

John Li
Common App Personal Statement

Eighteen! Nineteen! Twenty! Ready or not, here I come!

I uncovered my eye and began roaming through my grandmother's hallway. As I arrived at a semi-closed room, I strategically raised my little kindergarten legs and kicked open the door — a quick giggle, just as I expected; They had fallen right into my trap.

As I stomped into the room, I initiated my hunt — checking behind the bathroom door, under the bed and table, and inside the drawers — however, I came out empty handed. But there was still one place I haven't checked yet — the closet.

Quietly, I walked up to the sliding door and placed my hand on it, then swung that sucker open.

"I GOT YOU!"

There in the closet, my cousin, Amelia, sat there helplessly screaming as I stood above grinning knowing that I had another seeker. From there, we grew exponentially and swiftly conquered the objective — locating all the hiders.

The time it took to finish the game excited me. As the hunt drew to a close, I felt as if I were a general, leading my troops towards a decisive victory. Never before have I seen the effectiveness of a team. At the age of five, I fell in love with 'Hide & Seek'.

From the simple game of 'Hide & Seek', I had discovered a valuable lifelong lesson. It was the same lesson that enabled the Apollo 11 mission, set the ambitious goal of colonizing Mars, shaved second(s) off the world record, revolutionized the search engine: collaborating and sharing one's vision to propel human boundaries.

The lesson brings me to my running career, pushing my body past its limits in races. Training with a group, we shared a common goal and vision for the ideal competitor — resilience, ambitious, and ethical. Subconsciously, I had represented the team's ideology with each recovery to excruciating run. As my chest burned and legs tremble, I lay proudly at the finish knowing that I had embodied the team's spirit which allowed me to surpass personal expectations.

However, my vision is not limited solely on athletics. Through 'Team Xbot', I had shared the adversity of being an underfunded robotics team, lacking the resources to produce a component. Still aiming to be victorious, we approached each scenario in an unorthodox fashion. After a game where our robot was tilting forwards, we pondered various objects to tie onto the machine in order to evenly distribute the weight, eventually proposing and tying on two heavy hammers. Although we did not win the competition, our robot came out triumphant in its

upcoming match. As the crowd laughed at the two hammers, I sat in the stands content because we had innovated our robot by utilizing our resources to its fullest potential.

Yet, my vision in the robotics industry expands wider than competitions. Last summer, I sent numerous cold emails to local professors, whose work I was fascinated by, and landed an unpaid internship at 'Personal Robotics Laboratory'. There, I witnessed the drive in innovating robots to assist in efficiency, accessibility, and consistency. Being apart of a research team, I had experienced a rollercoaster of emotions — consistent code failures, incomprehensible errors, and successfully providing the essential data — but nevertheless, I survived by communicating with my mentors. Leaving the lab, I was prouder knowing the fact that I contributed to an impacting project — aimed to benefit at least one person's life.

That game happened years ago, but the lesson still remains. As I continue on in life, the lesson remains ingrained in my head. Since a kindergartener, it has affected my actions — whether that may be from the hobbies I enjoy, the career I pursue, or friends I make.

Each day, I embrace the day aiming to meet new people to join my team. I aim to break boundaries all while sharing my vision.