SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION ESSAY FOR Simon Fraser University

1. What personal experiences and events **have shaped your outlook on life** and how do you feel this will **contribute to you being a positive member of the SFU** community? **Why do you feel this makes you an excellent candidate for your chosen area of study** at SFU? (500 words)

“You cannot sit with us because you are not one of us,” my classmate chimed at lunch. As a minority Indian in Indonesia, such humiliating episodes led to frequent self-doubts as I strived to “integrate” into my school. Such experiences were a major driving force that prompted me to create Project Firefly – an initiative aimed at raising awareness about global issues through children’s books. “The Little Rafflesia” was dedicated to educating younger kids about accepting others whilst embracing one’s self. I aimed to calm the “storms within” of others like me that it is completely okay to be different.

It turns out that Project Firefly not only helped me spread the value of diversity in the community but also opened my eyes about managing a social enterprise. This start-up altered my view on project management as I realised that we not only needed to stay true to our vision, but also consider its financial feasibility. Due to the lack of funds and challenges faced in finding a publisher, I researched alternatives – which led me to self-publish for free on Kindle. This chapter had many obstacles, particularly the low self-esteem and expectations of my teammates, which honed my leadership skills as I kept reminding them of our purpose to boost their morale. Designing posts for digital media outlets during Covid-19 also refined my marketing skills. Witnessing the significance of online platforms and social media on connecting with multiple stakeholders prior to the release of the book, I learned that for any venture to be successful, it requires smart financing and a technologically savvy team. Working end-to-end on this start-up pushed me to pursue both fields of study as I equipped myself with the know-hows necessary to create an impactful social initiative with a global reach in the future. Such an enterprise that celebrates diversity is especially needed in a day and age where global political and social scenes are plagued by discrimination and fear of diversity.

Pursuing a joint major in Information Systems in Business Administration and Computing Science at SFU will allow me to both innovate and manage. To expand my knowledge outside classroom, I enrolled in online courses such as Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies and Introduction to Computer Science during my summer break. Through real-life case studies, I learned how entrepreneurs fill untapped needs of the society. It also prepared me to think critically and creatively to find solutions as I navigated through coding various problem sets.

Apart from academics, my involvement in activities promoting diversity and inclusivity taught me to value the opinions of others and I do believe that understanding the needs of the community first-hand helps establish the bigger picture before we invest time into taking small steps towards the goal. Hence, I would love to be involved in organizing projects or events such as fundraisers by bridging clubs to come together for a social cause which would help facilitate change in the SFU community whilst embracing unity through the showcase of individual talents and passion.

*Hi Anushka!*

*I really like how you connect your personal experience to its manifestation and the impact it made to your community – and tying the knot with your academic aspirations. Well done!*

*- Matthew*