**UC Essay Prompt 1**

**Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.**

T’was 6 a.m. when the “Avengers” theme song woke me up in my hotel room. I got up, picked up my gym-bag, and “Assemble” the swim team at the lobby. Tensions were high, much like the moment before Thanos snapped his fingers, as we reminisce the coach’s seven fingers statement.

His statement traced back a few months prior. Our “Jaws” were open as wide as Thanos’ fist when he wildly aimed for SEVEN gold medals at the ASEAN School Games (ASG) 2018. Our emotions ran wild with anxiety and our morale was low. As a result, practice became mediocre as we were filled with negative thoughts.

So I took initiatives to dispel these negativities and ensure our success. Experience and understanding of everyone’s strengths and weaknesses were, I believe, the reasons I was appointed team captain. I wrecked my brain trying to figure things out.

First, the team tend to be easily discouraged – constant mood boosters are needed. Second, each member has their own bad habits – they have solid foundations; they just need to polish their skills and minimize these habits during the race. Third, most of them lack stamina, which makes them run out of steam towards the end – stamina-improvement training menus and strategies planning are crucial.

Uplifting songs, positive reinforcements, dry humor, and team chants were some of the things I did to boost morale. For skill improvements, performance vs. stress level trends and personalized training plans to overcome their bad habits were generated. Lastly, performance analysis, training simulations, and nutrition management were done to develop the best winning strategy. Personalized training plans have the most impact for the team: identify weakness, fix-it, test, improve, morale boost, and better synergy in that order.

To identify each of my teammates’ weaknesses, I recorded their swimming routine from the front, back, left, and right side of the lane using four phones and compared their movements with those of Olympic swimmers like Michael Phelps and Joseph Schooling. Next, I communicated my findings to each member in the “fix-it” step and proposed a solution. For example, one member tend to jump slightly too high during the dive start causing him to lose the horizontal take-off velocity. The coach and I then suggested to try different dive angles/techniques from the starting block. Tests were performed and data were collected to determine the optimum dive start that maintains the longest highest velocity after the dive start. As improvements became more apparent, he became more confident, thus, acting as morale boost leading to better synergy through encouragement. It took us many trial-and-error, early mornings, and long nights, but it was worth it to see a glimmer of light and hope in their eyes.

One joke and chant at a time; one training and vomiting routine at a time; one simulation at a time, we began to synergize into a faster and tougher team. And eventually, we became the victor with 10 golds.

“Leaders are meant to know everything” was what I first thought a leader should be. However, becoming team captain made me realized that leadership is not about knowing everything and pulling everyone, but it’s about making mistakes, learning from them, and using these experiences to push everyone together to the finish line. It is about encouragement, inspiration, and instilling vision.