UC Essay Prompts (RD: 11/30)

You will have 8 questions to choose from. You must respond to only 4 of the 8 questions.

Each response is limited to a maximum of 350 words.

Which questions you choose to answer is entirely up to you: But you should select questions that are most relevant to your experience and that best reflect your individual circumstances.

2) Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

I love cinematography, recording what I saw and expressing my opinions in an expressive way. I often have video ideas flashing through my mind when I see things on the street, and I would try to make these ideas come true during once I have time. Shoot, repeat, edit, these parts of making the film have helped me to make my statements to the world.

Then I realized that I could make statements for the others too.

Growing up in a family where both my grandparents are deaf, I know how many difficulties they must overcome every day. One day when I was accompanying my grandparents visiting a deaf people school. I heard the teachers there were talking about teenage rape and sex-trafficking victims among the deaf people, which deaf people have become half of the victims of these tragedies. This shocking fact was the catalyst for my decision to help educate deaf teenagers in my community. I decided to make a sex-education video in sign language to address this problem. There has never been a similar type of video where it teaches deaf people sex-education. Even for YouTube, I only found two very old and brief videos talking that merely talked about sex education in sign language. With the help of my grandparents' network of friends, I contacted a sign language school, and worked with a sign language specialist to help translate the video script and perform it in front of the camera. During the editing phase, I decided to rescale and put the screen where the person talks, usually at the center of the video, to the bottom left corner where the sign language translations used to be at. I wanted to use this change to let the people who can hear sounds to experience how the deaf people feel when they are trying to watch a video. A few weeks later, we published the video online. The video I made has received countless comments telling me that the video has helped either them or their deaf kids. I was very happy that I could use my skills to help my community. There are still many marginalized groups in China, and I hope that I could help them with my creative insights on cinematography. I wish that in my four years of college life, I could extend my creative side through new insights, and use them to contribute to all the disabled people community in the world.

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

I played a game called Pokémon when I was seven years old. For the first time, I got to fly over mountains on the back of a dragon and fight against poisonous butterflies with a group of gophers. I was amazed by what this hand-held device could do. I later learned that the magic behind the game and device was computer science. Thus, I began to self-study computer science from the internet.

The first programming language I learned was Python, and I used it to solve a real-life problem in high school. Frustrated by the inconvenience of obtaining my calculated GPA at school, I made a GPA calculator app and shared it with my class. I was overwhelmed by the positive feedback from my classmates and teachers. For the first time, I was able to do something useful with programming and that made me happy. I decided to improve my programming skills and continue to turn my ideas into realities.

In 11th grade, I participated in an artificial intelligence course taught by a local professor in Shanghai. Through this course, I learned how computers identify colors and different types of animals through a series of statistical and calculus formulas. I also got to conduct field experiments and work on a project that uses artificial intelligence to make recommendations. The course helped me solidify my understanding of important computer science concepts and gave me valuable real-life experience.

I continue to learn more about computer science outside of the classroom. I interned at an education technology company called Axiom Lab in Shanghai. My tasks included supporting my colleagues and developing a coding software for kids. I have learned industry related knowledge such as Redux and React-Native. Having this work experience helps me avoid making common mistakes during software development in the future.

Currently, I am working on a free programming learning website aiming to give everyone equal chances to learn programming. Although I am learning something new each day about computer science, there are aspects of the project that I cannot do on my own or learn on my own. I wish to extend this project and my interest in computer science in my next four years of college, and I believed that California, where silicon-valley is located, will be the best place for me to obtain this knowledge!

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

I slowly pushed the cart with the cake inside toward the dart room. We had organized a farewell party for Ray and Vera, two members leaving the dart club. We were grateful for their support in the past several years. During the party, we cried and laughed as we reminisced our shared memories of the victories, mistakes, and the hilarious moments in the dart room.

This is our dart club, representing joy, hard-work, and passion for life. Two years ago when I decided to form the club, I never would have thought that it would be what I miss the most after graduation.

I love darts and enjoy controlling the dart with accuracy and precision, but more than that, I enjoy the time I spent with my team members. Initially, there were only three members but it eventually attracted more students and we are now a close-knit family of 23 members.

As dart club becomes bigger, I realized that the hardware environment at our dart room is not very satisfying since they were all old dart machines from decades ago. In order to provide a more comfortable environment for my club members to train dart skills and enjoy this sport, I wrote a two pages proposal and handed it to the principal of the school requesting to update the dart equipment. I talked about the benefits the school could have by upgrading the dart equipment treating it like an investment plan for future dart players and trophies. After a month, I saw brand new dart machines installed inside the dart room and the principal’s letter telling me that he agreed with my proposal. Eventually, we didn’t fail the school’s expectation. We brought back 12 trophies with five first places inside over the past one year.

Our dart club is not where we only practice dart techniques, it is also a harbor where people could interact and talk with each other like family members. We support each other, like giving Anita advice when she struggled with an English presentation. We shared happiness when Michael us his success of the lab experiment. Although we have different backgrounds and we may veer off into different paths as future artists, mathematicians, or writers, we still stand together in the dart room striving for “bull’s-eyes”.

Such celebrations and love in the dart club have always been my source of happiness. I hope to start a dart club at UW-Seattle and create the same family-like harbor for the UW-Seattle community to ponder the ultimate answers to life and the universe, all while playing dart and building life-long relationships.

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?

Flying over mountains on the back of dragons and commanding a team of gophers in battles against poisonous butterflies, I remember feeling fascinated by Pokémons at age seven and intrigued by the joy of a hand-held device called DS. Although Pokémons did’t actually exist, I knew that I could use technology to create something like Pokémons.

Then my chance has come, Sharon invited me to join CTB (an innovative project-based competition). We chose sex-education as our theme. I proposed to create a video game because it is an intriguing media platform that actively engage with the audience.

As I began to develop the game, I realized that the sex-education game was different from the projects I’ve created before. Technology was not the sole component. Due to lack of support and doubts coming from people's bias about sex-education, our motivation was weakened. I recalled the doubts I received earlier. If I was able to prove to my classmates my love for computer science, why can't we prove to the society that we’re doing something beneficial? I put programming aside, and focused on sharing my funny stories to recover our team's spirit. In order to increase the game’s reliability, we consulted the specialists about sex-education. After realizing the rooted bias of sex-education, my desire to "fix" this problem became stronger.

Four months later, we submitted the finished game to the Chinese software distributors. However, they rejected it due to "sensitive contents". This was like the hardest final battle in the Pokémon game. Nothing could take the place of perseverance. I tried to convince the distributors by meeting with the game reviewers. Through much back and forth communication and a few changes to the game, they finally approved to release it inside Mainland China. Meanwhile, I uploaded the original one on Steam - a global software distributor.

When I hear online communities talk about how they have learned knowledge regarding gender equality and puberty through our game, I feel a sense of pride that our mission has accomplished. Being a Pokémon master is no longer just about having the strongest Pokémon, but about being brave enough to explore the unknown with responsibility and persistence.

Now I’m still on my way of becoming the Pokémon Master, but this time, it is not only for computer science, but also for the goodness of the world.