"Why School?" Essay Checklist

A printable checklist to prove fit (academics + community + contribution).

1) Thesis (1–2 sentences)

☐ Thesis states what I want to study/explore.

☐ Thesis states what environment I'm seeking (and why).

2) Academic fit (2–3 specifics)

☐ I included 2–3 academic specifics (classes, sequences, labs, institutes, programs, capstones).

☐ Each detail answers "so what?" (what I'll do with it).

☐ At least one detail is a "bridge detail" that connects to my past work/track record.

3) Community fit (1–2 specifics)

☐ I included 1–2 community specifics (orgs, service programs, LLCs, mentorship pathways, leadership tracks).

☐ I tied them to what I've already done (now scaled at this school).

4) Close (contribution + forward motion)

☐ I ended with what I'll bring and how I'll show up.

☐ My ending has forward motion (a concrete plan).

Anti-generic check

☐ If I swap the school name, the essay no longer works.

☐ I removed rankings/prestige language.

☐ I avoided laundry lists (fewer details, explained well).

30-minute research (fill this in)

Academic specific #1

Academic specific #2

Community specific

Bridge detail (school → my track record)