decided that the best way to win the race was with a decisive head start.

The earliest stages of planning started weeks and weeks before school began. I went searching on the school website and discovered a mess of mandatory paperwork for clubs, but I singled out the club petition as being the most difficult to prepare ahead of time. It required me to get ten signatures of approval from prospective members and one teacher to sponsor the club. I could personally reach out to students who would support my club, but there was no promise any teachers would check their emails over the summer. I needed to find a teacher who was not yet sponsoring a club, and contact them before they were approached by a new one. To maximize my chances, I compiled a list of all the teachers I knew and split the list with the officers of the club. This combined with acting as soon as the year started meant that we had a sponsor before too long.

After a couple weeks of things running smoothly, clubs could start promoting using fliers. I noticed a flier was promoting a club with a name suspiciously close to Investment Club’s. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, I attended their debut meeting hoping the similarities began and ended with the name. Attending the meeting was a relief to be sure. Whereas my club was dealing with broader strokes, entry level topics for a wider audience, this club would delve more deeply into the analysis of the performance of a single stock. With my club meeting just one day before theirs, there was clear synergy and potential for collaboration. But the cherry on top was the story behind their name. They had to make it similar to ours because they wanted to be the Investment Club, but fell behind on the registration process and could not have a duplicate name, so they needed a new one. Knowing this let me know my efforts were not in vain.

(394)

1. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

English has challenged me throughout school. I would perform poorly in English classes, which would demotivate me, causing me to do poorly, demotivating me more, with no apparent break in the cycle. I had barely kept my head afloat in middle school and first couple years of high school when I was faced with my greatest academic challenge yet: AP English Language and Composition.

The first hurdle to get over was the multiple choice questions, which were weighted heavily in class and even more so on the AP exam. I struggled reading and analyzing the passages quickly, and thought the best practice was just to read more. But I had not read a book of my own volition in nearly four years at that point, and did not know where to start. While watching *Life of Pi*, I noticed in the credits that it was based on a novel. I checked out the book and thought it was every bit as good as the movie. Every day I was reading and every day I read more and for longer. Multiple choice passages became more digestible, especially with timed practices. I started the year going ten minutes overtime on practice multiple choice, but finished the AP exam multiple choice with 15 minutes to spare.

The second, and much taller hurdle, was essay writing. Three essays needed to be conceived, planned, drafted and fully fledged in just 45 minutes each. Each was unique in its own aspect, but I discovered they all needed reading comprehension, time management, and practice with clear feedback. Reading comprehension and time management overlapped with multiple choice practice, so my focus turned toward practicing. I was not fit to judge my own writing, and so I got a writing tutor to give feedback on my practice essays. We went over famous speeches, we went over rhetorical strategies, we went over analyzing devices, we went over effective structure; we went over the final hurdle. And at the end of the finish line waiting for me was an A in the class and a 5 on the exam.

I have changed my perspective on reading. No longer is it a dry activity for boring people to gab about over tea time. Instead, I see how it can be just as dynamic and exciting as the movies that base themselves on. Doing my own writing has given me a newfound appreciation for those books I can be so easily lost in.

(410)

# First Drafts

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.

Nearly every headline in the past year has been dominated by news of the stock market. From the short squeezes of Gamestop and AMC to the online explosion of crypto currencies and non-fungible tokens, it seemed a new fad popped up as soon as the last one died down. Everyone wanted to capitalize on the latest hot trends before they died down, but no one knew how. Everyone wanted to make an easy buck in the easiest way possible: having someone else explain it all to you.

It would be no surprise then that upwards of five different business/finance related clubs sprung up during the returning semester after the pandemic. In a game of supply versus demand, peak supply of eager learners were met with peak supply of determined leaders. The investment club I co-founded had to compete with some of the fiercest competition my school had to offer. Not knowing the challenges I would have to face going forward, I started the best way to win the race was a head start.

The earliest stages of planning started weeks and weeks before school began. I needed a clearly defined timeline of goals and a team I could rely on to help me achieve them. With the help from my co-founder, we assembled a team, established a line of communication, and assigned responsibilities. Before too long, I had a list of potential club sponsors, strategies on how to promote, a mission statement and logo ready to go, and even the first few meetings planned out. All this work paid off when the school year started and the formation of the club went relatively smoothly. The club netted a full classroom of tentative ears for the debut meeting, and showed no signs of slowing down.

However, the success of the club was drawing some unwanted attention. Some clubs with eerily similar names were being started, but I needed to know if other similarities existed. I attended one of their club meetings and found out that they had a mostly different member base, lecture style, and lecture topic. After the meeting concluded, I approached the officers of the club and we settled on a few agreements. We found out our respective strengths in certain fields of knowledge, agreed upon separate subject matters to cover and meeting dates, and narrowed the naming debacle down to mere coincidence.

The rest of the year went on without a hitch. I felt glad knowing that the club was able to thrive because of taking action sooner rather than later. Being a leader meant that I could not put off my responsibilities. It may seem tough at the time, but you are all the better for it in the long run.

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1. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

I used to think that my brain would only work in one way. For as long as I could remember, numbers just clicked in my head. I found math to be more exciting to learn, and therefore it became more exciting to do. English, however, was a different story altogether. Whether it be reading comprehension, or writing, or argument, or grammar, or vocabulary, or rhetorical analysis, I could not get a firm grasp on any of them, which reflected in my test grades.

I was aiming to go to a merit based high school that placed a heavy emphasis on standardized test grades. If my previous years were indicative of my potential score, my chances of being accepted were slim at best. To bolster my chances, I was enrolled in a couple private English classes. The first of which was one teacher and approximately 15 students, not too different from the classes I was already taking at school. Perhaps that was the reason the class did not resonate too deeply with me. The only thing I can remember gaining from that class was not any particular reading or writing strategy, but instead knowing that it was going to take more than extra classes to improve myself. Effort had to come out of my end just as much as the teacher’s.

The next writing class I participated in was a one-on-one tutoring class. When I expressed my general disinterest for English during one of the sessions, the tutor knew just what to do. He took note of what I was interested in, and incorporated it into his lessons. I showed an interest in history, and so we went over famous speeches and their use of rhetorical devices, expository history journals and their use of syntax and diction, and historical fiction books that could get me interested in reading. I felt more encouraged to engage in class, and enjoyed learning English for once. Testing day came and went, and a few months later I discovered that I received a near full score. I got into the high school that I was aiming for, thinking I was ready for the challenges that awaited me.

More advanced subject matter aside, junior year English’s primary obstacle was the time limit. No more middle school essays that drag on for months with the teacher holding your hand the entire way. Essays now needed to be conceived, planned, drafted and fully fledged in just 40 minutes. Ill prepared for this gargantuan task, I dropped several letter grades despite my best efforts. I was once again falling behind, and once again sought help. This new tutor was somewhat in the middle of the other two. She divided her time with me between two other students, and followed a more curriculum based teaching style. Once I realized that I would not have the personal connection I relied on before, I took a little more charge on how lessons were structured. I would do the assignments provided by the tutoring agency and have the tutor review them alongside my regular schoolwork. I recognized that my weakest aspect was time management and the best way to remedy it was just practice. I juggled practice with schoolwork and showed it to my tutor on how to improve. By the end of the semester, my grade went back up to an A and I received a 5 on the AP exam.

Even when I was not directly learning English, I always took something from my various learning endeavors.

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1. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

The first seeds for my interest in accounting were planted in my 8th grade math class, where my teacher taught exponents with pyramid schemes and taught percentages with taxes. My parents are both accountants, so when I told them about my newfound interest, they were delighted. They answered all my lingering questions and encouraged me to pursue a future in accounting. Since then, that interest has grown into a passion, a passion that led to some of the most fruitful moments of my life.

When I let my interest in accounting be known to the summer camp I have been with for several years, they offered me a spot on their finance team during the summer. It was an opportunity too good to pass on. I was mentored by two members of the finance team. They walked me through the basics such as expense reimbursements, petty cash, managing invoices, bank deposits, bank reconciliation, and payroll. At the same time as this internship, I was taking an online city college accounting course. I took Financial Accounting 1A, the most beginner course you could take in accounting, just to confirm whether or not I enjoyed it. I was worried that doing the internship and the class at the same time would be conflicting, but they complimented each other very well. The class taught me terms such as credit, debit, account, general ledger, and single source of truth, and taught me proper procedure and internal control. This freed my mentors to talk about aspects specific to the camp, without needing to explain all the beginner terminology. And getting hands-on experience with the camp accounting systems allowed for a deeper understanding of the material covered in class. Only a few days after doing the June bank reconciliation for camp, I had a test on reconciliation for class; When the camp needed to open or replenish the petty cash, I could look at the petty cash section in the class textbook: it almost seemed too perfect.

Although it was only one summer, I thought it was the most educational experience of my life. I enjoyed doing the work, and my mentors gave great insight into career options. I did so well and enjoyed my Accounting 1A class so much that I have already enrolled in Accounting 1B. And the summer camp has offered an extension on the internship, extending it to their after school program. It felt good to be a part of a team that made people’s summer better, and my experiences confirmed my conviction that I want to study accounting in college so that I can do what I love year round.

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1. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

People are almost never what you expect of them. This was made clear to me when I worked as a counselor for my church’s summer day camp. I was in charge of leading the first day’s ice breaker activity. At first, I was hesitant because it meant that while the rest of counselors could bond with the kids, I had to step back and make sure the activity was running smoothly. But a while into the activity, I noticed its merits: I could be a passive observer of all the kids’ interactions.

While the kids and counselors were forming cliques on the first day, Ethan seemed a little left out. During the ice breaker activities, he was louder, pushier, and more animated than any other kid, making him a little unpleasant to the other kids. I noticed he was approached less often than other kids on that first day, and so on the next day, I made an effort to befriend him.

I understood what it was like to be left out just because you were misunderstood. I had trouble making friends at around Ethan’s age and most friends I did make, I could not keep. I did not know how to approach people and so I eventually became complacent with my isolation. It took me a while to open up and form closer connections, and once I did I felt sorry for all those years I spent alone.

If no one else, I wanted Ethan to spend time with me so he could have at least one meaningful relationship that summer. After spending more and more time with him, I saw a heartfelt, soft spoken side to him that the other campers were not close enough to him to see. Ethan was very kind, but could get carried away and forget other people’s boundaries. As Ethan spent more time with me, he learned to respect my boundaries. As I got Ethan to spend more time with the other kids, he respected their boundaries too. Of course, Ethan was not always on top of his behavior, but the kids learned to meet him halfway. They grew to bond with Ethan as I did, and were friends with him for who he was. On the last day of camp, I could not hold back my tears when seeing the kids so happy together for maybe the last time in a while. After hugging Ethan one last time, I took solace in the fact that, even if for a short while, I gave my best effort to make someone feel more included.

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