A Letter To The Admissions Committee On My Cumulative GPA

Dear members of the admissions committee,

I wanted to take this time to briefly talk about my lower than average cumulative undergraduate GPA because it may be seen as a weak factor in my application and I want to shed some light to it in two main points. My first point is about early involvement in academic research. I am very passionate towards academic research and was involved in it starting at the end of my first semester, continuing even after graduating from UC Berkeley while balancing my work at Apple. I worked in 3 different labs, working as much as forty hours per week, while completing coursework in my program at UC Berkeley as an international student coming with no AP credits to reduce the coursework. Valuing research over a high cumulative GPA was a conscious decision on my part because I was adamant about challenging myself, learning new things outside my comfort zone and discovering my true interests with an eventual goal of continuing on to graduate school.

My second point is about why it should not be a decisive factor. I believe my actions speak louder than my words. With the time I've spent on research, I've presented in BARS 2016, published a research paper in robotics and presented it in ICRA 2019. In my 2 years at Apple, I became one of the 3 lead developers on a project in distributed combinatorial optimization on sparse graphs that went on to become a tentpole project of Special Projects Group. Recently, Apple has filed a patent application with me as one of the co-inventors, recognizing my contributions.

While I was not able to excel in all courses, I've excelled in those I was truly passionate about including graduate level courses in deep learning, computer vision (listed as CS294, CS280 in transcript respectively) and advanced courses in linear algebra theory and statistics. My only hope is that you see beyond the limitations of my cumulative GPA and focus on my relentless enthusiasm to benefit from the Computer Science M.S. program at Ohio State University and better contribute to the advancements of the fields I'm interested in in the industry.

With regards,
Cem Koc