**Common App Essay Feedback for Varadraj Chavan**

| **Overall** | It is an honest, impactful essay.  It has a strong appeal to service-oriented/military oriented colleges, and the details he’s given (especially about barracks, routines, etc.) will be sure to resonate with many admissions members. If however, he is aiming for more selective schools, restructuring the essay should make it stronger. |
| --- | --- |
| **The Good** | +Details of the encampment  +The impact of the story in general, especially on service-oriented schools (many in California, especially the UCs) |
| **Could Be Better** | \*Could restructure the essay, if needed   1. Intro - how encampment changed you to become a highly service-oriented person, mention big accomplishments and takeaways 2. Then, talk about encampment - and your experiences, draw parallels to things you’ve done in high school 3. End with conclusion that gives your past accomplishments, present, and future goals - try to seem ambitious about being service-oriented |

**Notes**

* The main priority for college essays is to show who you are, and sell yourself.
* In general, unless you are applying to highly selective schools - you don’t need to spend too much time on the essay.
* Depending on which colleges Varadraj is aiming for, and how selective it is - he can either leave the essay as is, or restructure it to make his admission case more focused.
* Feel free to share more details about his situation! Knowing his GPA, SAT (if taken), extracurriculars, schools he wants to get into, etc… should help narrow down what he should do next.

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**Essay**

**I entered and exited the 2019 Encampment as a completely different person. A month**

**into summer break, I found myself taking part in a disciplinary boot camp. A week away from**

**my parents, surrounded by new people, and without my prized possession: my phone. I had**

**people shouting at me from the moment I arrived and had to march long distances in the summer**

**heat. How did I, a reserved and nerdy teenager, end up in a rigorous military camp? A year**

**earlier, I joined the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), a civilian auxiliary of the US Air Force, and I needed**

**to attend Encampment to advance to the next rank. I never realized how much more than just a**

**promotion requirement this trip would mean to me. I learned how to listen to directions, work as**

**a team, and be open to trying new things.**

**Discipline was a key lesson for us cadets and we practiced this by keeping our barracks**

**clean and organized. There were set rules on how our rooms must be kept in the morning and we**

**were graded on how well our rooms matched the expectations. I was up for the challenge. Every**

**day, I remembered to line up my shoes along the wall, keep my clothes hung at equal intervals,**

**and make my bed without any wrinkles. I made sure to fix anything I got wrong and improve my**

**score the next day. Then on the final day of the camp, I walked down the long hallway and saw**

**listed on my door: 25 out of 25. This boosted my confidence in my ability to follow directions. It**

**also taught me how I can achieve anything I put my mind to and I will carry this mindset for the**

**future.**

**Although it built an independent personality, the camp was focused on creating a team**

**experience. All the cadets were placed in groups called flights. Even though we were complete**

**strangers, my flight looked out for each other and took on challenges as a team. Every evening,**

**we played volleyball between the several flights. Having played cricket for 6 years, I was used to**

**competing in a sports team. I am a competitive person and got very involved in every single**

**round. We helped each other along the way and I encouraged my teammates to keep fighting**

**even when we were losing. Many of us were new to volleyball but our team coordination helped**

**us win round after round. I learned the importance of being able to work well with new people.**

**This skill will definitely help me for the rest of my student career and will be essential for my**

**future job.**

**Since Encampment was a part of the CAP, we participated in many aerospace activities.**

**One day, we had a lesson on rockets which reminded me of the time I won a bottle rocket**

**building competition in a regional science olympiad. A few days later, I got the opportunity to**

**ride in a military Chinook helicopter and pilot a Cessna plane. I was initially nervous and**

**considered not taking part in the activities but changed my mind when I realized I would hardly**

**get this chance again. Flying became one of the best things I have ever done. I loved the feeling**

**of being free amongst the clouds and learning how to operate the plane was exciting. This taught**

**me how getting out of your comfort zone can help find something you like.**

**Encampment was a tough but necessary journey that tuned my skills and personality. I**

**was always a good student but the camp toughened me in nonacademic aspects and taught me**

**general life lessons. The camp encouraged me to take on leadership roles in my CAP squadron**

**and improved my overall character. I wish to apply this to college life and continue serving my**

**community as best as I can.**