

TUFTS ESSAYS

Past Essays We Love

From Admissions

Students always ask about the essay. Topic selection, length, style, message – there is so much to think about. We realize that it is not an easy process, to say the least. So it is our pleasure to share with you exceptional essays penned by members of the Tufts Class of 2016.

These pieces capture the distinct voices of these young men and women, and forge a powerful and affective human connection with their readers. They truly helped to set these students apart in our applicant pool. They compelled, magnetized, and fascinated us. They demonstrated creativity and illuminated curiosity. We hope that these works will inspire you to find your unique voice as you craft your words and stories in the months to come.

Essays That Matter: Aaron Forrest

Aaron Forrest '16

Bow High School

Bow, NH

Engineering

Celebrate your nerdy side.

It's a Saturday night in late January and I am in a basement with about fifteen of my best friends. The music is blasting and everyone is having a great time. No, this is not a typical high school party; we are building a robot on this fine Saturday night.

I try to close my eyes for a minute to concentrate on the task at hand, programming the robot to score in autonomous. After a moment I open my eyes and Chris, my fellow programmer, and I start to bounce ideas off of each other. The possibilities range from light sensors, to a tracking camera, to pure dead reckoning. After a few minutes of discussion we each turn to our laptops and start punching in lines of code, each trying desperately to make our project work the way it's supposed to.

After about twenty minutes we both try the codes that we had written. Each of us had attacked the problem from different angles, and we were curious to see how it would work. He ran his program first, but quickly cut the power after about ten seconds when the robot started to spin in circles, clearly out of control. I proceeded to attempt the code I wrote after, but instead of spinning, the robot simply refused to move, and I too was forced to admit defeat.

Programming can be extremely frustrating. I have spent hours struggling to discover why everything suddenly stopped working, only to discover that a wire had come loose, or that I had misplaced a semicolon, the worst form of punctuation. However all of this frustration is worth it when something finally works. I remember times when I have spent over twenty hours on a single issue, but when the robot finally manages to perform a seemingly simple task, such as raising a lift ten feet in the air, the feeling of jubilation justifies the time I spent.

When I first joined a FIRST Robotics team I did not know what to expect. I knew that it would be a large time commitment, but I never knew how much it would consume my life. While it may be a huge commitment to spend 164 hours, the total time from the 2011 season, in front of a computer typing code, it is also immensely enjoyable. Being down in that basement with fifteen other kids, who are all equally as dedicated to what is really one big hunk of metal and electronics, is addicting in its own unique way. I found myself excited to spend all of my free time in a basement, typing on a computer for what seems like hours on end, all because I knew that the other kids are just as excited as me. Yes I do build robots on weekends, and it's one of the highlights of my year.

Joanna Emerson
Arlington, VA
H B Woodlawn
Arts & Sciences

Sports, science and society are filled with rules, theories and laws like the Ninth Commandment, $PV=nRT$, Occam's Razor, and The Law of Diminishing Returns. Three strikes and you're out. "I" before "E" except after "C." Warm air rises. Pick one and explain its significance to you.

Few things retain the simplistic beauty of balance. One of the first concepts a budding photographer is taught is the rule of thirds, which states that the focal point of a picture should lie upon a line that demarks each third of the frame, either length- or width-wise. Though far from law, I can recall my father - a one-time photojournalist whom I hope to follow in the footsteps of - telling me that nothing will get me farther in life than the rule of thirds. A photograph's worth rests heavily on its aesthetic appeal; without it, there is no point in the photo's existence, but composed just right, nothing in the world is more compelling.

The exception, however, is a classic proof. In literature, there are classic works that are noted for their brilliance, eloquence, and timeless quality, and this idea translates into the mathematical field as well. Euler's equation, one of the most beautiful equations of all time, unites fundamental arithmetic operations as well as the five basic constants - 0, 1, π , e , and i - in one basic identity: $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$. To the untrained eye, the equation's multiple identities may not be visible; it is immensely complex and full of diverging concepts, while at the same time remaining minimal and simply stunning.

The most striking aspect is that these two laws - fundamentally different in their nature - converge onto one concept: balance. When a photographer understands the perceptions of the eye and is able to translate that into art, their ingenuity is reflected in consistently well-shot photographs on any subject. When the complexity of balancing the elements of a photograph along with the meditation that is required to find meaningful content for that photograph are taken into account, a photographer can seem just as brilliant as Euler himself. On the other hand, the conceptual confluence that is Euler's equation is unequivocally one of the most harmonious models in mathematics. The derivation, which involves trigonometric concepts among many other fundamental processes, is minimal enough for a pre-calculus student to understand, yet intricate enough to have been written upon the subject.

The most alluring aspect to me personally is the slight imperfection of each theorem. Not every photograph looks best off-center, and not every mathematician agrees with the style of derivation Euler adopted. Though each idea is nearly perfect, it retains some realistic element, reminding me of the achievable nature of each. I find the laws to be incredibly compelling and hold an unmatched beauty, but knowing that neither is truly ideal gives me something to aspire to. Though my specific goal isn't to prove a new theorem or take the world's most famous photograph, I find myself able to transpose the beauty and balance of both laws onto my own experiences.

Louis Guerrier de Dumast
Paris, France
Ecole Active Bilingue Jeannine Manuel
Arts & Sciences

Which aspects of Tufts' curriculum or undergraduate experience prompt your application? In short: "Why Tufts?" (50–100 words)

Tufts is cool! All the prospective and current students, alumni and faculty scream it off the top of their lungs. I have seen alumni from other universities brag about the outstanding academics at their choice school, but never have I seen students getting so electrified when asked a question about Tufts. They wear a huge, fantastic smile and desperately try to get you to come share their joy. And I confess, they are rather convincing. The school is transparent and seems to have no secrets (that I know of). You have a blog showing what happens in your admissions room and whole pages dedicated to stopping us from falling into traps in the application. Only you have "The Procrastinators guide to apply". I am also a big fan of Lee Coffin's colloquialism and humour in his Voice Lessons article. Tufts is a unique school that seems above all, friendly and welcoming. I aspire to become part of the Tufts comradeship and one day boast about how great my university is to prospective students!

Sophia Herzlinger
Newport Coast, CA
Sage Hill School
Arts & Sciences

There is a Quaker saying: "Let your life speak." Describe the environment in which you were raised – your family, home, neighborhood or community – and how it influenced the person you are today. (200–250 words)

My parents have always stressed the importance of acceptance. From a young age I was taught that under no circumstances is it ever OK to discriminate because of skin color, gender, religion, or sexuality. A friend of mine laughed at me just a few weeks ago because as we were going out my father said to me, "Goodnight and remember to be nice to everyone." While I too find his words slightly humorous, they are just an extension of how I was raised to love everyone and celebrate their diversity.

My parents have also taught me the importance of responsibility. From making my bed daily to coming home at a reasonable hour on weekends, my parents have always held me accountable for my actions. Rarely in my life have I ever explicitly been asked to do something, instead it has simply been expected of me. I like the fact that my parents are not constantly nagging me but rather encourage me to explore. Raised with this type of parenting I've found that I feel a greater sense of accomplishment when I achieve something such as an "A" in a class, because the grade was achieved by my own drive and merit rather than pressure placed on me by my parents.

I have also been taught to remain vigilant about what is happening in the world around me. My home is a place where it is crucial to always be "in the know." Whether it's about the new Broadway show coming to our performing arts center or the latest politician who's made a fool of himself, our dinner conversations are always centered on a current event. I do not think that my passion for politics or global news would have ever burgeoned had I not been brought up in this type of atmosphere. Without my dad constantly saying, "Sophia, read this, you need to know what the 'other' side is saying" I would never have developed the ability to form concrete opinions about what I believe in or have the ability to hold my own in an argument or debate. My home environment has been and will always be a vital influence on the person I am today.

**Nirandara Praekarn
Bangkok, Thailand
Bangkok Patana School
Arts & Sciences**

Watching documentaries about the polar regions never ceases to send chills through my body. If I could do something with absolutely no risk of death, I would dog-sleigh to the South Pole, Roald Amundsen-style. I'd like to feel a sense of accomplishment after having endured the hardships that stopped even the likes of Sir Robert Falcon Scott. After that, I'd join a National Geographic photography team, and ice dive in to photograph leopard seals and emperor penguins in the South, or polar bears, beluga whales, and narwhals in the North as they trail bubbles along in the ghostly blue light beneath the ice.

Despite coming from a tropical climate, there's something inevitably vast, pure and untouched about the Arctic and Antarctic regions that call to me. The mass of snow and ice hides the richness in diversity of animals, less obvious than in rainforests where life almost seems to scream out at you. You have to search to find the abundance of life concealed within the white. That's what I like doing: searching for meaning hidden in unexpected places. In the wild, it means exploring and going where humans seldom step. In academic life, it means emphasizing interdisciplinary connections and trying to draw lines that join the dots -- lines that may not be visible at first glance. In the icy tundra, there are no claustrophobic trees or cramped spaces. There is only the potentiality of finding something special behind all the ice, and the feeling of being unlimited -- of being free.

Emily Posamentier
The Woodlands, TX
The Woodlands High School
Arts & Sciences

As I look within, I take pride in knowing that I am multi-faceted, an attribute that manifests itself in my love for the tangible world of logic and the intangible world of the arts. Logic is my safety blanket, my haven in a world of uncertainty. Its black and white nature wraps me in a sense of security. Calmness washes over me upon solving a geometric proof. It is therapeutic to know that there is a solution for everything, so long as you search hard enough. With a pencil in one hand and calculator in the other, I find serenity in this certainty.

That said, with the same pencil I use to explore comforting black and white topics, I venture into the gray spaces; I create. In any spare time, I pull out my sketchbook to transfigure my ideas into tangible concepts, organizing my thoughts through my art in such a way that it often conveys ideas for which I simply cannot find the words.

Initially, my affinity for logic and art might seem to be in stark contradiction. Why would one who is at ease in the fields of math and science embrace the inherently imprecise field of the arts? After years of nurturing both talents independently, I found a means to merge the two: photography. With my first photograph, I realized that photography is a unique artistic endeavor. Though an art form, there is a "right" answer. The selection of a subject as well as the composition appeals to my right-brain, the half more focused on aesthetics than practicality. The technical aspect of photography feeds my left-brain. By modifying the shutter speed, aperture, or lens, I determine the success of my art. The creativity I put into the piece is crucial, but would be lost without science behind it.

My camera has become an extension of my body, a third eye that helps me see the beauty in life in a more calculated way. Though I thrive in both a science lab and an art studio, I feel complete, fusing both of my mental gifts by looking through my lens.

Ivan Cherem
Mexico City, MX

American School Foundation
Arts & Sciences

The first word one encounters when entering the field of economics is not one that you hear outside the walls of a school or the premises of a corporation often. It's a cold word, a word that attempts to measure, and yet it is warm for it calculates that which makes life worth living. Utility.

Utility is not a synonym for happiness or for profit, it is much more than that. It is a goal and a thought in the back of your mind that tells you that life is precious and success lies in making the absolute most out of it. The absolute most what? The absolute most Utility. To make this word a part of my dictionary defined my outlook on life for it pushed a common phrase out of my vocabulary: "I don't care." I always care, and the reason why I always care is because I know that the degree to which I'll find fulfillment and joy in life will mark the degree to which I've succeeded to turn my values into decisions.

With such a mindset I have discovered how beautiful life is; beauty that exists not only in the grandness of beautiful mountains and epic tales of adventure but also in the feeling of picking the right table at my favorite café and in the sound my fingers make when I press them against the snow. I find Utility in spending a day at the park (and in knowing that clovers mark the perfect spot to place a picnic blanket). I find Utility in the lightness of Vivaldi and in the deep sorrow of Albinoni's Adagio in G minor. I find Utility in studying for a hard test because I find Utility in mastering complex concepts. I find Utility in poetry, in dance, in tea, and in knowing that the beginning of this sentence is much more than a beginning to a sentence; it is my motto. I find Utility.

Samuel Boatner
Boise, ID
Riverstone International
Arts & Sciences

Common Application: Personal Statement

I am balancing on a thin metal tightrope over a gaping hole that begins at the tips of my crampons and descends 11,000 feet to the center of the earth. The only thing tethering me to the world far below is a checkered rope. That checkered rope also links me to my climbing team, a group of seven hardened smokejumpers who have just disappeared around a corner up ahead. I can already picture my epitaph: "Specimen originally believed to be a Neanderthal infant is missing from Idaho." That was where the rescue teams would find me, frozen on the side of treacherous Mount Rainier. Then I felt a tug from ahead. If I didn't move quickly, the some 1,225 pounds of men around the corner up ahead would pull me forward, dropping me into a crevasse and sending me on a journey to the center of the earth.

“Hey Sam, want to climb a mountain?” That was the question my father, a former smokejumper, asked me in August of 2009. Acting on sheer impulse and a desire to challenge myself, I said yes. Luckily for me, that was the same response I received from the climbing company, who waved me on after seeing a summary of my previous outdoor experience. I’d been hiking as long as I’d been walking, climbing as long as I’d been crawling, and my childhood had been divided equally between houses and tents. Thinking back on it now, everything the climb represented terrified me. My outdoor experience would mean nothing facing such a foreign obstacle, and the idea of starting back at the basics thrilled me. Anxious excitement was muddled with an intense desire to prove to myself that I could do it. I could climb 14,000 feet into the clouds and sign my name on the roof of the world.

At 12:00 AM on the third day of the climb, I left high camp at the back of the rope. Ahead lay a six-hour push to the summit, followed by a complete descent of the mountain. Unsurprisingly, the glacier fields between the summit and me were far more intimidating and perilous in the dark. After only an hour of navigating crevasses and icefalls, three members of my climbing team had turned around. But I chose to hear my doubt as a challenge, and that unique perspective led me forward. After five excruciatingly long hours, I had “bagged” my first peak.

I left Mount Rainier National Park with a fractured foot and an irrepressible hunger for further adventure. I thought I would be testing myself, proving that I could endure the harshest conditions and do something extraordinary. While I did prove myself to myself, my desire to test my limits was far from satisfied. I’ve been chasing adventure ever since that climb, whether it be designing an ambitious experiment in my Biology class or skiing in backcountry Idaho. Almost three years later I am still looking to broaden my physical, intellectual, and creative horizons. Challenge me.

Hashim Pasha
Ridgefield, CT
Ridgefield High School
Arts & Sciences

Common Application: Personal Statement

In Australia coffee is ordered in geometric terms. “Long black” is the equivalent of an espresso, a “flat white” is comparable to a latte, and traditional American filter coffee is known as “why bother.” Familiarity with these trivial, seemingly insignificant details of cultures as far apart as Melbourne, Missouri, and Mecca, to mention only a few, play a vital role in my sense of the world. They allow me to navigate borders—political, cultural, and linguistic—with ease unknown to my parents. From the Indian Sub-Continent, to the Far East, to the Middle East, they allow me to steer mindsets, aesthetics, and habits whose logic is as alien to one another as their languages and whose problems are as common as that of a closely interdependent planet. Finally, they make me the world’s local, or what the anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem calls, “a Third Culture Kid.”

The exposure to values and beliefs of cultures other than those of my parents (who are also of different origins), formative as it is, has not just made it impossible for me to identify with any one set of cultural norms. It has also forced a critical reflectivity upon my personal and civic values. I have had the good fortune to shape my character from a much wider array of perspectives than have been available to us in the past. Last year in Kuala Lumpur, I attended Eid Al-Fitr ceremonies at Masjid Negara in the morning, sung Christmas carols at school in the afternoon, and then lit candles for Diwali at a friend's house in the evening; all on the same steamy tropical day. Only a few days later I would wish all of my Chinese friends "Gong Xi Fa Cai" in my best Mandarin accent. I celebrated each of these rituals with the same respect as an objective distance from them.

This life experience makes me a member of a generation that can be properly called the United Nations. It embodies diversity and celebrates the insight of people of mixed backgrounds. It is open to difference. It is a generation that has to think the problems of a connected and spiteful world afresh. It is the generation that is confronted with the old problems of xenophobia and economic injustice like never before. It has to find the much-sought delicate balance between economic growth of the developing world and the health of the ecosystem. It has to remain committed to clean energy and food security that afflict the globe alike but are experienced differently everywhere. This generation knows that its redemption lies in its ability to learn from alternative models of governance, stewardship of nature and global citizenship.

In short, I belong to no generation, not to X, Y, or Z; I am of generation "Gen. U.N." I hope higher education will at once refine my character and make me a productive member of this generation. I hope to expand the palate of people I meet further, learn more languages, and deepen my understanding of the solutions available to us.

Why Tufts?

President's Day is like New Year's Day in an admissions office. It's the wicked moment in which two admission cycles converge, when our primary focus is shared between the high school seniors whose applications are being evaluated and the high school juniors who are launching their (active) searches as February vacation gets underway.

As a bridge for this transitional moment, here's a sampling of pithy ED2 responses to the "Why Tufts?" question on our supplement. Consider it as advice from an older sibling, things to notice if you will, as you learn how to follow the tour guide walking backwards. Anyway, here's what some of them said as they declared their affinity for Tufts in 100 words or less:

- "My dad always used to tell me, 'Strangers are friends you just haven't met yet.' This is how I already feel about the students at Tufts—the nerdy and passionate, the fabulously quirky; the learners and the dreamers and the inventors and the thinkers-I want to meet them all.'
- "The school and its student body manage to be quirky without being weird."

- “It’s a place where creativity underscores a dynamic intellectual community.”
- “On my visit to campus I witnessed a Shakespeare flash mob in the cafeteria.”
- “I want to go to school where an outrageously mix-matched outfit is more common than Uggs and Juicy Couture, where 'out of style' does not raise eyebrows. A polka-dotted shirt mixed with tie-dye pants - visually and mentally stimulating - poses inquiry and reflects individuality.”
- “Tufts speaks to me. It has everything I'm looking for: internationalism, compassion, strong intellectual challenge, and uninhibited joy. It is the only school on my Twitter feed, the only one that unflinchingly makes me smile, the only one that feels like home.”
- I love Tufts because, even though I am interested in math...It's important to me to be well-rounded, and I don't gravitate toward other math-heavy people.”
- Dear Tufts, You're an animal. Let me clarify: you're elegant, yet not pretentious; you're brawny and full of personality. You're an elephant—you never forget; you remember tradition, yet have an uncanny ability to explore the unexplored.”
- “I'm a physics girl, so I know that energy is a very real thing that can be quantified and converted from different forms and whatnot. So knowing full well what energy is, I'm also saying that sometimes people can just feel it. At Tufts, I felt the energy of a student body excited to learn and of their professors bubbling over with knowledge.
- “It's the only university whose admission officers are free enough to put their 'paws up' like Lady Gaga.” (That would be me, I fear.)
- “My interest in Tufts was sparked when I saw the sculpture of a poem in binary in the library. It told me that Tufts recognized the innovation in the combination of art and science. That resonated with me because although I want to major in computer science, I also want to pursue other subjects in the arts...I can take classes in the history of fairy tales and behavior-based robotics, study what I love all over the world, and be part of a community of people genuinely interested in learning of all kinds.”
- “What could Music, Astronomy, and Linguistics possibly have in common? I think my answer lies at Tufts.”

Tell us. What did you notice when you visited?

Why Tufts?

Ruth Sun '17

East Brunswick High School, NJ

Arts and Sciences

Only here could I find a dance class specifically for people who can't dance or take a course to discuss whether Superman is more like Moses or Jesus (ExCollege=awesome?!?). Ever since I stepped onto the campus and felt that click, I haven't been able to stop smiling whenever I think about Tufts. The energy at Tufts is different: friendlier, happier, and excited about things that maybe are a bit dorky, and I can't wait for the chance to be a part of this atmosphere as a Jumbo 2017.

Emma Coltoff '17

Springfield Township High, PA

Engineering

I read the list of engineering projects at Tufts as voraciously as my peers read their Twitter feeds. I am an innovator, passionate about robotics and ready to create. I only need the right place for my ideas to take flight. That place is a school that supports students' efforts to create a robo-cupcake decorator. Where else could my observations of life forms in nature be engineered into a robotic caterpillar? How many schools have a music engineering minor that inspires students to create an "e-cordian?" Tufts is where I can learn to be my kind of engineer.

Julia Fuller '17

St. Luke's School, CT

Arts and Sciences

Tufts University is like a crocheted hat. All aspects of the University are seamlessly woven together. There's no course titled Math 101, instead there's "The Mathematics of Social Choice." And what other school offers "Confucianism and Modern China?" A Tufts student doesn't take just a history course, just an English class, or just a science. Every class features application and every subject is intertwined.

In the same way that there is no beginning or end to the continuous stitches of a crocheted hat, the academics blend effortlessly into student life at Tufts. It's not uncommon for a student to take a variety of courses and wholeheartedly explore his passion for anything from Frisbee to pie baking. Tufts University houses a cornucopia of warm smiles and keen minds. The school fosters the quirky and the passionate. Tufts is a crocheted hat and I want to wear it.

Common Application

Archie Troxel '17

Christ Presbyterian Academy, TN

Arts and Sciences

When a teacher asks a question in class, more often than not I have an idea of the answer. And more often than not, I remain silent. I am a person of many thoughts and few words. Luckily, I do not have to move my mouth to speak. I use the Postal Service for that.

Letters are, to me, the means by which I compensate for my major character flaw: my difficulty vocalizing sincerity. I possess a constant desire to validate others, to tell them I love them, to admit that they play a vital role in my life. Yet sometimes when I attempt to channel these thoughts through my mouth, the words come out with a hint of sarcasm or in a strange voice. I, for some unknown reason, am afraid that if I openly express honesty, I will lose a morsel of my worth. It is as if I am applying mathematical rules to my life, believing that in order to add to another's value, I must subtract from my own. And unfortunately, I am often immobilized by this overwhelming fear of subtraction. My instinct is to then disguise sincerity with insincerity, to use humor as a repellant for pain. I fail to do what I most desire.

But I will not allow insecurity to entirely inhibit me.

So I pick up my pen, and my paper. And write.

Some would call this an escape mechanism, a way out. "You are shielding yourself with stamps and mailmen," they might say. But I would beg to differ. Although writing letters is indeed an alternative to speaking words, it is not an inferior alternative. It does not refuse to reflect the personality of the sender, as do texting or email. It does not limit the author in his expression of thought, as Twitter does. And it does not improve one's appearance by sharing thoughts to hundreds of friends and followers (read: Facebook). It is instead an honest and vibrant medium, one that offers a small parcel of the person that sent it.

Every aspect of a letter is revelatory, with each minute detail alluding to an attribute of the letter-crafter. The paper, the ink, and the envelope all hint at traits of the one who selected the paper, inked the letter, and sealed the envelope. Take, for example, my own letters. I choose old and faded stationery to reflect my nostalgic nature. Letters in black ink are often resolute, letters in a lighter tone: romantic. I create my own envelopes out of construction paper because I enjoy adventuring outside the conventional. I believe these details allow me to display not a manufactured, insincere persona, but instead a manifestation of my true nature. And I believe this ensures the recipient that what they hold is not a contrived creation, but rather an honest opinion. So whenever I sign my letters, I receive a feeling of immense satisfaction. For when I write, "Sincerely, Samuel Archibald Troxel," I do so with sincerity.

Nicolas Serhan '17

Bolingbrook High School, IL

Arts and Sciences

It was the winter of 2008, and like other winters, I had fallen into the arms of the common cold: raspy voice, sore throat, and congested nose. Regardless, I went to school and continued my normal day, though I spoke less and carried plenty of tissues.

I arrived to my first period class and stood to say the Pledge of Allegiance. I put my hand over my heart, but I did not say it aloud; my throat was too sore to speak. After reciting, I sat down and listened to the morning announcements on the loudspeaker. Soon after, my teacher asked

in disbelief, “Why didn’t you say the Pledge, boy?” I sniffled, feeling the dry itch in my throat. “I have a cold.” Sternly my teacher said, “People who don’t say the Pledge are terrorists. You’re a terrorist, Serhan.” The class erupted with laughter as I sank into my seat, feeling defeated. I knew right away that she was taking a dig at my background, just like everyone who ever told me a Sirhan Sirhan joke. Living with Arab blood in post 9/11 America was not easy. Initially, I thought the laughter and humiliation would end after that class period. However, my classmates continued to joke about it, and the name-calling persisted for days. By the next week, they forgot about the teasing, but I had not.

That moment stayed in my mind for a long time, yet it did not weaken me. I used the negative experience to empower me. After that incident, I began to notice how many people are chastised because of their race, socioeconomic status, style of dress, or musical taste. I decided to stand up for victims of discrimination by valuing cultural diversity. I started by appreciating the differences that make us all unique, from the physical aspects, like skin color, to the social aspects such as cultural traditions. As a member of the Foreign Language Club (FLC), and an aide in the World Language Department, I have the opportunity to learn—and share with my peers—information about people who live beyond the United States, current events in different countries, and eclectic music and food. FLC holds bi-weekly meetings, and each highlights a different country with a presentation about its native language, traditions and society. As an aide in the World Language Department, I have met many students and teachers from around the globe. These experiences have made me realize that every culture has great contributions to offer, which makes America a beautiful place.

As a college student that values diversity, I will participate in (or establish, if not already present) a club on campus that celebrates cultural distinctiveness and promotes peaceful coexistence. Coming from cultures that are stigmatized, I will defend students who experience hatred because of their diversities, as well as provide information about current events around the world that promote awareness and encourage fellowship. I look forward to educating and continuing to fight for the rights of others.

Connor Fallon '17

Yarmouth High School, ME

Arts and Sciences

Five Things I’ve learned from Moose

Being from Maine, I’ve learned a thing or two about moose. Surprisingly enough, this mammal of the Maine woods has a few valuable lessons to teach...

1. Wade in Swamps

The natural diet of a moose consists of weeds that it must wade deep into swamps to get. Everybody has to wade through unpleasant water at some point in his or her life. Some swamps are deeper than others, but the goal is always the same: make it safely to the other side and pick up some nutrients along the way. For me, the French language was initially a swamp. Although I got bogged down a few times, I continued to wade my way through and did the best

that I could. I may have picked up a leech or two, but the satisfaction and confidence I gained by persevering helped to nourish me.

2. Chew Your Cud

A moose can spend hours just standing and thinking, chewing its cud. Like the moose, I have always been a thinker and have always taken time to “chew” before acting. When I was in seventh grade, I was much smaller than my peers and found out I was growth hormone deficient. I had to decide whether to take medication to accelerate my growth. After much discussion and thought I decided to take the growth hormone injections and have never regretted my decision. That decision put me as close to a moose in height as I will ever be.

3. Don't Lock Horns Unnecessarily.

Moose are known to combat each other so vigorously that their racks get locked together resulting in the death of both moose. I was the vice-president of my class during my freshman and sophomore years of high school, and in my junior year, I decided to run for president. Instead of “locking horns” with the girl who had been president the last two years, I focused on what I could do for the class by taking a positive approach to my campaign. I was elected president of the class and found a way to get my message across that didn't create divisions or offend my classmate.

4. Be Confident and Independent

Moose are independent creatures that are confident and comfortable in their surroundings. Much like the moose, I have always been comfortable in my surroundings and confident in whom I am. Moose find comfort in the woods of Northern Maine. My comfort is in my passion for learning, whether it is about the American Civil War or the Italian Renaissance, and in my love of in-depth conversations with peers and adults alike.

5. Be Dependable

From what I can tell moose are pretty much the same day after day. For me, it is not only important to be consistent, but to be consistently reliable and conscientious. When I make a commitment I see it through. Whether I am working on Model United Nations' legislation, mentoring my fifth grade buddy, rigging boats for my crew team or organizing class events, people know they can count on me. When I say I will do something, I give it my all and see it through to the end.

Some moose may object to me comparing myself to them since I can comfortably stand underneath most of their species, so this is where the comparisons end. But for the record, I am smarter than they are. And I smell better too.

Let Your Life Speak

Anna Weissman '17
Onteora Central High School, NY
Arts and Sciences

Our Grandpa is ancient, wears a coat of many fabrics, and drags a cart through town holding a rag-tag collection of toys. Our artists are the reason we exist. Our children have the freest spirits on this earth. We are the Woodstock community, a village of the most creative individuals you will ever encounter. Without these people I would lead a very different and boring life.

At the age of three, my parents loaded my brother and me into our big, black Buick and told us to wave goodbye to Brooklyn. It was the beginning of my transformation from city kid to Woodstocker. With time my Brooklyn accent faded and by kindergarten I was a member of the community. I joined the kazoo brigade in the town parade. I wrote poetry in after school. I did African drumming in the town summer camp. I played in an elementary Jazz Band. I learned about Picasso, Haring, Dylan and Sparrow. I was taught that it is okay to disagree and to speak up.

From then to now, Woodstock has made me into a musician, an artist, and a freethinker. The word "peace" has been imprinted on my brain. Woodstock is not only my home; it is my family. Every day I silently thank them for making me who I am. They have helped form my views and my nature to always do what I feel is right. In Woodstock, there is no crazy. There is just extraordinary.

Abdisalan Mohamud '17
Waynflete School, ME
Engineering

I am a descendant of the monarchy of the Ajuuraan State from medieval Somalia. Call me Prince Abdisalan. My family moved to the United States when I was just a toddler and at the time the youngest of a brood that would swell to fourteen. In age, we now range from thirty to nine. As the one of the oldest in house, while my oldest siblings are out in college or living their life, I have an obligation to the youngest. I am the bridge that connects those with no memories with those who have strong ones. This is because I was the last born in Somalia, have only a sliver of memory of our home country and a flawed Somali speaking ability. I feel different from my siblings and yet am still deeply connected to them. My education has all been in America, but I always go home to a Somali culture. Some may see this as a division but for me it's home. Since I know what both the older siblings and the younger siblings go through as a Somali family in the 96% white state of Maine, I am the common ground in every discussion. The more I moderate, the more I learn about both my history as a Somali and how it comes to play in some of our lives. My position is sometimes an arduous commitment, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

Kylie Reiman '17
Ponte Vedra HS, FL
Arts and Sciences

I live on a street that time forgot, a dirt road originally called "Guano" Drive. The Post Office recently changed it to Guana to save us from any further embarrassment (didn't study Spanish? Please Google it.). One neighbor just over the fence is 100-years old and growls on occasion when he gets excited. His name? Bismarck. He is a 14-foot American Alligator and, as Robert Frost once wrote, "good fences make good neighbors". Another neighbor, Bill, also nearly 100-

years old, lives in a fish camp shack, one of four that still line our road, abandoned and in shambles. Bill proudly built that home with his own hands, and now quietly cares for his wife under the roof they once raised. Cody, up the road, works two jobs to support his mother and pay for community college. Live oaks, bent with age, witnessed the history of hard work and humility here. Thousand-year old Timuquan Native American pottery surfaces on the lawns, evidence of self-reliant, simpler times. America was born on dirt roads just like mine. Amid the oceanfront mansions and world-famous golf courses of Ponte Vedra Beach, Guana Drive represents many of our country's essential values: pride, humility, independence and hard work. I learned a lot from my neighbors, and I respect, and often adore, their differences. While I long for the energy of a big city, I will always be grounded in this dirt road. I will miss it.

Darby Young '17

Sidney High School, NE

Arts and Sciences

I am the youngest of four daughters. I never wanted brothers, because my older sisters were boyish enough to tackle me at every available opportunity. I learned early on to watch corners. In all seriousness, though, my family is very close and we always have been. My parents never sat us down and told us how to live; they just set an example that was impossible not to follow. I live in Sidney, and I'm not exactly a country girl, but I am ferociously Nebraskan. I know what kind of wheat is grown all around town, I know the difference between a steer and a cow, I know how to dance (albeit badly) to country songs. The first time I drove a car, I was about eight years old - and that's old for Cheyenne County. My community isn't that close, but we are true to our beginnings, way back in the Wild West. Sidney was an outlaw town that could give the roughest neighborhoods of eastern cities a run for their money. Literally. The town was known for having one of the highest ratios of population to saloons in the history of the territory. It was the stop on the Union Pacific Railroad that met the Deadwood Trail. And there were a lot of highwaymen waiting to intercept the shipments of gold before they reached the rails. Back then, Sidney was a haven for the corrupt, drunk, and wily bruisers of a bygone era-- now it's a pool of employees for the World's Foremost Outfitter: Cabela's Hunting Goods, which was founded in nearby Chappell, Nebraska. My dad likes to say that Sidney was a stop for Colonel Custer on his way to Montana. He came to town and told the residents not to do anything until he got back. We're still waiting, true to the words of our ancestors.

Lucy Cronin-Golomb '17

Reading Memorial HS, MA

Arts and Sciences

"Go for it!" My father had given a wave and left me standing, poised with a paintbrush. I was decked out in a full body white cotton suit and rubber gloves. An open can of bright, green paint lay on the plastic tarp beneath my feet. Just the week before, I had complained offhandedly about the color of my bedroom walls. My mother responded, "Well, why don't you just repaint them?" I picked a sea foam green-it was vibrant and tacky, and contrasted wildly with our dark wood floors, just to see if they said anything about it, which (not surprisingly), they didn't. My parents' attitude about my spontaneous desire for a room makeover should offer an idea of the type of environment I was brought up in. We were encouraged to be

curious. They assisted us in experimenting, sometimes for the better (colored water in squirt guns to draw pictures on snow) and sometimes for the worse (milk in a lemonade recipe). My mother, a professor of neuropsychology, liked to ask us for advice on how to spice up her course. We suggested edible brain cakes. It's becoming a tradition-she offers extra credit for those able to fashion a brain out of food. If we ever wanted to try something a bit differently (within reason), we were allowed to. If I hadn't been raised in this type of environment, I wouldn't be nearly as accepting of the fresh aspects of life that I'm continuously exposed to today.

Rachel Kramer '17

Padeia School, GA

Engineering

I became a Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim, a Reconstructionist temple founded by Gay and Lesbian Jews who wanted to create a safe environment in which to practice their religion. They formed a community that welcomes and celebrates each member's unique choices and differences. As a result, my synagogue is organized as much around issues of inclusion, acceptance and social justice as it is around God and scripture. While I studied prayers and rituals to become a Bat Mitzvah, I also marched on the Capitol with my Hebrew school class in support of gay marriage and packaged food at the local food bank. My Jewish education not only taught me how to participate in a Shabbat service, but also showed me the importance of valuing and accepting others for who they are, standing up for what I believe in, and being true to who I am. So who am I? I am a girl who loves math and science, embraces her dorky side, and enjoys rap music. I care more about my athletic prowess than how I look in a pair of jeans. I do not follow the traditional "girl" stereotype. I am confident, outspoken, and diligent. I want to be an engineer, a profession dominated by males, but that will not stop me. Bet Haverim has shown me the value of accepting differences, both in myself and in others.

Who Are You, Supp Essay #3

Dalia Berkowitz '17

Richard Montgomery High School, MD

Arts and Sciences

Anyone who has known me for more than ten minutes knows that my most common judgmental face is often accompanied by my standing, arms akimbo. If you think that means that I am standing with my arms reaching toward the sky, you are sorely mistaken. Akimbo is one of my favorite words ever, but "arms and legs akimbo" does not mean spread-eagled. Legs cannot be akimbo in the first place. Just because amateur fan-fiction writers use the phrase endlessly does not justify quasi-professional writers charging money for books that engage in such egregious abuses of the English language.

Standing akimbo simply involves putting the hands on the hips and bending the elbows outward. It is one of the most common poses, especially for snarky people, but not nearly enough people know that the word exists. And the people who do know the word think it means the opposite of what it actually means! I suppose I should be more lenient toward people who use the phrase "legs akimbo" to refer to a cross-legged position because it is

actually officially recognized, but I have yet to encounter someone referred to as having only their legs akimbo in the first place. And it just hurts my soul a little to have someone misuse the word akimbo without knowing that it is supposed to refer only to a position of the arms. It's like when people misuse the word irony.

But I don't love the word irony quite as much as I actually love being ironic or standing, arms akimbo, while silently staring down in disappointment at the most recent person who has managed to mangle the English language.

Leah Fletcher '17

Laguna Beach High School, CA

Engineering

Each summer I look forward to working. I spend my days in the sun with good friends and share my love of sailing with young children. At Westwind Sailing in Dana Point, California, we run weeklong programs teaching children how to sail and be safe on the water. The best part of teaching is watching as kids have their first moments of freedom on the water and move from fear to pride as they learn to control where they move. Since steering a boat is opposite from how they have seen adults drive cars, we teach them the saying "tiller toward trouble." By pushing the tiller of a boat toward "trouble," such as another boat or rocks or a kayak, the bow of the boat turns the opposite direction. The easy-to-remember saying comes in handy during frightening moments for the newly independent sailors.

While experienced sailors rarely think, "tiller toward trouble" while sailing, I believe the saying applies to many parts of life. By identifying "trouble," a conscious decision can be made to steer toward or away from the situation. In teen years, there is plenty of trouble to get into, and it takes constant vigilance to avoid the hazards. I believe that sailing as a whole has helped me navigate around trouble by giving me goals and skills. I love sharing the passion I have for sailing in hopes that others benefit from it as much as I have. Push the "tiller toward trouble" and end up in a better place.

Isaac Brown '17

Singapore American School

Arts and Sciences

The use of the word "nerd" conjures up too many stereotypes these days, but I believe that at its heart, it refers to someone who is highly knowledgeable in a specific field. Whether that field is Dungeons and Dragons, Celtic religious practices or entomology, knowledge is indeed a cause for celebration.

Take fantasy languages, for instance. I have been singing choral music for over seven years now, but my favorite performance was singing the soundtrack from The Lord of the Rings films.

Though Elvish (Sindarin, to be exact) requires a bit of phonetic acrobatics, there are few fictional languages more melodic and resonant. The dragon language of Skyrim is too guttural, and Dothraki of A Song of Fire and Ice unwieldy. Elvish is the antithesis of Vogon poetry; it is a glass sphere rolling across a marble floor, the morning sun rising over a frozen wasteland after many months of winter.

But don't let my appreciation for Elvish lead you to believe that fantasy is my only love. I observe the Holy Trinity—Heinlein, Clarke, and Asimov—and honor the Archangels of Dystopia: Orwell, Huxley, and Bradbury. This pantheon pioneered the concept of highlighting the ideals and values of the present by writing about the future. More prophetic than your average prophet, these authors adeptly dragged the darker aspects of humanity into the light, reminding us that optimism and progress must be tempered with caution and wisdom to consider the vast ramifications of small actions.

My Life Speaks Pennsylvania Dutch



by Meghan McHale
December 19, 2012



Breakfast at Shady Maple Smorgasbord and Farm Market

For my debut blog, I put myself in the shoes of thousands of Tufts applicants and took a crack at one of our supplement questions. I'll admit it was tough (but not impossible) to "Let My Life Speak" in 250 words or less but: I did it! And so can you. Here's a glimpse of why I am the way I am:

My parents raised three bar babies (picture car seats next to pints) who know all the words to "Give Ireland Back to the Irish," speak too loudly and too often, and pace incessantly on individual tracks in the kitchen that somehow never collide. They made us skeptics, liberals, and part-time Catholics. They gave us a love of New York, a deep pride in family, and a very broad outlook. It was just like the Long Island/New Jersey upbringing that shaped their youth, except it took place in Pennslytucky: a portion of PA that feels more Deep-South than Mid-Atlantic. Conservative, rural, and white, my corner of the boonies is the Snack Food Capital of the World, adjacent to 2011's "Poorest City in America," and home to both the KKK and the Amish. In my day, I assisted with a 4am milking, castrated a sheep, survived Republican landslides, and knew the Future Farmers of America Creed by heart ("I believe in the future of

agriculture..."). While charmingly quirky at times, it also felt stifling and backwards and narrow. I hated it, and even tried to ship off to boarding school. But while it often fell victim to my youthful resentment, I learned better. I saw the value in an environment that keeps you in check and doesn't let you think too highly of yourself. It gave me perspective, as well as authenticity and honesty. Without Pennsylvtucky, I'd be different. Probably more obnoxious, maybe a bit pretentious. And I wouldn't like that at all. (251... close enough, right?)

Hello '17!



by Lee Coffin
August 28, 2013

As you matriculate today as Tufts' 158th undergraduate class, take a bow for making history. The Class of 2017 set new university admissions records for the most applications ever received, for having the lowest acceptance rate and the highest yield on our offers of admissions, and as the entering class with the highest SAT scores on each section of the test. Bravo!

But let me quickly change the subject. The stats that highlight your admissions process are not the traits I want to celebrate at this welcoming moment. Instead, I'll use the rich content of your applications to introduce you to Tufts—and to each other—so you can appreciate the lively community you join this afternoon.

"Let your life speak," we advised each of you, and you did. A Nebraskan set the tone with a poetic reflection about her Midwestern roots: "There is a quiet, haunting peace in the hush of prairie wind... and the people who live beneath its wide blue sky."

Sometimes a few words vividly illuminated your personal vibe:

- "I am the man with the over-sized pompadour, glorious sideburns and no sense of direction."
- "I'm a Horatio, not a Hamlet."
- "I found my peace among beakers and flasks."
- "I'm a bisexual Eagle Scout."
- "I always feel like I'm Ella Fitzgerald trapped in the body of a short, pale, curly-haired girl."

A hot air balloon enthusiast from Connecticut told us, "I am blessed with a big red afro that invites comparisons to Orphan Annie and Art Garfunkle." You highlighted your many talents—"I am a chorister-turned-whistler who thinks he can talk to birds"—as well as your ambitions—"I aspire to be a sort of Irene Adler mixed with Catwoman with a dash of Hillary Clinton added for dignified flair." A math major from China was reflective—"I am a quiet boy whose heart

beats aloud for...a super complex math problem”—while the “liberal atheist” from Chicago celebrated her affinity for Woody Allen films “and any and all renditions of cheeseburgers.”

We invited you to “celebrate your nerdy side” and you enthusiastically shared passions in Henry VIII and his six wives, election statistics, marriage equality, Steven King novels, quantum computing, mica, Lincoln, Tolstoy, Aztecs, the effect of tooth brushes on gum health, the Martian atmosphere and Jamaican dance hall music. A New Yorker hopes “to talk about Byzantine art, Hobbes, absolute monarchs and romantic poets” while the history major from Dusseldorf wrestles with the legacy of World War II on young Germans like himself.

A creative spark is common among you. The son of a Bosnian beekeeper plans to study biology so he can help his father increase his honey yield while the All State oboist from suburban Boston said her life goal is to make the perfect reed “to best serenade the lullabies of Brahms.” And the civil engineer from Nepal found a new purpose for waste: he started an alternative fuel project that makes replacement fireplace bricks out of used paper.

We asked you to describe the environment in which you were raised and, as usual, you celebrated places as different as an apple orchard in Central Mass., an Italian neighborhood in the Bronx, a village in the Swiss Alps, a bamboo house on Hawaii’s Big Island, a multi-generational apartment in Istanbul and a community near Seattle known as “Little Norway.” A dual citizen reported, “I grew up on airplanes, in taxicabs, in the space over the river between the borders of Canada and the U.S.,” while the colorful streets of Provincetown offered a lively backdrop for another new Jumbo: “I love how I don’t even think twice when I see a cluster of drag queens strutting by my house,” she said.

You hail from 43 American states, D.C., Puerto Rico and 47 nations, including new students from Argentina, Austria, Georgia (the state as well as the country), Iceland, Saudi Arabia, Uganda and Vietnam. Places like Deer Lane, Vermont and Lafayette, Louisiana; Iowa City and Wisconsin Rapids; Roma, Texas and Genoa, Italy; Medford and Somerville are your hometowns. (And now Medford and Somerville are your hometowns, too!) Two of you are from Cairo, and two are residents of Newtown, Connecticut. You graduated from 906 different high schools, including a boarding school nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas and another located on a 2,860 acre working ranch in California’s Santa Ynez Valley.

More than 40 percent of you were raised in suburbia—places like Lexington, Mass. and La Jolla, California— but a wide array of landscapes framed your pre-Tufts lives. “I’m not very outdoorsy, despite living on a horse farm,” one of you observed. You were raised in a house featuring a crucifix in every room as well as a home with “Quranic calligraphy on the walls and Spongebob sheets on the bed,” in homeless shelters and African refugee camps. “Seeing poverty and the run down houses on a daily basis instills a drive in me,” the football captain from LA noted. A pre-law from upstate New York echoed a similar thought: “Dealing with a repo man coming to take your stuff away makes a man out of a child.”

The people who raised you were often well-represented in your applications. The prospective anthropologist from Boston’s South Shore quipped, “Living with an African Grey Parrot is like living with a four year old who sounds like your mother” while the daughter of a prominent media family in Spain mused about her journalistic roots: “I come from the black and white hue

of freshly printed negatives... and the soft crinkle of newspaper pages being turned in the early morning." You are the children of investment bankers and elementary school teachers; of a paralegal for Pepsi and the chief procurer at Sea World; of a Turkish ballerina, a Venezuelan barber, the segment producer for Real Time with Bill Maher and a professional gambler. 115 freshmen are first-generation college bound, eleven are the children of Tufts faculty and 94 are the sons and daughters of Tufts alumni. That includes the heavy metal drummer from Newton whose parents met 33 years ago on their first day of Tufts' freshman orientation. (Think about what could happen to you later today...)

The differences that collectively distinguish this new class are not always overt; as you interact with each other be ready for the unexpected twist. And on this 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, know that you join a community defined by a wide and lively rainbow of humankind and its experiences. As the computer scientist from Florence, South Carolina explained, "Diversity represents something less tangible...it is the idea that a group of people who think differently can blend together, creating a more dynamic group." That's the essential idea.

Including foreign citizens, more than a third of you are non-Caucasian and nearly 15 percent speak a language other than English at home. You are Jewish and Muslim, Roman Catholic and Hindu, Unitarian Universalist and Mennonite, among a long list of faith traditions. Some are agnostic. Your personal stories are inspiring, and I invite you to share them freely with your new classmates. For example, the mother of an incoming IR major from Albania spent 17 years in political exile. He proudly told us, "I am the product of a freer world." The daughter of a housekeeper in West Palm Beach was told by her mother's employer that she would someday work as a housekeeper for his son; I'm proud to report that she enrolls today as a pre-med who was lauded by her US history teacher as someone with few intellectual equals in 26 years of teaching. You go, girl!

Say hello to the "Best Cook in Texas," the organist at a Baptist church in Oakland, the descendant of a medieval Somali monarch ("you can call me Prince," he offered) and a circus artist known as "Slide." Look for the cookie entrepreneur from Salt Lake City, the Pentecostal cheerleader from Kansas, the intern for the NY Times crossword editor, the member of the LA Children's Chorus, the submarine racer from Florida and the food hippie from Charlottesville. They have interesting experiences to share.

We salute the "Best Overall Soldier" at Singapore's Officer Cadet School, Utah's five-time state champion in swimming, the Massachusetts state yoyo champ, an a capella singer from Oregon who competed on NBC's The Sing Off, the woman voted "Most Likely to Rule Australia," 76 National Merit Scholars, and "The Sexy Sax Man" at California's Ukiah High.

A newspaper editor from Pakistan and 57 other high school valedictorians arrived at Tufts today. So did a glassblower from Seattle, a Colorado kayaker, a gas station attendant from Martha's Vineyard, and the founder of an online make-up tutorial. A big Jumbo welcome to the Thai slam poet, the party host at a Jersey bowling alley, the third-generation fish breeder, and the proud founder of the Film Nerds Club at Beverly Hills High.

The Admissions Committee was intrigued by the Homecoming Queen from Dallas who led her schools' LGBT Alliance, the conga-playing Nigerian engineer, the adoption advocate who

invented a Muppet to champion his cause and the English major from Illinois who composed an operetta about her mother turning into a chicken... We were inspired by the courage of the Libyan Freedom Fighter who participated in the Arab Spring and the determination of the pre-med daughter of Colombian immigrants who proclaimed, "I will not be the girl who came from nothing...I will be the girl who defied all the nothings and made her life extraordinary."

Someone once asked, "What's in a name?" Well, Thailand's Sartrapat Saengcharoentrakul owns the longest name in the freshman class with 27 letters while Shanghai's Li Fan has the shortest with just five. For the second class in a row, Alex and Sarah are the most common names among you while Qais wins "Most Original" because I'm addicted to Words With Friends and any name that begins with Q without a U is something to celebrate.

We wondered, "Why Tufts?" An Early Decision candidate from New Jersey announced, "I pick Tufts simply because I feel it is the only place that cares just as much about the content of my character as the content of my transcript." We do. The banjo-playing philosophy major from Oak Park, Illinois thought Tufts "seems like a place where I will learn things I didn't even know I wanted to know." You will. An Alabama engineer is itching to paint a replica of Botticelli's Birth of Venus onto the cannon. Go for it! But perhaps my favorite response came from the equestrian from New Delhi who said simply, "Like Jumbo, I have big ears."

I hope you can see that my colleagues in Bendetson Hall shaped a first-year class with loads of texture. Embrace it. Relish it. Learn from it.

On behalf of the admission officers who shared this historic admissions cycle with you, welcome to the Jumbo herd, my friends.

Collected from: <http://admissions.tufts.edu/apply/essay-questions/past-essays/>

Aaron Forrest '16
Bow High SchoolBow, NH
Engineering

Celebrate your nerdy side.

It's a Saturday night in late January and I am in a basement with about fifteen of my best friends. The music is blasting and everyone is having a great time. No, this is not a typical high school party; we are building a robot on this fine Saturday night.

I try to close my eyes for a minute to concentrate on the task at hand, programming the robot to score in autonomous. After a moment I open my eyes and Chris, my fellow programmer, and I start to bounce ideas off of each other. The possibilities range from light sensors, to a tracking camera, to pure dead reckoning. After a few minutes of discussion we each turn to our laptops and start punching in lines of code, each trying desperately to make our project work the way it's supposed to.

After about twenty minutes we both try the codes that we had written. Each of us had attacked the problem from different angles, and we were curious to see how it would work. He ran his program first, but quickly cut the power after about ten seconds when the robot started to spin in circles, clearly out of control. I proceeded to attempt the code I wrote after, but instead of spinning, the robot simply refused to move, and I too was forced to admit defeat.

Programming can be extremely frustrating. I have spent hours struggling to discover why everything suddenly stopped working, only to discover that a wire had come loose, or that I had

misplaced a semicolon, the worst form of punctuation. However all of this frustration is worth it when something finally works. I remember times when I have spent over twenty hours on a single issue, but when the robot finally manages to perform a seemingly simple task, such as raising a lift ten feet in the air, the feeling of jubilation justifies the time I spent.

When I first joined a FIRST Robotics team I did not know what to expect. I knew that it would be a large time commitment, but I never knew how much it would consume my life. While it may be a huge commitment to spend 164 hours, the total time from the 2011 season, in front of a computer typing code, it is also immensely enjoyable. Being down in that basement with fifteen other kids, who are all equally as dedicated to what is really one big hunk of metal and electronics, is addicting in its own unique way. I found myself excited to spend all of my free time in a basement, typing on a computer for what seems like hours on end, all because I knew that the other kids are just as excited as me. Yes I do build robots on weekends, and it's one of the highlights of my year.

Joanna Emerson
Arlington, VAH B Woodlawn
Arts & Sciences

Sports, science and society are filled with rules, theories and laws like the Ninth Commandment, $PV=nRT$, Occam's Razor, and The Law of Diminishing Returns. Three strikes and you're out. "I" before "E" except after "C." Warm air rises. Pick one and explain its significance to you.

Few things retain the simplistic beauty of balance. One of the first concepts a budding photographer is taught is the rule of thirds, which states that the focal point of a picture should lie upon a line that demarks each third of the frame, either length- or width-wise. Though far from law, I can recall my father - a one-time photojournalist whom I hope to follow in the footsteps of - telling me that nothing will get me farther in life than the rule of thirds. A photograph's worth rests heavily on its aesthetic appeal; without it, there is no point in the photo's existence, but composed just right, nothing in the world is more compelling.

The exception, however, is a classic proof. In literature, there are classic works that are noted for their brilliance, eloquence, and timeless quality, and this idea translates into the mathematical field as well. Euler's equation, one of the most beautiful equations of all time, unites fundamental arithmetic operations as well as the five basic constants - 0, 1, pi, e, and i - in one basic identity: $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$. To the untrained eye, the equation's multiple identities may not be visible; it is immensely complex and full of diverging concepts, while at the same time remaining minimal and simply stunning.

The most striking aspect is that these two laws - fundamentally different in their nature - converge onto one concept: balance. When a photographer understands the perceptions of the eye and is able to translate that into art, their ingenuity is reflected in consistently well-shot photographs on any subject. When the complexity of balancing the elements of a photograph along with the meditation that is required to find meaningful content for that photograph are taken into account, a photographer can seem just as brilliant as Euler himself. On the other hand, the conceptual confluence that is Euler's equation is unequivocally one of the most harmonious models in mathematics. The derivation, which involves trigonometric concepts among many other fundamental processes, is minimal enough for a pre-calculus student to understand, yet intricate enough to have to be written upon the subject.

The most alluring aspect to me personally is the slight imperfection of each theorem. Not every photograph looks best off-center, and not every mathematician agrees with the style of derivation Euler adopted. Though each idea is nearly perfect, it retains some realistic element, reminding me of the achievable nature of each. I find the laws to be incredibly compelling and hold an unmatched beauty, but knowing that neither is truly ideal gives me something to aspire to.

Though my specific goal isn't to prove a new theorem or take the world's most famous photograph, I find myself able to transpose the beauty and balance of both laws onto my own experiences.

Sophia Herzlinger
Newport Coast, CA
Sage Hill School
Arts & Sciences

There is a Quaker saying: "Let your life speak." Describe the environment in which you were raised – your family, home, neighborhood or community – and how it influenced the person you are today. (200–250 words)

My parents have always stressed the importance of acceptance. From a young age I was taught that under no circumstances is it ever OK to discriminate because of skin color, gender, religion, or sexuality. A friend of mine laughed at me just a few weeks ago because as we were going out my father said to me, "Goodnight and remember to be nice to everyone." While I too find his words slightly humorous, they are just an extension of how I was raised to love everyone and celebrate their diversity.

My parents have also taught me the importance of responsibility. From making my bed daily to coming home at a reasonable hour on weekends, my parents have always held me accountable for my actions. Rarely in my life have I ever explicitly been asked to do something, instead it has simply been expected of me. I like the fact that my parents are not constantly nagging me but rather encourage me to explore. Raised with this type of parenting I've found that I feel a greater sense of accomplishment when I achieve something such as an "A" in a class, because the grade was achieved by my own drive and merit rather than pressure placed on me by my parents.

I have also been taught to remain vigilant about what is happening in the world around me. My home is a place where it is crucial to always be "in the know." Whether it's about the new Broadway show coming to our performing arts center or the latest politician who's made a fool of himself, our dinner conversations are always centered on a current event. I do not think that my passion for politics or global news would have ever burgeoned had I not been brought up in this type of atmosphere. Without my dad constantly saying, "Sophia, read this, you need to know what the 'other' side is saying" I would never have developed the ability to form concrete opinions about what I believe in or have the ability to hold my own in an argument or debate. My home environment has been and will always be a vital influence on the person I am today.

Louis Guerrier de Dumast
Paris, France
Ecole Active Bilingue Jeannine Manuel
Arts & Sciences

Which aspects of Tufts' curriculum or undergraduate experience prompt your application? In short: "Why Tufts?" (50–100 words)

Tufts is cool! All the prospective and current students, alumni and faculty scream it off the top of their lungs. I have seen alumni from other universities brag about the outstanding academics at their choice school, but never have I seen students getting so electrified when asked a question about Tufts. They wear a huge, fantastic smile and desperately try to get you to come share their joy. And I confess, they are rather convincing. The school is transparent and seems to have no secrets (that I know of). You have a blog showing what happens in your admissions room and whole pages dedicated to stopping us from falling into traps in the application. Only you have "The Procrastinators guide to apply". I am also a big fan of Lee Coffin's colloquialism and humour

in his Voice Lessons article. Tufts is a unique school that seems above all, friendly and welcoming. I aspire to become part of the Tufts comradeship and one day boast about how great my university is to prospective students!

Emily Posamentier
The Woodlands, TX
The Woodlands High School
Arts & Sciences

As I look within, I take pride in knowing that I am multi-faceted, an attribute that manifests itself in my love for the tangible world of logic and the intangible world of the arts. Logic is my safety blanket, my haven in a world of uncertainty. Its black and white nature wraps me in a sense of security. Calmness washes over me upon solving a geometric proof. It is therapeutic to know that there is a solution for everything, so long as you search hard enough. With a pencil in one hand and calculator in the other, I find serenity in this certainty.

That said, with the same pencil I use to explore comforting black and white topics, I venture into the gray spaces; I create. In any spare time, I pull out my sketchbook to transfigure my ideas into tangible concepts, organizing my thoughts through my art in such a way that it often conveys ideas for which I simply cannot find the words.

Initially, my affinity for logic and art might seem to be in stark contradiction. Why would one who is at ease in the fields of math and science embrace the inherently imprecise field of the arts? After years of nurturing both talents independently, I found a means to merge the two: photography.

With my first photograph, I realized that photography is a unique artistic endeavor. Though an art form, there is a "right" answer. The selection of a subject as well as the composition appeals to my right-brain, the half more focused on aesthetics than practicality. The technical aspect of photography feeds my left-brain. By modifying the shutter speed, aperture, or lens, I determine the success of my art. The creativity I put into the piece is crucial, but would be lost without science behind it.

My camera has become an extension of my body, a third eye that helps me see the beauty in life in a more calculated way. Though I thrive in both a science lab and an art studio, I feel complete, fusing both of my mental gifts by looking through my lens.

Ivan Cherem
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The first word one encounters when entering the field of economics is not one that you hear outside the walls of a school or the premises of a corporation often. It's a cold word, a word that attempts to measure, and yet it is warm for it calculates that which makes life worth living. Utility. Utility is not a synonym for happiness or for profit, it is much more than that. It is a goal and a thought in the back of your mind that tells you that life is precious and success lies in making the absolute most out of it. The absolute most what? The absolute most Utility. To make this word a part of my dictionary defined my outlook on life for it pushed a common phrase out of my vocabulary: "I don't care." I always care, and the reason why I always care is because I know that the degree to which I'll find fulfillment and joy in life will mark the degree to which I've succeeded to turn my values into decisions.

With such a mindset I have discovered how beautiful life is; beauty that exists not only in the grandness of beautiful mountains and epic tales of adventure but also in the feeling of picking the right table at my favorite café and in the sound my fingers make when I press them against the snow. I find Utility in spending a day at the park (and in knowing that clovers mark the perfect

spot to place a picnic blanket). I find Utility in the lightness of Vivaldi and in the deep sorrow of Albinoni's Adagio in G minor. I find Utility in studying for a hard test because I find Utility in mastering complex concepts. I find Utility in poetry, in dance, in tea, and in knowing that the beginning of this sentence is much more than a beginning to a sentence; it is my motto. I find Utility.

Samuel Boatner
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Common Application: Personal Statement

I am balancing on a thin metal tightrope over a gaping hole that begins at the tips of my crampons and descends 11,000 feet to the center of the earth. The only thing tethering me to the world far below is a checkered rope. That checkered rope also links me to my climbing team, a group of seven hardened smokejumpers who have just disappeared around a corner up ahead. I can already picture my epitaph: "Specimen originally believed to be a Neanderthal infant is missing from Idaho." That was where the rescue teams would find me, frozen on the side of treacherous Mount Rainier. Then I felt a tug from ahead. If I didn't move quickly, the some 1,225 pounds of men around the corner up ahead would pull me forward, dropping me into a crevasse and sending me on a journey to the center of the earth.

"Hey Sam, want to climb a mountain?" That was the question my father, a former smokejumper, asked me in August of 2009. Acting on sheer impulse and a desire to challenge myself, I said yes. Luckily for me, that was the same response I received from the climbing company, who waved me on after seeing a summary of my previous outdoor experience. I'd been hiking as long as I'd been walking, climbing as long as I'd been crawling, and my childhood had been divided equally between houses and tents. Thinking back on it now, everything the climb represented terrified me. My outdoor experience would mean nothing facing such a foreign obstacle, and the idea of starting back at the basics thrilled me. Anxious excitement was muddled with an intense desire to prove to myself that I could do it. I could climb 14,000 feet into the clouds and sign my name on the roof of the world.

At 12:00 AM on the third day of the climb, I left high camp at the back of the rope. Ahead lay a six-hour push to the summit, followed by a complete descent of the mountain. Unsurprisingly, the glacier fields between the summit and me were far more intimidating and perilous in the dark. After only an hour of navigating crevasses and icefalls, three members of my climbing team had turned around. But I chose to hear my doubt as a challenge, and that unique perspective led me forward. After five excruciatingly long hours, I had "bagged" my first peak.

I left Mount Rainier National Park with a fractured foot and an irrepressible hunger for further adventure. I thought I would be testing myself, proving that I could endure the harshest conditions and do something extraordinary. While I did prove myself to myself, my desire to test my limits was far from satisfied. I've been chasing adventure ever since that climb, whether it be designing an ambitious experiment in my Biology class or skiing in backcountry Idaho. Almost three years later I am still looking to broaden my physical, intellectual, and creative horizons. Challenge me.

Hashim Pasha
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Ridgefield High School
Arts & Sciences

Common Application: Personal Statement

In Australia coffee is ordered in geometric terms. “Long black” is the equivalent of an espresso, a “flat white” is comparable to a latte, and traditional American filter coffee is known as “why bother.” Familiarity with these trivial, seemingly insignificant details of cultures as far apart as Melbourne, Missouri, and Mecca, to mention only a few, play a vital role in my sense of the world. They allow me to navigate borders—political, cultural, and linguistic—with ease unknown to my parents. From the Indian Sub-Continent, to the Far East, to the Middle East, they allow me to steer mindsets, aesthetics, and habits whose logic is as alien to one another as their languages and whose problems are as common as that of a closely interdependent planet. Finally, they make me the world’s local, or what the anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem calls, “a Third Culture Kid.”

The exposure to values and beliefs of cultures other than those of my parents (who are also of different origins), formative as it is, has not just made it impossible for me to identify with any one set of cultural norms. It has also forced a critical reflectivity upon my personal and civic values. I have had the good fortune to shape my character from a much wider array of perspectives than have been available to us in the past. Last year in Kuala Lumpur, I attended Eid Al-Fitr ceremonies at Masjid Negara in the morning, sung Christmas carols at school in the afternoon, and then lit candles for Diwali at a friend’s house in the evening; all on the same steamy tropical day. Only a few days later I would wish all of my Chinese friends “Gong Xi Fa Cai” in my best Mandarin accent. I celebrated each of these rituals with the same respect as an objective distance from them. This life experience makes me a member of a generation that can be properly called the United Nations. It embodies diversity and celebrates the insight of people of mixed backgrounds. It is open to difference. It is a generation that has to think the problems of a connected and spiteful world afresh. It is the generation that is confronted with the old problems of xenophobia and economic injustice like never before. It has to find the much-sought delicate balance between economic growth of the developing world and the health of the ecosystem. It has to remain committed to clean energy and food security that afflict the globe alike but are experienced differently everywhere. This generation knows that its redemption lies in its ability to learn from alternative models of governance, stewardship of nature and global citizenship.

In short, I belong to no generation, not to X, Y, or Z; I am of generation “Gen. U.N.” I hope higher education will at once refine my character and make me a productive member of this generation. I hope to expand the palate of people I meet further, learn more languages, and deepen my understanding of the solutions available to us.