Rice Upload File

**There is a breadth of intellectual opportunities here at Rice. Further explain your intended major and other areas of academic focus you may explore. (150 word limit)**

At Rice, I want to focus on core computer science and bioinformatics.

In the past few years I have created several programs for fun and profit, but its was through the development of a navigation app for the blind community and a health reimbursement platform for people with disabilities that I developed a passion for applying computer science to health for the benefit of society. While designing health-related applications I have been confronted with multiple accessibility, bias and ethics issues and would like the opportunity to learn from Rice’s substantial bioethics curricula.

Finally, as an entrepreneur I have been exposed to the difficulty of turning an idea into a product and taking it to market. I intend to pursue entrepreneurial projects at Rice and I look forward to taking advantage of the workshops and mentorship offered by the Liu Idea Lab.

**What aspects of the Rice undergraduate experience inspired you to apply? (150 word limit)**

I have two cousins who are currently seniors at Rice and have told me many wonderful things about their experience. One that stands out to me is the residential college system. I have grown a great deal from being on a specialized track and with a cohort in my highschool and I look forward to a tight-knit environment within which to form meaningful relationships with students in all areas of study. Another aspect I am looking forward to is the close relationships with faculty that Rice’s small size encourages. I have benefited enormously from the mentorship of my teachers in the past and hope to engage with professors at Rice in similar ways. Finally, when visiting my cousins at Rice I was taken by how their friends welcomed me and were, in fact, excited to meet a prospective student.

**Rice is lauded for creating a collaborative atmosphere that enhances the quality of life for all members of our campus community. The Residential College System is heavily influenced by the unique life experiences and cultural traditions each student brings. What personal perspectives would you contribute to life at Rice? (500 word limit)**

Five years ago I was diagnosed with scoliosis. When the doctor told me, I started crying. I knew it meant I was going to have to wear a plastic vest around my torso for many years.

The vest was a stigma. It was noticeable even under a shirt, so people pointed it out, and asked what it was. It made me feel different. I was limited in a number of ways by it. If it was sunny, I couldn't play outside because the heat would be unbearable. I couldn't do anything that might cause me to fall because hitting the ground with the vest on would hurt me considerably. Running, playing sports, and riding a bike were completely out of the question. Moreover, every time I went through airport security I got pulled aside and was asked to explain the vest.

In the beginning, I didn’t take it well at all. I would start hyperventilating at random times throughout the day. As I learned to live with it, this started happening less and less frequently.

Once I came to terms with the vest, time passed quickly, and a year ago, due to my spine having stopped growing, I was able to take it off permanently. It felt weird at first. After years of having worn the vest, not having something pressing on my chest felt liberating. I started enjoying all the activities I had lost touch with again, but after a while, I started experiencing strong back pain.

The doctor told me that it was caused by the lack of muscle supporting my back, so I decided to join a gym for the first time. It has been a whole year, and I have never stopped attending. I developed a love for it because it allows me to put conscientious effort towards fighting a condition I will never be able to get rid of.

A few months ago I was offered the possibility of surgery: having a titanium rod attached with bolts to each side of my spine to straighten it. It would alleviate my back pain, but it also has its drawbacks. I wouldn’t be able to exercise for a year, and would lose flexibility for life. I have thought about it long and hard, and I believe it is worth the sacrifice. It will allow me to go through my life without fear of damaging my spine. I am proud to say I will undergo the surgery this February.

I acknowledge and I am very grateful for the positive effect of those who supported me and helped me cope. My experience with scoliosis made me realize how it feels to be different and misunderstood, and recognize the massive importance of being sensitive to the feelings and circumstances of others.