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This is a full copy of all of my writings for college applications. Every single college or scholarship is here. I'll detail the results of everything here as well.

Harvard	Deferred, Rejected	Brown PLME	Rejected
UT Austin	Accepted	Stanford	Accepted
UT Austin Deans	Rejected	WashU	Accepted
UT Austin Forty Acres	Semi-Finalist, Rejected	ASU	Accepted
U Michigan	Accepted	Northeastern	Rejected
U Michigan LSA Honors	Accepted	Colgate	Accepted
U Michigan LSA Scholars		UTD	Accepted
UCLA	Waitlisted	Jack Kent Cooke	Semifinalist, Finalist
UCSD	Accepted	Equitable Excellence	Rejected
UC Berkeley	Accepted	Toyota	Finalist, Withdrawn
USC	Accepted	Belton	Rejected
USC Merit Scholarship	Rejected	House	Finalist, Rejected
Case Western Reserve	Waitlisted	Lubell Rosen	
Case Western PPSP	Rejected	Taussig	
Rice	Accepted	Where You Go	
Rice Baylor	Rejected	DCU	Finalist
Duke	Waitlisted	BTB	
Columbia	Waitlisted	Newton	Finalist
Yale	Accepted	Superintendent	Finalist
Johns Hopkins	Rejected	Ronald McDonald	Finalist
Brown	Accepted		

Stanford Admissions File

Note that this is personal, but I think it provides some good commentary on how I went through with the application process and how my essays were received.

I requested to see my admissions file for Stanford on October 6th, 2022. I have written everything that I saw that was relevant and interesting. I was only able to take pen and paper notes, and there are some abbreviations that I'm not familiar with. Hopefully this is helpful.

Le, Thu

[just a bunch of information about me]

School: [I redacted this]

GPA: 4.65

HI GPA: 4%

Size: 163

Type of school: public

ETH: 2V, 2, 2C

Pri: 2V

Rigor|SU: NA MD

Rank: 5 [this looks to be my high school rank]

[R1 and R2]

[SPIV is apparently self presentation and intellectual vitality]

Test RTG	R1 HSR	R1 SUP	R1 EC	R1 SPIV	R1 Eval
1	3	3	3	2	2-
	R2 HSR	H2 SUP	R2 EC	R2 SPIV	R2 Eval
	3	3	3	2	2-

ACT/SAT: Y

Tags: DIV

[They listed AP scores: 9x5, 4444, 3]

Reader Committee Preparatory Form

03/06/2022

From: Committee Preparatory

To: Committee Read

Rec: "Defer/Waitlist would love to admit, but academic interest not as well fleshed out"

[I applied RD, not REA. In the end, I was accepted. I intentionally did not write about my extracurriculars in my essays. Did this backfire? I don't know.]

Reader 1 Review Form [I believe this to be R1 Reader 1]

02/11/2022

From: First Read

To: Second Read

"Thu's voice rings through so beautiful in the self presentation. He shows perceptiveness, academic engagement, humor and warmth in the writing. Thu commutes a great distance to attend [school], and we see a clear appreciation for being challenged and learning in community in the writing"

"Scores superb. Top student in [school] cohort [blanked out] EC are standard in our pool. He notes an interest in biology, while he doesn't write really write about it, he does have general STEMMy EC like research, physician shadowing, etc. Could to either way, but the PE has me rooting for him. Could be a logical waitlist" [They both complimented me and kinda roasted me. I intentionally didn't write anything about my major or anything STEMMy in my writing. R1 mentioned this. I believe R2 mentions something similar. This might've been a mistake in my application. Curious to see them fixate on physician shadowing, as it was so down low on my EC list. Definitely puts things into perspective if my activities are standard for Stanford's pool.]

Context: [lists AP scores and some other generic stuff from my profile]

"He commutes a significant amount of the each way to get to school. (He says 2 hours, seems long given mileage)"

EC: [lists a bunch of my extracurriculars]

"Jack Kent Cooke Semifinalist"

SPIV:

PE: "train commute to school and the ugly and beautiful (really beautifully done)"

IV: "love of art history"

RM: "loves movies, music, books. Mean stir-fry. Liks pop/kpop. Frank Sinatra is his favorite artist"

WM: "importance of being in committed community where learning and personal growth are shared values"

[looks like these are summaries of my supplementary essays]

Reader 2 Review

From: Second Read to committee

Rec: Right there with you R1

"Thu's voice is captivating. Writing flows easily and draws me in. Just as you think you have gotten to know him, he adds another layer to his story."

"Science interest not discussed but ECs and excellent academic profile point to a capable student. Humanities interest rings loudly in supplement [Blanked out]"

Additional Notes:

"Leaning in" [I read up on what this means. It just indicates support to admit]

"CB landscape shows high contextual challenges"

19/15 APs [Not sure what this split is. For context, I took 21 APs in high school.]

8 solids in 12th, include 8 APs

Non Cogs:

Educated commitment

[After this is some really generic info.]

[In sum: top student from a top school (We make US news top 25 lol). ECs are standard. Good essays with nuance. Admitted.]

Common App[650]

Essay

It was a dark and stormy night. Or morning. It was that time in the early hours, when all is pitch black except for the moon and the sun has yet to rise. The train doors opened. I'm greeted by heavy rain and the sickly sweet smell of cigarettes. "If I take one more step, I'll be the farthest from home I've ever been," I thought to myself.

In every way, this was a trip to my own Mordor. After attending a small charter school for nine years, I transferred to a magnet school in Dallas. And unlike the Fellowship in the Lord of the Rings, I had no giant eagles of my own. My parents worked in the mornings. With no car, my only option was a two-hour commute to school by train.

Thunder rumbled overhead, snapping me back to reality.

I hesitantly stepped forward onto the train platform. The floor was sticky, despite the pouring rain. I weaved through the crowd, pinching my nose as strangers took drags on their smokes.

Dark clouds circled overhead. "Not exactly the best weather for my first day of high school," I mused. Then again, life doesn't always go as planned. During freshmen orientation, our principal gave us a speech. He said that the journey through high school is difficult. But, he never said that the journey to high school is also difficult.

I don't belong on the train at all. I'm a kid. Everyone there is, well, an adult. There's the Hispanic lady from my neighborhood. There's the medical student in blue scrubs. There's the occasional senior, sometimes bound in a wheelchair, sometimes missing an arm or a leg. There's always a shoeless man sleeping, curled up on several seats.

And then there's me. I sit in the very front. Mother said to. It's safer there. That way, I won't be pickpocketed again.

I stood out remarkably back then.

Besides that, public transportation can be insufferable. A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. You can distinguish the train stations apart by their smell. At each train station, preachers remind you that the world will end soon. There's always police present, along with the occasional ambulance.

However, the idea that I have to travel through hell and fire to school everyday doesn't do it justice. Although they aren't exactly the people you'd expect at Platform 9¾, they're certainly just as magical in their own way.

The Hispanic lady who, despite our language differences, never failed to greet me with a polite nod as we boarded the same bus. The elderly African-American lady who

passed out tissues when it was below freezing. The man who stopped the train and assisted an old lady in a wheelchair in boarding. The many who congratulated me on winning the grand prize in the science fair, my trophy in hand and board in the other. The passing stranger who complimented my shirt. That's my favorite shirt now.

Their kindness has inspired me to be a better person. I'm always charitable when I meet panhandlers. I gave napkins and a plastic spork to the guy with ramen. I've lent my phone to the haggard man who needed to call his family when no one else on the bus did. In the winter, I give out cough drops. I've recently started handing out masks to whoever needs them.

I realize now that I am one of the many passengers on the train. We live day to day, working for a better tomorrow. I know that the transition from high school to the next chapter in my life will be daunting. I don't know where my next train will take me. But I do know that I'll meet new people, experience new smells, and learn new things. I will continue forward towards my dreams, train ticket in hand.

Additional Info (CAPP)[110]

I'd like to clarify a few things in my application.

In my common app essay I mention my commute to school. I take the train to and from school for a total of four hours everyday. Additionally, I stay after school for clubs and activities which take an additional hour. Also, I stay at school on Mondays for an additional two hours.

I may have referenced ATTAM (Advanced Topics on the Theory of Applied Mathematics). ATTAM is a class specific to my school, and may be listed as Independent Math Study on my transcript. Per the syllabus, ATTAM covers content from Discrete Mathematics, Linear Algebra, Multivariable Calculus, and Differential Equations.

Harvard[750]

Intellectual Interests? (Art + art history)[750]

I played the violin when I was young. Art History is my favorite class. I was invited to a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

We were doing introductions in our senior year ATTAM class. Everyone was in good spirits, as the class was like a homeroom for us. We all knew each other, as we had freshman calculus together four years ago.

"So which one is false?" the teacher asked.

"Art History! Art History," they all shouted. "Nobody likes Art History."

But they were wrong. I've never touched a violin in my life.

For the longest time, I was the stereotypical quiet, artsy kid. I've doodled on my quizzes and tests. I've animated my own Youtube shorts on Microsoft Powerpoint. I've block-coded games on Scratch. I've drawn my own comics. If you go to the school library, you'd find an entire shelf with my works and people would actually check them out. Art was literally my identity back then.

As the years passed, I, like most children, outgrew my little boots. Although I considered myself artsy, my skills could never compare to other art kids. Mediocrity was unfulfilling, and my envy later turned into bitterness.

It wasn't until sophomore year in high school that I revisited art. I swapped a class to AP Art History on a whim. It'd been a long time since my disappointment, and I hoped to re-experience that magic that entranced me in my youth.

I remember my first day of Art History. With bated breath, I opened the door and peeked my head in. The class was dark, save for a projection on the board. Pens stopped mid-sentence as eyes turned to look at me.

"Welcome," the teacher said. "Take a seat."

It'd not been a minute since I entered the classroom, yet I was already home. A rush of nostalgia overcame me as my eyes met with the board.

My classmates had already returned to writing their notes on their paper. But the eyes were still looking at me. Blue eyeliner. Glowing white smiles. Faces framed by locks of yellow. A singular mole on the left cheek. Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych*.

In our small, dark, yet cozy classroom, we traveled through time and space. We saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw artists of the ages capture great beauty, but also horror, grief, and tragedy. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There's Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men frozen in time, their faces stricken with despair. They're scrawny and devoid of life. They walk

forward to their deaths, some cradling their heads, others with their heads held high. There's Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* in the Sistine chapel. I particularly adored the depiction of a damned man in shock and horror as he realizes his inevitable doom. That was my phone's wallpaper for quite a while.

I've come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

I remember talking about art with my older brother until 4:00 AM, way past our bedtimes but awake as if it was day. My eldest brother calls me "art boy" in an attempt to tease me, but I take it with grace. It's fitting.

I remember my playful banter with an upperclassman, about how Durer's *Adam and Eve* is superior to Donatello's *David*. He disagrees. It's become an inside joke between us. But he's wrong. Let it be known that I've immortalized it here.

I love art because it's universal. It doesn't take an education or a great deal of time to appreciate art. Art transcends language and cultural barriers. We have eyes to see. We might as well engross ourselves in beauty.

It's funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There's the Art of Problem Solving. There's *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art *is* art.

As my years as a budding youth draw to a close, I cannot help but find myself reminiscing about my roots. And as such, it is inevitable that I think about my future. To reflect on myself, I find it more than appropriate to call upon my love for art to speak for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

Elaborate on EC[150]

In the summer after sophomore year, I was given the opportunity to join MEL Keystone. It was a program tutoring (grades 3-9) kids in mathematics. We work at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an impoverished area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it's also a fervid dream of my own. I was tutored in a reading program in elementary, and the reason I enrolled in my high school was because of an upperclassman. He was a stranger who just gave me his phone number and answered all of my questions. Tutoring was my way of paying it forward, to help others like those who helped me. I lead meetings, fill out paperwork, recruit kids, and recruit tutors. We have about 51 kids and 28 tutors total. We were also featured in the local news.

Dear Harvard,

My name is Thu Le and I am a senior from the School of Science and Engineering at Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Magnet Center.

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to review my application. Despite my initial disappointment with my deferral, I do not regret applying early action to Harvard. In my time talking with my high school's alumni at Harvard, I've reached the same conclusion as I had made previously. Harvard is still my dream school.

Although my deferral from Harvard was a setback, my senior year couldn't have progressed any better. In Journalism UIL, I'm spearheading a new initiative to film and produce a promotional video for our school. We're currently working with the school admissions committee to revamp our school image and showcase new developments. In Robotics, I'm happy to announce that this year has been our most successful year for our business team. Since my personal update, we earned an additional \$3,000 from the Gene Haas Foundation, bringing us to a total of \$21,000. This is the first time we've ever had five figures in the bank account, and honestly the possibilities seem endless.

I do, however, know for a fact that the possibilities are endless at Harvard. I want to have the Hogwarts experience at Harvard, living in Harvard's Houses and dining at Annenberg. As a native-born Texan, I want to experience the "butt freezing coldness" that my interviewer laughed about and the magical moment where all was snowy and silent in the Quad that he spoke so fondly of. I may not have been Harvard's first choice, but Harvard is still mine. It's been an amazing experience learning about and falling in love with Harvard these past few months, and I can only hope that I can do it again everyday for the next four years, this time right in the heart of Cambridge.

Yours Truly,

Thu Le

UT Austin

Why major (biology)?^[299]

Like all children, I was smitten with dinosaurs. I'd read about them in encyclopedias. There's the infamous Tyrannosaurus Rex. The long-necked Brachiosaurus. The staple Triceratops and Stegosaurus. The hard-headed Pachycephalosaurus. I explored the world from the foot of the library bookshelves.

Books hold a special place in my heart. Each and every one has a story. In the encyclopedias, you could see the story of advancements in human knowledge. In every new encyclopedia edition, there'd be some passage about new discoveries. I remember reading the newest edition and being completely baffled by the idea that my scaly dinosaurs that I've learned and loved had feathers. Impossible. Pure blasphemy.

In high school, I received the very wonderful gift of a book with a sunflower on its cover. There's a popular saying: don't judge a book by its cover. And indeed, Campbell's Biology 11th Edition was not sunshine and daisies. But like any book, it had a story. In particular, the story of life.

I remember reading about photosystems and the electron transport chain. I remember how eerily ATP Synthase looked like a turbine. I remember how fascinating it was, to see cichlid species evolving in Lake Victoria.

In the summers, I took the train to UT Southwestern. I sat through research seminars, where researchers would present their latest findings from Zebra finches' songs to hereditary breast cancer. I even attended a presentation by a Nobel Prize winner. Additionally, I was able to conduct research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes.

As a biology major, I simply hope to study biology. I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in an encyclopedia or textbook.

Leadership?[300]

In the summer after sophomore year, I was posed a question. “Do you want to tutor kids? It’s called MEL Keystone and it’s-”

“Sure,” I said. And thus began one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Since then, I’ve spent my Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings tutoring children in mathematics. We work at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an underserved area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it’s also a fervid dream of my own. The whole reason why I consider myself well-read is because I started reading after being introduced to books in preschool as part of a reading program. Additionally, the reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two high schools. He approached me unsolicitedly and just answered all of my questions; I decided on my current high school because of him. As a sophomore, I was itching to pay it forward and an opportunity to do so came right in front of me.

It’s been two years since. I’m the one leading meetings now. It feels surreal. I see bits of myself in the kids I tutor. They’re carefree. They like K-Pop and Anime. They struggle with quadratics. They’re bright.

I’ve done robotics since middle school. As the business captain of our robotics team, the one thing that I’ve always preached was “Gracious Professionalism.” It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service and leadership. I’ve taken this oath upon myself to mentor the kids before me. Whether that be coaching the team in Science UIL or explaining how FAFSA works in ASP, I strive to lead and inspire others.

Change the World[281]

I love encountering things I’ve learned about. Like finding the words *schadenfreude* and *myopic* online outside of English. Or recognizing the Bayeux Tapestry in a documentary outside of Art History. Or better yet, reading a passage about UT in a standardized test. It was about a student researcher at the Jackson School of Geosciences who had disproved a claim on the discovery of the oldest land-living organism.

Although I don’t plan on studying the huge rock we live on in great detail (fascinating, though really), I plan on doing research of my own. I believe that doing research is the most reasonable way for me to change the world. Contributing to science has been a dream of mine since middle school, and just recently it has become reality. I was able to work in a lab at UT Southwestern and develop neural networks to recognize catheter lines. I hope that I can continue making my dreams a reality at UT. Perhaps I’ll be in the Esbaugh lab fiddling with fish or playing with plants’ polyploidy in the Chen lab. Maybe in the future, I, too, will be featured in some kid’s test.

To transform lives and society is a quest I hope to surmount at UT. I plan on joining the Longhorn EMS team to serve my fellow longhorns and learn the basics of emergency services.

I'm mostly inspired by my eldest brother's horror stories as an EMT. I think it's bad taste to hope for disaster and trauma, but if they ever happen, I will be prepared to help.

I want to major in biology, conduct research, and become an EMT. Being a Longhorn will help me fulfill my ambitions.

Challenges?[300]

When I asked my father why he fled Vietnam and immigrated to America, he said, "There was no future in Vietnam. If I stayed there, I would've died." But that doesn't make sense. There's no future in America, either. Why did he have to work abroad in Singapore? Was there a future there?

I am poor. That was pounded into my brain every time I refused to go on field trips in elementary school. That was pounded into my heart every time my mother pleaded with my aunt for some money. That was pounded into my feet every time I followed my mother from store to store, scrambling for coupons and tomorrow's sustenance.

Recently, my household's income has increased. My parents no longer worry about finances. It seems that our poverty was in the past.

However, it has become a habit for me. I now have the privilege of having my family and friends laugh at me for being obnoxiously stingy with money for myself. I never went out with friends until my senior year, in fear of spending money. And even when I do go out to eat with friends, I always get soda to feel full. I wear oversized shoes and stuff napkins in them so that they'll fit.

The world can forget that I ever was poor. But I will not. And although I carry these memories with me, I will not let them extinguish my ambitions. If anything, my financial situation has taught me to make the best of what I have. I am proud to be an honors student. I am proud to be someone who is able to help others. I am proud of succeeding where so many fail.

I see it now. There is a future in America, and I will seize it.

Dean's Honors[346]

Unlike my brothers and friends who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented (GT) program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. At the time, I didn’t quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. My grades improved, my teachers complimented me, and my peers started asking me for help. Through GT, I met my two best friends. We’d sit together during class, eat together during lunch, and compete together in the same competitions. And while everyone else was learning grade-level math, we sat in the back and learned ahead. By the end of middle school, I knew Pre-Calculus and graduated as the top of my class.

Even now in high school, that label has stuck. Me and my friends are all honors students and we help each other achieve new heights. Back then, I would’ve never thought I’d come this far.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. In college, I plan on having my own tight-knit community. And at UT, I think the Dean’s Scholars Program is fit for me. I’m no stranger to research, as I’ve done my own at UT Southwestern. And I’m very much entertaining the concept of bonding with my fellow big-brained Longhorns. To be a Dean’s Scholar is much more than being an honors student or being called gifted and talented. Its promises of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic research and growth appeal to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

Forty Acres Scholars

Community[299]

In J.K. Rowling's *The Sorcerer's Stone*, a young Harry Potter meets the entirety of his Gryffindor house during the banquet after the Sorting Ceremony. There, he becomes acquainted with his fellow first-years. Throughout the series, many of them become his life-long friends. Many join Dumbledore's Army to learn to defend themselves. Many fight for Harry in the battle for Hogwarts against evil. And many of them grow up to do incredible things as the Wizarding World's equivalent of officers, prime ministers, and professors.

It's the same for me as well. My peers are some of the most incredible people I've met. One of them is learning how to fly a plane. Another one writes content on public policy. Another is nationally competitive in mathematics. They're astounding people that I can learn and be inspired from.

At UT, I want to be inspired. I want a supportive community that will foster excellence and help me grow to my full potential. Thus, I want to be a Forty Acres Scholar.

As a scholar, I ultimately look forward to the Freshman Dinner Series. I believe that everyone can appreciate good food, but even more so good company. Just as Harry is introduced to his fellow Gryffindor wizards and witches at the banquet, I want to learn about equally magical Forty Acres scholars at the dinner series. To make memories and connections with fellow peers is a great ambition of mine, and I would be honored to make them at UT as a Forty Acres Scholar.

For generations of Forty Acres Scholars to be inspired, I believe that the program should foster more interactions between all four years of scholars as well as alumni. I think that this can be achieved through a mentorship program where upperclassmen scholars would mentor underclassmen scholars.

Connection[298]

My life has been especially enriched by a mentor. In fact, the whole reason why I had chosen my high school now was because of an upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two magnet schools. I was submitting my application paperwork to the school office when he just started to talk to me. He was also Vietnamese like me, and a current student. He strongly encouraged me to choose his school and offered me his phone number to talk about it with him. His friends then whisked him away from me with offers of hot chili pepper Takis.

It's amazing how such a small encounter has influenced my future. His decision to casually approach someone who he assumed to be an applicant and help them unsolicitedly was honestly life-changing for me. I love the classes at my school and I know that there's a better community here than I would have at my other prospective school. My teachers are invested in my education, and my counselor even more so.

Back in middle school, my mathematics coach always said "97% student, 3% teacher." It was his way to make us actually study on our own time, but I believe there's more to it than that. Anyone can succeed from anywhere, but it depends on the mentors you have to unlock that full 100%. And it's true. I would've never achieved anything remotely to that 100% without the mentors I've had at the school I've chosen.

At UT, I want to unlock my 100%. I want to meet upperclassmen that dare me to dream for more and the teachers to open the doors for me to reach those dreams. As a Forty Acres Scholar, I ultimately hope to find a community that will support me in my endeavors.

Discovery[296]

This year was the first time Korean was offered as a language at my school. Since we're all seniors and planning to take it easy, a couple of my friends decided to take Korean as a joke. But it's become more than just a joke now. A few of them have gotten together to plan a trip to Korea after we all graduate high school. Although I'm neither Korean nor taking Korean, I have been invited to join them on an international trip to Korea over the summer.

As of yet, my decision to go to Korea is in a sort of limbo. I do believe that a trip to Korea will be insightful and entertaining, but I'm not sure if I can. International trips are costly and I don't have the funds.

But the people in my life still encourage me to go. My father told me about how every individual should travel the world. It's a coming-of-age sort of experience that celebrates your maturity and independence as an adult. Both of my history and my environmental science teachers also encourage me to go, citing their own experiences.

Honestly, I haven't had a grandeur fantasy to become an adventurer and explore the corners of the globe. The world's a big place, and I have yet to find my place in it, much less explore it. But as a senior imagining my future as a college student, I'm starting to realize the endless possibilities I can do in life. To be enrolled into UT, much less than being a Dean's Scholar, is one such possibility that I'm starting to daydream about. But if I am ever a Dean's Scholar, I can only hope to grow as an individual, perhaps through a global experience of my own. Perhaps I'll visit Korea.

U Michigan

Communities you belong in?[296]

At my school, I'm one of the few out-of-district students. Meaning, I attend a public school in Dallas, but I don't live in Dallas. I'm originally supposed to attend a high school next to my house. It's so close that I can hear their marching band play. And every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. Every morning, I take two buses and two trains to school, which takes me two hours. And then I repeat it in the afternoon to get home.

Commuting to school is hard for me as an out-of-district student. But arguably, getting admitted into my school is even harder. See, since out-of-district students didn't live in Dallas, they didn't pay taxes to Dallas and were therefore "lower-priority." All of the out-of-district applicants were placed at the bottom of the pile to be considered only when all eligible in-district students were enrolled. And luckily, in the year I applied, my high school drastically increased its class size by half. I got in during the second round of admissions.

As out-of-district students, we didn't know anyone in the beginning. Many of us were the only ones from our middle school to be admitted. So we bonded through our long commute times, rigorous coursework, and a general lack of roots. I'm proud that I'm a member of a small group of people who've succeeded in the face of insurmountable odds. I hope that I will also be a member of such a community at U Michigan.

Why UMich[363]

Like all children, I was smitten with dinosaurs. I'd read about them all in an encyclopedia. There's the infamous Tyrannosaurus Rex. The long-necked Brachiosaurus. The staple Triceratops and Stegosaurus. The hard-headed Pachycephalosaurus. It was fun to explore the world from the foot of the library bookshelves.

For me, books hold a special place in my heart. Each and every one has a story. In the encyclopedias, you could see the story of advancements in human knowledge. In every new encyclopedia edition, there'd be some passage about new discoveries. I remember reading the newest edition and being completely baffled by the idea that my scaly dinosaurs that I've learned and loved had feathers. Impossible. Pure blasphemy.

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In the summers, I'd take the train to UT Southwestern. I'd sit through research seminars, where researchers would present their latest findings from Zebra finches and their songs to hereditary breast cancer. I even had the opportunity to attend a presentation by a Nobel Prize winner. Additionally, I was able to conduct research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes. It was insightful to actually meet professionals in the field, and that experience has guided me through what I wanted to do as a career. My lab's principal investigator actually graduated from U Michigan and spoke well of it.

As an aspiring wolverine, I hope to study biology at U Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and Arts. I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in an encyclopedia or textbook.

LSA Honors

Why Honors

Unlike my brothers who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. I didn’t understand why an intelligence test allowed me to be pulled out of class to play board games.

Although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. Being called talented didn’t change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you’re around great people, you do great things.

We grow because of the people we draw inspiration from. UMichigan’s promise of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic and personal growth appeals to me, and I dare to hope that I’ll be part of it.

What Heals you

In the summer before senior year, I was, like always, cooped up in my room on my computer. But instead of surfing the internet or playing video games, I was on a Zoom call for a college interview. “What would your friends describe you as?” my interviewer asked.

If you had asked me a year ago, I would’ve offered my introvertedness nested among a string of various standard qualities. And that much is true among my school friends. I’m a person of small words, and I hardly ever engage in conversation. But, it is a half-truth to describe me as a person. At home among family, I am arguably annoying and I chatter incessantly. However, rather than some relation to an arbitrary definition of personality, I believe that this contrast in personality lies more in the topic of the conversation.

And that belief has been cemented recently. Just as how disappointing Junior year has been in terms of school life with the entire world pandemic, my Senior year has been a blast. Since senior year has started, I’ve never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. This is true, regardless if I haven’t talked to them since freshman year or I had just recently learned their name. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I’m a much happier person. I talk to people, they talk to me, and together we dream about our future. I’ve reconnected with friends I haven’t talked to since middle school. I’ve been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities. I talk to friends in class, during lunch, on my commute home, and at midnight. There are times when I’m quite literally texting five people at a time while being on call with another. Just today, I woke up to my alarm as well as a text from one of my friends regarding the Coalition application.

But it’s evolved into something more than just talking. I like to think that I’m well-read, and in extension, a decent writer. Whenever I do share my essays, both friends and teachers seem to like it and I usually get positive feedback. To be honest, it has fed my ego that my teacher said that they enjoyed

reading my essays and my counselor commented that I'm an unusually strong writer for my age. Although I know that I'm not a Mary Shelley or a Christopher Paloni, I'm very proud of my essays and I always feel bubbly after these conversations. But it cannot compare to the euphoria I experience in helping others.

I was on the train home with a friend, reading their essay on their phone. Everything just clicked together; reading their essay immediately made me understand why they were like the way they were. It was insight to the person as a whole, uncovering an entire half missing from the one I know at school. It was so honest and true to their person. I honestly was invested in that piece of writing as if it were my own. For the next forty minutes, I started rambling on how good it was and bounced ideas off each other to perfect it. In that time frame, I had come up with better ideas than I'd ever write for my own essays that I literally had goosebumps. We had the same light in our eyes – that spark of realization that makes your heart race and tremble with excitement. It's the same light that reflects off your eyes when you stare mesmerized at a brilliant flame that warms your very soul. That essay was quite literally fire. I remember getting off my train stop with a hot sweat down my back, the same type you wake up in after a vivid dream.

That was probably the most surreal of my experiences in helping others with their college applications. I've had similar experiences, but none of them come close to what happened that night. I am genuinely proud of these experiences. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' essays is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in their stories, both in their essays and in their lives. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

LSA Scholars

Career

Like all children, I was smitten with dinosaurs. I'd read about them in encyclopedias. There's the infamous Tyrannosaurus Rex. The long-necked Brachiosaurus. The staple Triceratops and Stegosaurus. The hard-headed Pachycephalosaurus. I explored the world from the foot of the library bookshelves.

Books hold a special place in my heart. Each and every one has a story. In the encyclopedias, you could see the story of advancements in human knowledge. In every new encyclopedia edition, there'd be some passage about new discoveries. I remember reading the newest edition and being completely baffled by the idea that my scaly dinosaurs that I've learned and loved had feathers. Impossible. Pure blasphemy.

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In the summers, I took the train to UT Southwestern. I sat through research seminars, where researchers would present their latest findings from Zebra finches' songs to hereditary breast cancer. I even attended a presentation by a Nobel Prize winner. Additionally, I was able to conduct research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes.

As a biology major, I simply hope to study biology. I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in an encyclopedia or textbook.

What are you looking for in a college? What colleges?

I'm looking for three things in my college experience.

I want to either have efficient public transportation to places or have everything I need in an immediate area. I've heard that Michigan has a decent public transportation system, and Ann Arbor in particular is a good college town. Some of my friends from high school have also got into UMich, so I don't think I'll be bored there in terms of social life.

From my experiences in high school, I plan on having my own tight-knit community college. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you're around great people, you do great things. I think that every college has people that I'll find enjoyable to surround myself with, and at UMich that is no exception.

College is a new chapter in my life, and I'm expecting the certain freedoms that come with it. The world's a big place, and I have yet to find my place in it, much less explore it. But I

think I can grow as an individual if I get outside of my comfort zone. Thus, I want to go out of state.

My college list is mostly open, and I'm still not sure where I'll end up. But I'm sure that I'll be happy wherever I go. I've applied to UMich, Case Western, Rice, Harvard, Yale, UT Austin, UT Dallas, John Hopkins, Stanford, Brown, Columbia, and Duke.

Non-Financial Obstacles

Every morning, I walk to my local high school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. My daily commute consists of taking four trains and four buses to school, for a total of four hours. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. I got my wallet stolen on my first day.

However, the idea that I have to travel through hell and fire to school everyday doesn't do it justice. Although they aren't exactly the people you'd expect at Platform 9¾, they're certainly just as magical in their own way.

The Hispanic lady who, despite our language differences, never failed to greet me with a polite nod as we boarded the same bus. The many who congratulated me on winning the grand prize in the science fair, my trophy in hand and board in the other.

I want to be someone who helps others, like how others have helped me. I think the train is nothing short of inspiration. Recently, I've found other role models on the train that I've decided to emulate: the medical students. I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

How you gonna live in college bruh

In our household, it was not a question of if we'd go to college, but which college we'd go to. This wasn't a heavy expectation for my brothers and I, as we were all rather ambitious students. We were all talented in our own right, and had built a reputation of academic excellence in middle school. We were championed as the family of valedictorians. But in truth, I struggled to uphold this air of excellence and have my own identity. To my teachers and peers, I was "Mini-Minh" or "small Quan".

Then came high school. My brothers decided to enter into a very well-known accelerated high school up north from home. One graduated with honors and a full-ride. The other almost failed out and ended up with a copious amount of debt.

In any case, I've practically adopted this mindset that I have to provide for myself. I chose to enroll into a Title I magnet school down south from home. Everything I've done in high school has been paid by the government. The SATs, AP tests, train tickets, score reports, and college applications I've done come out to \$8,600. For college, I plan on graduating debt-free. All of the schools I've applied to give good financial aid and I've applied to a lot of scholarships. I plan to do research in college and get paid. I'm learning how to cook on the weekends, so that I'm not reliant on campus dining. I'll manage.

Community Service

In the summer after sophomore year, I was posed a question. "Do you want to tutor kids? It's called MEL Keystone and it's-"

"Sure," I said. And thus began the most rewarding experience of my life.

Since then, I've spent my Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings tutoring children in mathematics. We work at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an underserved area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it's also a fervid dream of my own. The reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. He approached me unsolicitedly and just answered all of my questions; I decided on my current high school because of him. As a sophomore, I was itching to pay it forward and an opportunity to do so came right in front of me.

It's been two years since. I'm the one leading meetings now. It feels surreal. I see bits of myself in the kids I tutor. They're carefree. They like K-Pop and Anime. They struggle with quadratics. They're bright.

I've done robotics since middle school. As the business captain of our robotics team, the one thing that I've always preached was "Gracious Professionalism." It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service and leadership. Whether that be coaching the team in Science UIL or explaining how FAFSA works in ASP, I strive to lead and inspire others.

Awards

Jack Kent Cooke Semifinalist [finalist status unknown]

UT Austin Forty Acres Semifinalist [finalist status unknown]

Science UIL

Juan Seguin High School Invitational 2019-2020 | 1st Place Individual

James Bowie High School Invitational 2019-2020 | 1st Place Individual

Burleson High School Invitational 2019-2020 | 1st Place Individual, 1st Place Biology, 1st Place Chemistry, 1st Place Physics, 1st Place Team

Grandview High School 2019-2020 | 1st Place Individual, 1st Place Physics, 2nd Place Team

Texas Math and Science Coaches' Association 2021 | 5th Place Individual, 2nd Place Team

2020-2021 HS Virtual Meet 1 | 2nd Place Team (5A), 2nd Place Individual (5A)

2020-2021 HS Virtual Meet 3| 1st Place Team (5A), 1st Place Individual (5A), 3rd Place Biology (5A), 1st Place Chemistry (5A), 3rd Place Physics (5A)

UIL District 2021 | 2nd Place Individual, 1st Place Biology, 1st Place Team

First Robotics Challenge

November Qualifier 2018-2019| Inspire Award

Creativity Award 2021 in Game Design Challenge (Ruthenium Group)

Five FIRST grants for \$5,200

NASA Sustaining Grant for \$5,000

NASA Grant for \$450

Raytheon Grant \$2000

BAE Electronic Systems Grant \$500

Gene Haas Foundation Grant for \$3000

Science Fair

1st Place District Engineering and Mechanics 2019

1st Place District Microbiology 2020

UT Southwestern Medical Center Best of Fair 2020

2nd District Place Microbiology 2021

Journalism UIL

District 2019| 1st Place Individual Editorial Writing (6A), 2nd Place Individual Feature Writing (6A), 1st Place Journalism Team (6A)

District 2021| 1st Place Journalism Team (5A), 1st Place Editorial Writing (5A), 1st Place Feature Writing (5A), 2nd Place News Writing (5A)

UC Schools

4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

school350

“When you’re in high school, don’t overload yourself,” my 8th grade English teacher said, chiding us as we wrote letters to our future high school selves. “Take three to six AP classes max.”

As a current high school senior, I will have taken 21 AP classes by the end of the year. Sometimes I find my schedule to be exhausting, but I don’t regret it. Applying to a magnet school has been one of the best decisions I’ve made.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. Going to my school has opened up so many opportunities for me. Compared to my old middle school, there’s just so much more. I’ve been able to take all of the classes I’ve wanted. I’ve competed in the academic competitions that I so desperately wished to compete in. We have six robotics teams and championship teams in various academic competitions, and I’m actually captain for our best FRC team and our science team. We actually compete (and win) against my old robotics team every year. And despite going to a heavily STEM focused school, I’m able to return to my interests in art and writing through classes and our journalism club. I’ve been able to take AP tests and SAT tests, send test scores, get transportation to academic competitions, get train passes, and apply to colleges for free. If I were to pay for all of that, it’d be at least \$8,600. But I don’t; my school does.

I got the letter my past-self wrote at the end of my freshman year. It was filled with a bunch of hopes and dreams that I had for my highschool self, of better mental health and a better future. It’s been about two and half years since then, and I concur with my freshman self. I’m doing better than I’ve ever thought, and honestly, the dreams we’ve had don’t seem so unreachable anymore.

5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

train332

Despite our financial hardships, my family has always encouraged me to prioritize my education. So I applied to a magnet school and got in. I’m originally supposed to attend a high

school next to my house. It's so close to my house that I can hear their marching band play. And every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. My daily commute consists of taking four trains and four buses to school, for a total of four hours. During freshmen orientation, our principal gave us a speech. He said that the journey through high school is difficult. But, he never said that the journey *to* high school is also difficult.

And the long commute is sometimes the least troublesome. A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. You can distinguish the train stations apart by their smell. At each train station, preachers remind you that the world will end soon. There's always police present, along with the occasional ambulance. I got my wallet stolen on my first day.

Although it's not exactly the trains at Platform 9¾, the trains I board take me to just as magical places. In addition to taking the train to a magnet school, I take the train to my radiology lab at UT Southwestern in the summers. On weekends, I take the train to the Dallas Museum of Art and immerse myself in the art galleries or to the cinema to watch movies with my friends. I've been able to do the academic opportunities I enjoy and have a social life outside of school. It's been liberating to have your own independent (albeit slow and inefficient) transportation everywhere. It can be exhausting, but it has added to my academic achievement rather than taken away from it.

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

art history350

For the longest time, I was the stereotypical quiet, artsy kid. I've doodled on my quizzes and tests. I've animated my own Youtube shorts on Microsoft Powerpoint. I've drawn my own comics. If you go to the school library, you'd find an entire shelf with my works and people would actually check them out. Art was literally my identity back then.

But it wasn't until sophomore year in high school that I revisited art. I swapped a class to AP Art History on a whim, hoping to re-experience that magic that entranced me in my youth.

In our classroom, we traveled through time and space. We saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw artists of the ages capture great beauty, but also horror, grief, and tragedy. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There's Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men frozen in time, their faces stricken with despair. They walk forward to their deaths, some cradling their

heads, others with their heads held high. There's Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* in the Sistine chapel. I particularly adored the depiction of a damned man in shock and horror as he realizes his inevitable doom. That was my phone's wallpaper for some time.

I've come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

I remember my playful banter with an upperclassman, about how Durer's *Adam and Eve* is superior to Donatello's *David*. He disagrees. It's become an inside joke between us. But he's wrong. Let it be known that I've immortalized it here.

It's funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There's the Art of Problem Solving. There's *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art is art. To reflect on myself, I find it appropriate to call on Art History to speak for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

MEL340

In the summer after sophomore year, I was posed a question. "Do you want to tutor kids? It's called MEL Keystone and it's-"

"Sure," I said. And thus began one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Since then, I've spent my Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings tutoring children in mathematics. We work at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an underserved area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it's also a fervid dream of my own. The reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two high schools. He approached me unsolicitedly and just answered all of my questions; I decided on my current high school because of him. As a sophomore, I was itching to pay it forward and an opportunity to do so came right in front of me.

It's been two years since. I'm the one leading meetings now. It feels surreal. I see bits of myself in the kids I tutor. They're carefree. They like K-Pop and Anime. They struggle with quadratics. They're bright.

I've done robotics since middle school. As the business captain of our robotics team, the one thing that I've always preached was "Gracious Professionalism." It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service and kindness. It's become something I strive to practice in my everyday life, not just at MEL Keystone. Every year, we park our robotics team's Mobile Lab at the Dallas STEM expo to teach kids how to code. Every Monday, I work as an ASP student ambassador with counselors to help kids get into college. Every Tuesday, I teach science to underclassmen in preparation of our Science UIL competitions. Every Wednesday, I teach underclassmen how to work with robotics tools.

As I embark on the next chapter of my life, I plan to continue to employ gracious professionalism in both college and in life.

USC

Art2[250]

I play the violin. Art History is my favorite class. I attended a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

“So which one’s false?” the teacher asked.

“Art History! Art History,” my classmates shouted. “Nobody likes Art History.”

But they were wrong. I’ve never touched a violin in my life.

In AP Art History, we saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There’s Rodin’s *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men walk forward to their deaths, some cradling their heads, others with their heads held high. There’s Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement*. I particularly adored the damned man horrified by his inevitable doom.

I’ve come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

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It’s funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There’s the Art of Problem Solving. There’s *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art *is* art. My love for Art History speaks for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

Describe how you plan to pursue your academic interests and why you want to explore them at USC specifically. Please feel free to address your first- and second-choice major selections.
(Approximately 250 words)

Why USC

Of all of the schools I’m applying to this school year, USC is the closest and truest to my interests. In high school, I’ve become enamoured with biology as a whole. Learning about P680 and P700 in photosystems, trying to memorize all of the products and enzymes in glycolysis for fun, and learning about cichlid evolution in Lake Victoria has been fascinating. Attending research seminars (one of which by a Nobel Laureate) and doing research at my radiology lab at UT Southwestern have both been high school highlights. But before all of that, I was interested in the arts.

For the longest time, I was the stereotypical quiet, artsy kid. I’ve doodled on my quizzes and tests. I’ve animated my own Youtube shorts on Microsoft Powerpoint. I’ve block-coded games

on Scratch. I've drawn my own comics. If you go to the school library, you'd find an entire shelf with my works and people would actually check them out. Art was literally my identity back then.

After taking Art History, I want to re-experience that magic that had entranced me in my youth. I have not yet decided to forsake biology, and by extension an interest in medicine. Perhaps I will go full Ken Jeong and pursue the arts. All my life, I've been presented with the ultimatum STEM or the Arts. But I reject this premise, this false dilemma. At USC, I will craft my own path and study both biology and the cinematic arts.

Describe yourself in 3 words

Reliable, compassionate, chill

Favorite snack?

Hummus and chips, bonus points if there's pesto sauce and olives

Best movie

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Dream job

Movie Director/Physician

Theme song

I've Got the World on a String, Frank Sinatra

Dream trip

MoMA at New York

TV show to binge?

Arcane

Fictional character that is ideal roommate

Luna Lovegood

Favorite book

Flowers for Algernon

Teach a class. What topic is it?

Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Arts - a History

Dornsife prompt

"What would your friends describe you as?"

If you had asked me a year ago, I would've offered my introvertedness nested among a string of various standard qualities. I'm a person of small words, and I hardly ever engage in

conversation. But that has recently become a half-truth to describe me as a person. But rather than excusing myself as an introvert, I believe that this change in personality lies more in the circumstances that surround me.

Since senior year has started, I've never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. This is true, regardless if I haven't talked to them since freshman year or I had just recently learned their name. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I'm a much happier person. I've reconnected with friends I haven't talked to since middle school. I've been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning.

I'm glad that I've had the opportunity to connect with others, and I regret not knowing others sooner. In the words of Bilbo Baggins, "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve." There are amazing people out there. Go out into the world and make relationships that you will never regret.

Case Western Reserve University (PPSP)

By applying to the Pre-Professional Scholars Program, you are applying to gain admission to professional school earlier than students who apply in the traditional way. Please indicate why you're interested in your chosen profession. How do you see yourself being particularly suited to this field? What events and/or experiences have led you to your choice? This essay should be between 250 and 500 words in length.*

PPSP[Why Med Final]

"Healing hands." That's my father's nickname for me when I'm massaging his back and right arm. He says that it's not the same when my older brothers do it because I have this "hot energy" inside me.

Ever since I was young, my two older brothers and I were tasked to give our parents a massage every night until they both fell asleep or our arms got tired, whichever came first. After continuing this routine for the majority of my life, I daresay that I've gotten quite good at it.

I've thought about becoming a massage therapist. To alleviate others' pains and aches is something I can see myself doing and take pride in. But I think that there's more I can offer to the world than just that. Because of this, I believe that the prospect of working in medicine appeals to me the most. At its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

I take the train to and from school everyday. And everyday along my route, I pass by UT Southwestern. It's pretty easy to notice when you're approaching the UT Southwestern train station besides the campus and hospital buildings; there's a great deal more people on the train with arm slings, leg braces, IV bags, wheelchairs, and the sort. Now, in my four years of experience in riding public transportation, I stand by the notion that the people on public transportation are singularly the kindest, most compassionate, and most genuine people I've ever met.

I remember talking to one of them. It was a cold, Saturday evening sometime in January, and I was coming home alone from a Science Fair competition. He sat across from me, and started to congratulate me after eyeing my trophy. We talked about life, about what I wanted to do when I grew up and how he'd just gotten discharged from one of the various hospitals at UT Southwestern. He only made small talk and gave me some generic advice, but it meant a lot to me at that time. I was feeling a bit down, as I realized how sad it was to have no one to share my happiness with.

Even still, he wasn't the only one who congratulated me – other commuters did as well throughout the long ride home. This experience, coupled with other positive memories, have shaped my aspirations in life. I want to be someone who helps others, like how others have helped me. I think the train is nothing short of inspiration. Recently, I've found other role models on the train that I've decided to emulate. Everyday on the train, I can't help but watch the crowd of medical students and professionals disembark at UT Southwestern. I know the path of

becoming a physician is long and arduous. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

In the college application process, you are constantly prompted for a list of your achievements, awards, and accomplishments. While this information is useful to us, we are interested in hearing more about you. Describe an event, achievement, or experience of which you are particularly proud but that will not show up on a resume, may not garner any recognition, and does not appear anywhere else on your admission application. This essay should not exceed 750 words in length.

Pride 3

In the summer before senior year, I was, like always, cooped up in my room on my computer. But instead of surfing the internet or playing video games, I was on a Zoom call for my Case Western interview. "What would your friends describe you as?" my interviewer asked.

If you had asked me a year ago, I would've offered my introvertedness nested among a string of various standard qualities. And that much is true among my school friends. I'm a person of small words, and I hardly ever engage in conversation. But, it is a half-truth to describe me as a person. At home among family, I am arguably annoying and I chatter incessantly. However, rather than some relation to an arbitrary definition of personality, I believe that this contrast in personality lies more in the topic of the conversation.

And that belief has been cemented recently. Just as how disappointing Junior year has been in terms of school life with the entire world pandemic, my Senior year has been a blast. Since senior year has started, I've never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. This is true, regardless if I haven't talked to them since freshman year or I had just recently learned their name. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I'm a much happier person. I talk to people, they talk to me, and together we dream about our future. I've reconnected with friends I haven't talked to since middle school. I've been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities. I talk to friends in class, during lunch, on my commute home, and at midnight. There are times when I'm quite literally texting five people at a time while being on call with another. Just today, I woke up to my alarm as well as a text from one of my friends regarding the Coalition application.

But it's evolved into something more than just talking. I like to think that I'm well-read, and in extension, a decent writer. Whenever I do share my essays, both friends and teachers seem to like it and I usually get positive feedback. To be honest, it has fed my ego that my teacher said that they enjoyed reading my essays and my counselor commented that I'm an unusually strong writer for my age. Although I know that I'm not a Mary Shelley or a Christopher Paloni, I'm very proud of my essays and I always feel bubbly after these conversations. But it cannot compare to the euphoria I experience in helping others.

I was on the train home with a friend, reading their essay on their phone. Everything just clicked together; reading their essay immediately made me understand why they were like the way they were. It was insight to the person as a whole, uncovering an entire half missing from the one I know at school. It was so honest and true to their person. I honestly was invested in that piece of writing as if it were my

own. For the next forty minutes, I started rambling on how good it was and bounced ideas off each other to perfect it. In that time frame, I had come up with better ideas than I'd ever write for my own essays that I literally had goosebumps. We had the same light in our eyes – that spark of realization that makes your heart race and tremble with excitement. It's the same light that reflects off your eyes when you stare mesmerized at a brilliant flame that warms your very soul. That essay was quite literally fire. I remember getting off my train stop with a hot sweat down my back, the same type you wake up in after a vivid dream.

That was probably the most surreal of my experiences in helping others with their college applications. I've had similar experiences, but none of them come close to what happened that night. I am genuinely proud of these experiences. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' essays is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in their stories, both in their essays and in their lives. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

Rice University (Rice Baylor)

The questions on this page are being asked by Rice University

The Admission Committee is interested in getting to know each student as well as possible through the application process. Please respond to each of the following prompts.

1. Please explain why you wish to study in the academic areas you selected above.
(150)

Major

In high school, I received the very wonderful gift of a book with a sunflower on its cover. There's a popular saying: don't judge a book by its cover. And indeed, Campbell's Biology 11th Edition was not sunshine and daisies. But like any book, it had a story. In particular, the story of life.

I remember reading about photosystems' P680 and P700 and ATP Synthase's architecture. In the summers, I took the train to UT Southwestern. I sat through research seminars, where researchers would present their latest findings from Zebra finches' songs to hereditary breast cancer. Additionally, I conducted research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes.

As a biology major, I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in a textbook.

2. Based upon your exploration of Rice University, what elements of the Rice experience appeal to you? (150)

Why Rice

Of all of the schools I'm applying to, Rice is the homeliest. Not only is it quite literally close to home, but the culture and people are close to home as well. There's a huge alumni network from my high school. My brother in Will Rice has told me quite a lot about Beer Bike and Baker 13, and overall Rice has a pleasant aura around it. I got to explore the campus a few times while I was in Houston. There's the absolutely gorgeous running trail near campus, where the trees kind of create a tunnel. There's the Texas Medical Center nearby as well, which aligns with my interests. I aspire to be one of the many who pass through Sallyport next year and matriculate into Rice.

3. 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 and undergraduate life are heavily influenced by the unique life experiences and cultural tradition each student brings. What life perspectives would you contribute to the Rice community? (500 words)

Life Perspectives

When people ask me “what type of Asian I am”, I say that I’m Vietnamese. They don’t pry further than that, because to the simple observer, I certainly look the part.

But I’m not that Vietnamese. Despite my heritage, I can’t hold a conversation to save my life. When I was in Vietnam, my parents told me to go to the hotel lobby and ask for a bag. Probably five minutes tops, right? I was in that hotel lobby for half an hour. Later, I played Bingo with my cousin. I still remember the awkward pauses between calling the numbers and then translating them in English.

Technically speaking, I’m half-Vietnamese and half-Hongkongese. Although both of my parents were born in Vietnam, my mother’s family emigrated from Hong Kong.

My mother was the youngest of five. She worked in a sweatshop since she was eight years old to support her siblings in college. Although she was in the top of her class, she couldn’t finish high school due to discrimination from the North Vietnamese government.

My father was the oldest of twelve. He fled Vietnam during the Sino-Vietnamese war. He bribed his way onto a smugglers’ ship, which then was destroyed by a storm. He then swam to a small island, but was captured by Chinese soldiers and deported to a United Nations refugee camp in Hong Kong. There, he’d work odd jobs and act as a translator to pay for his immigration to America.

I do cherish my asian heritage. But before I am Vietnamese or Hongkongese, I am my mother’s and father’s son. I am the youngest of three. I may not be able to speak the languages of my ancestors, but I hear their voices all the same. I will move forward to secure a better life for my family, like my ancestors did before me.

4. What aspirations, experiences or relationships have motivated you to study in the eight-year Rice/Baylor Medical Scholars Program?(500 words)

Rice Baylor[Why Med Final]

“Healing hands.” That’s my father’s nickname for me when I’m massaging his back and right arm. He says that it’s not the same when my older brothers do it because I have this “hot energy” inside me.

Ever since I was young, my two older brothers and I were tasked to give our parents a massage every night until they both fell asleep or our arms got tired, whichever came first. After continuing this routine for the majority of my life, I daresay that I’ve gotten quite good at it.

I've thought about becoming a massage therapist. To alleviate others' pains and aches is something I can see myself doing and take pride in. But I think that there's more I can offer to the world than just that. Because of this, I believe that the prospect of working in medicine appeals to me the most. At its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

I take the train to and from school everyday. And everyday along my route, I pass by UT Southwestern. It's pretty easy to notice when you're approaching the UT Southwestern train station besides the campus and hospital buildings; there's a great deal more people on the train with arm slings, leg braces, IV bags, wheelchairs, and the sort. Now, in my four years of experience in riding public transportation, I stand by the notion that the people on public transportation are singularly the kindest, most compassionate, and most genuine people I've ever met.

I remember talking to one of them. It was a cold, Saturday evening sometime in January, and I was coming home alone from a Science Fair competition. He sat across from me, and started to congratulate me after eyeing my trophy. We talked about life, about what I wanted to do when I grew up and how he'd just gotten discharged from one of the various hospitals at UT Southwestern. He only made small talk and gave me some generic advice, but it meant a lot to me at that time. I was feeling a bit down, as I realized how sad it was to have no one to share my happiness with.

Even still, he wasn't the only one who congratulated me – other commuters did as well throughout the long ride home. This experience, coupled with other positive memories, have shaped my aspirations in life. I want to be someone who helps others, like how others have helped me. I think the train is nothing short of inspiration. Recently, I've found other role models on the train that I've decided to emulate. Everyday on the train, I can't help but watch the crowd of medical students and professionals disembark at UT Southwestern. I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

5. Outside of academics, what do you enjoy doing most? 300

Hobby

During my sophomore year of high school, I found myself with an uncharacteristically large amount of free time. At that time, the COVID 19 pandemic took off and what started was the longest spring break of my life. We were on break and online school for about 500 days. In total, I spent 48 days and one hour, or 9.6% of that time playing League of Legends (League).

League of Legends is a popular video game involving two teams of five players. In essence, League involves killing the enemy team and destroying the enemy base. In each team, there are five roles, one of which is the support role. I almost always play as a support. It's something that I personally enjoy, because as a support player, my responsibilities are to keep others alive. This usually means protecting my team from the other team, which is often less glorious and flashy compared to the other roles. But playing support has its merits, as I get to play hero and save my

teammates from disaster, oftentimes sacrificing myself in the process.

I like to think of it as babysitting my team members, and it's often like how a mother nurtures her young. You sacrifice a lot of blood, sweat, and tears in raising them. You have to fix their mistakes. You're often sidelined in their successes. But in the end, a mother's joy comes from their children's. Playing in order to support others and to let them have a good time is my favorite part of the game. Win or lose, my satisfaction comes from the idea that I help others have a good time.

6. Describe the most difficult adversity you have faced, and describe how you dealt with it. 300

Adversity

At my school, I'm one of the few out-of-district students. Meaning, I attend a public school in Dallas, but I don't live in Dallas. I'm originally supposed to attend a high school next to my house. It's so close that I can hear their marching band play. And every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. Every morning, I take two buses and two trains to school, which takes me two hours. And then I repeat it in the afternoon to get home.

Commuting to school is hard for me as an out-of-district student. But arguably, getting admitted into my school is even harder. See, since out-of-district students didn't live in Dallas, they didn't pay taxes to Dallas and were therefore "lower-priority." All of the out-of-district applicants were placed at the bottom of the pile to be considered only when all eligible in-district students were enrolled. And luckily, in the year I applied, my high school drastically increased its class size by half. I got in during the second round of admissions.

As out-of-district students, we didn't know anyone in the beginning. Many of us were the only ones from our middle school to be admitted. So we bonded through our long commute times, rigorous coursework, and a general lack of roots. I'm proud that I'm a member of a small group of people who've succeeded in the face of insurmountable odds. I hope that I will also be a member of such a community at Rice University.

Duke University

Why Duke

Besides Duke Chapel's towering spires and their breathtaking stained-glass windows, I find beauty in Duke University's opportunities in interdisciplinary study. I've always loved science, but Art History has been my absolute favorite class. Through Duke's FOCUS program, I want to join the Scientists, Artists, and Polymaths in the Renaissance cluster and study both STEM and the Arts.

In addition to interdisciplinary studies, I want to continue doing research at Duke. To me, I believe that research is one of the most rewarding parts of science. My time working in a research lab was both fascinating and insightful, and I greatly enjoyed how supportive my lab was. I plan to find a similar community at Duke.

But all of these plans are at the time being, simply dreams. I can only lie in bed and daydream as I gaze at the Duke Chapel poster on my wall. "Other than the architecture, nothing here is set in stone." I could join the Duke EMS squad, intern at the largest lemur sanctuary in the world, or have FLUNCH with my professors. But maybe one day, I'll set foot inside Duke Chapel as a Blue Devil and immerse myself in all its glory.

Community

Unlike my brothers who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented (GT) program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the "smartest" kids in my grade. At the time, I didn't quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything "gifted and talented" in the actual program, I started to do "gifted and talented" things. My grades improved, my teachers complimented me, and my peers started asking me for help. Being called talented didn't change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you're around great people, you do great things.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual's haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. In college, I plan on having my own tight-knit community. To be a Blue Devil is so much more than being an honors student or being called gifted and talented. Its promises of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic research and growth appeal to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

Columbia

HS books

Wealth of Nations; The Communist Manifesto; A Vindication of the Rights of Women; Incidents of the Life of a Slave Girl; The Destructive Male; Emile/On Education; What is Enlightenment; Leviathan; Letter from a Birmingham Jail

The Hobbit; The Epic of Gilgamesh; The Odyssey; A Midnight Summer's Dream; Frankenstein; 1984; Story of an Hour; O Captain! My Captain!; The Lady, or the Tiger?; The Road not Taken; Mending Walls; When I have Fears

Independent books

Flowers for Algernon; Pet Sematary; Macbeth; The God Equation; Seven Brief Lessons of Physics; How to Teach Quantum Physics to Your Dog; Red Rising; Golden Son; Morning Star; Iron Gold; The Pearl; Fahrenheit 451; Red Scarf Girl; Redwall; American Gods

Other content

Dr. Glaucomflecken; Medlife Crisis; Jam_and_germs: Journey to the Microcosmos; Institute of Human Anatomy; UT Southwestern Pre-Health Virtual Shadowing

The Organic Chemistry Tutor; MIT OpenCourseware; Khan Academy; Dallas Museum of Art; Smart History; National Geographic; TED-Ed; Kurzgesagt; Flammable Maths; BlackPenRedPen; 3Blue1Brown; Mind your Decisions

OverlySarcastic Productions; Schafrillas Production; 1Million Dance Studio; Batzorig Vaanchig; Two Steps from Hell; Nino's Home; Dad, How do I?; Daria Cohen; NileRed; LockPickingLawyer; Corridor; Joel Haver

Community200

Unlike my brothers who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. I didn't quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. Being called talented didn’t change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you’re around great people, you do great things.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. Columbia’s promise of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic and personal growth appeals to me, and I dare to hope that I will be part of it.

Why Columbia200

Science and Engineering. Talented and Gifted. Government and Law. Business and Management. Education and Social Services. Health Professions. We have six magnet schools on one campus.

But, you can choose only one school. I’m in the School of Science and Engineering. Everyone else knows us as the big-brained masochists who take too many math classes. But that’s a half-truth.

Sure, I find linear algebra fun and all, but I’m nerdier than that. I don’t want to pigeonhole myself into one interest. I’m a reader, a writer, and an art enthusiast. I believe that a good education should strive to produce cultured individuals. And being in New York, Columbia is rich in culture. As such, Columbia appeals to me.

I want to fall in love with the brain in Neurobiology (like Dr. Strange), immerse myself in Eighteenth Century Art in Europe, and discuss literature and philosophies in seminars. I want to spend the days before classes at the Met. I want to see the hustle and bustle of New York City and take the trains everyday, while listening to Frank Sinatra’s New York, New York. At Columbia, I want to be myself and more.

Why major200

In high school, I received the very wonderful gift of a book with a sunflower on its cover. There’s a popular saying: don’t judge a book by its cover. And indeed, Campbell’s Biology 11th Edition was not sunshine and daisies. But like any book, it had a story. In particular, the story of life.

I remember reading about photosystems and the electron transport chain. I remember how eerily ATP Synthase looked like a turbine. I remember how fascinating it was to see cichlid species evolving in Lake Victoria.

In the summers, I took the train to UT Southwestern. I sat through research seminars, where researchers would present their latest findings from Zebra finches’ songs to hereditary breast cancer. I loved listening to a Nobel Laureate reminisce about when he was our age and

what he has done. Additionally, I was able to conduct research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes.

As a biology major, I simply hope to study biology. I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in an encyclopedia or textbook.

Yale

Why Major[125]

In high school, I received the very wonderful gift of a book with a sunflower on its cover. However, unlike its cover, Campbell's Biology 11th Edition was not sunshine and daisies. But like any book, it had a story. In particular, the story of life.

I've become enamoured with biology. I remember learning about photosystems' P680 and P700, as well as ATP Synthase's architecture. I've gotten the opportunity to immerse myself in research at UT Southwestern on various research seminars, from generational Zebra Finch songs to hereditary breast cancer, and conduct research in a radiology lab.

As a biology major, I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in a textbook.

Why Yale[125]

Science and Engineering. Talented and Gifted. Government and Law. Business and Management. Education and Social Services. Health Professions. Six magnet schools on one campus.

But, you can choose only one school. It's not really and. It's just or.

I'm in the School of Science and Engineering. Everyone else knows us as the big-brained masochists who take too many math classes. But that's a half-truth.

Sure, I find linear algebra fun and all, but I'm nerdier than that. I'm a reader, a writer, and an art enthusiast. As such, Yale's liberal arts education appeals to me.

I want to read the Voynich manuscript, write for the Yale Daily News, and see Oldenburg's *Lipstick on Caterpillar Tracks*. As a Yalie, I want to be myself and more.

Inspiration[35]

I've been on call with my friends for nine hours till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities. Their support is empowering, and the dreams we've had don't seem so unreachable anymore.

Teach a Course[35]

Behind the Lines: A Mathematical Analysis of Art. We'll cover math behind linear perspective and optics and investigate how these techniques add to art such as *Las Meninas* and the *Arnolfini Portrait*.

Speaker[35]

Vincent Van Gogh. People who've suffered through hardships are often worth listening to. That, and I want to see him being congratulated post-mortem as one of the most celebrated artists of all time.

And/Or3[35]

All my life, I've been presented with the ultimatum STEM or the Arts. But I reject this premise, this false dilemma. At Yale, I will craft my own path and study Biology and Art History.

Art[250]

I play the violin. Art History is my favorite class. I attended a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

"So which one's false?" the teacher asked.

"Art History! Art History," my classmates shouted. "Nobody likes Art History."

But they were wrong. I've never touched a violin in my life.

In AP Art History, we saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There's Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men walk forward to their deaths, some cradling their heads, others with their heads held high. There's Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. I particularly adored the damned man horrified by his inevitable doom.

I've come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

I remember my banter with an upperclassman, about how Durer's *Adam and Eve* is superior to Donatello's *David*. He disagrees. It's become an inside joke between us. But he's wrong. Let it be known that I've immortalized it here.

It's funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There's the Art of Problem Solving. There's *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art *is* art. My love for Art History speaks for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

Community 3[249]

Unlike my brothers who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented (GT) program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. At the time, I didn’t quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. My grades improved, my teachers complimented me, and my peers started asking me for help. Being called talented didn’t change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you’re around great people, you do great things.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. In college, I plan on having my own tight-knit community. To be a Yalie is so much more than being an honors student or being called gifted and talented. The residential colleges’ promise of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic and personal growth appeal to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

Johns Hopkins

Essay

Unlike my brothers and friends who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented (GT) program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. At the time, I didn’t quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. My grades improved, my teachers complimented me, and my peers started asking me for help. Being called talented didn’t change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you’re around great people, you do great things.

Through GT, I met my two best friends. We’d sit together during class, eat together during lunch, and compete together in the same competitions. And while everyone else was learning grade-level math, we sat in the back and learned ahead. By the end of middle school, I knew Pre-Calculus and graduated as the top of my class.

Even now in high school, I continue to be inspired. My peers are some of the most incredible people I’ve met. One of them knows how to fly a plane. Another one writes content on public policy. Another one is nationally competitive in mathematics.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. In college, I plan on having my own tight-knit community. And as an aspiring pre-med, I think Johns Hopkins University is fit for me. To be a Blue Jay is much more than being an honors student or being called gifted and talented. Its promises of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic and personal growth appeal to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

Brown

Why Med[250]

“Healing hands.” That’s my father’s nickname for me when I’m massaging his back and right arm. He says that it’s not the same when my older brothers do it because I have this “hot energy” inside me.

I’ve thought about becoming a massage therapist. To alleviate others’ pains and aches is something I can see take pride in. But I think that there’s more I can offer to the world than just that. Because of this, I believe that the prospect of working in medicine appeals to me the most. At its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

I like to think that, as a prospective physician, I’ve already started my journey in making the world a better place. I volunteer every Saturday at a recreation center to teach kids mathematics. I’m part of our robotics team’s outreach events where we teach kids how to code and tour our minivan-turned mobile lab. As a veteran competitor and captain, I also instruct club members in Robotics, Science UIL, and Journalism UIL. I’m in the robotics cage teaching students how to work the CNC machine, in the Chemistry classroom lecturing about magnesium’s role in Chlorophyll, and in the English classroom dissecting the components of a well-written article.

It’s been a blast, and I can see myself doing this for the rest of my life. Making others happy has made me happy, and I think that’s a life worth living.

Personal Background[250]

Everyday is a new journey. The destinations are still the same. I still have to pass by the high school next to my house. I pass by the UT Southwestern Medical Center. I pass by the Dallas Skyline, Reunion tower and all. I pass by the Coors Light Waterfall Billboard off of I-35. I pass by the Oakcliff cemetery. And finally I walk uphill to my high school, two hours later from leaving my house. And then the entire process starts again in reverse in the afternoon as I make my way home.

I take the train to school. It’s tiring, but never boring. There’s always some new faces in the crowd as I ride the train and change lines at Downtown Dallas. But they all look the same to the untrained eye. As I ride further down south to the city, there’s more of them. They have walking canes and sunglasses, IV bags, the wheelchairs, the arm slings, and the leg braces.

They're missing an arm or a leg, sitting there motionless in contrast to the city bustle. But most memorable of all, they're all kind people.

If there's anything I've learned in these past four years in school, it's that there's good in seemingly unsuspecting sources. And of that, I've learned to be compassionate and care for my community of train commuters. Having experienced it myself, I know that a little compassion goes a long way. My ambition to work in medicine is a means to that end.

PLME[500]

Science and Engineering. Talented and Gifted. Government and Law. Business and Management. Education and Social Services. Health Professions. We have six magnet schools on one campus.

But, you can choose only one school. I'm in the School of Science and Engineering. Everyone else knows us as the big-brained masochists who take too many math classes. But that's a half-truth.

Sure, I find linear algebra fun and all, but I'm nerdier than that. I don't want to pigeonhole myself into one interest. I'm a reader, a writer, and an art enthusiast. I believe that a good education should not limit, but rather open up the possibilities.

Brown's PLME program is precisely that. I found it funny that Brown opted to call their combined undergraduate and medical school program "PLME". They didn't outright call it a BS MD program like any of the other combined programs offered at other schools. It is called PLME solely because of its unique focus on integrating Brown's open curriculum into medical education. And it sounds like a dream come true.

Through Brown PLME, I plan on concentrating in Biology and History of Art and Architecture. With assurance that I can pursue the path of a physician, I'd like to flesh out my interests and mature as an individual exposed to multiple disciplines. I want to take the course entirely dedicated to Caravaggio's works, as I found *The Calling of St. Matthew* to be fascinating. I'm also interested in cross-registering classes at RISD and trying my hand at art. My time in AP Art History was amazing, and I want to re-experience that in college. I believe that Brown's ability to offer this degree of flexibility is unmatched and without equal.

As a prospective physician, I'd also like to immerse myself in biology. I want to be fascinated and uncover the mysteries of the universe, from the microcosmos to enormous ecosystems. I want to continue doing research in college. I think that research is the best way to immerse yourself in science, as you are studying a niche field and advancing it. I believe that exploration and discovery are key components in my love for science, and I hope to continue to

do so at Brown.

Specific to Brown PLME, I'm interested in the Summer Research Assistantship, specifically in Emergency Medicine. I'd like to work with Dr. Duffy on developing a care plan for children with poor mental health issues. I found that through my time volunteering, I enjoy working with children. Volunteering in high school, specifically teaching mathematics to children, has been one of the most rewarding things I've done in my life, and I want to continue to do so in college. By combining both clinical relevance and my fond experiences with volunteering, I think that this is a worthwhile venture I'd like to explore.

Brown's promise of a community founded on commitment to academic flexibility and professional security appeals to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

Art[250]

I play the violin. Art History is my favorite class. I attended a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

"So which one's false?" the teacher asked.

"Art History! Art History," my classmates shouted. "Nobody likes Art History."

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I've come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

I remember my banter with an upperclassman, about how Durer's *Adam and Eve* is superior to Donatello's *David*. He disagrees. It's become an inside joke between us. But he's wrong. Let it be known that I've immortalized it here.

It's funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There's the Art of Problem Solving. There's *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art is art. My love for Art History speaks for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

Complex Issues[250]

"Don't give them money. There's a reason why they're homeless. Study hard so that you don't become one of them," my friend's mother said, as an old man held his sign, looking up at

us in our school bus from the dirty streets. She started rambling how they're dangerous and will use our money for drugs and alcohol. I had already droned out of her wisdom, as it became one with the mindless chatter of my 3rd grade classmates around me.

Even back then, I thought that it was a bunch of hogwash. Homeless or not, they're still human. How could you make baseless assumptions on people by their appearance? Funny, how that simple question has plagued humanity since the start of its existence. Even now, that question remains unanswered with the great political and racial divides in our nation. But I digress.

I should've said something back. It wouldn't have been polite, but it would save me from the regret that I hold now. My lack of action is on my conscience. I have long forgiven myself, but I'm proud to admit that I learned something that day. Not that I believe her supposed wisdom, but that I have a voice and I should exercise it.

Eight years later, I have an answer. I have studied hard, per her advice, but not so that I am not homeless. Rather, I have studied to become a doctor to make a better world for them all, one person at a time.

Pride[250]

Just as how disappointing Junior year has been with the entire world pandemic, my senior year has been a blast. Since senior year has started, I've never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I'm a much happier person. I talk to people, they talk to me, and together we dream about our future. I've reconnected with middle school friends. I've been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities.

But it's evolved into something more than just talking. I like to think that I'm well-read, and in extension, a decent writer. To be honest, it has fed my ego that my counselors and teachers enjoyed reading my essays. Although I know that I'm not a Mary Shelley or a Christopher Paloni, I'm very proud of my essays. But it cannot compare to the euphoria I experience in helping others write essays and writing peer recommendation letters for others.

I am genuinely proud of these experiences. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' essays is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in their stories, both in their essays and in their lives. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

Stanford

Challenge

"97% student, 3% teacher." That's what my teacher says to make us study, but I believe there's more to it. Good teachers unlock 100% in education. Similarly, good education is a key in life and, in that sense, an equalizer. Society is hindered by inequality. It's time we equalize it.

Summers

2020: I spent time with my family and fed a stray cat daily.

2021: I took a semester of physical education so that I could make room for AP Research in senior year. I conducted research at UT Southwestern and attended research seminars. I visited the Dallas Museum of Art.

Historical Moment

November 22nd, 1963. The assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Kennedy was one of my favorite orators and it feels personal as I live in Dallas. I want to clear up the conspiracy about other shots fired from the grassy knoll as well.

Elaborate ECs

In the summer after sophomore year, I joined MEL Keystone. It's a program tutoring kids in mathematics at a small recreation center. I've had many great mentors that have inspired me, and being one for others makes me happy. It's become one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Why Stanford

After watching countless videos about it on Youtube, I've become obsessed with it. I can clearly picture it in my mind: the bright California sun, the Spanish colonial architecture, and their grief-stricken faces. Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* replicated in Memorial Court. It's my favorite artwork and coincidentally at Stanford.

Art[250]

I play the violin. Art History is my favorite class. I attended a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

"So which one's false?" the teacher asked.

"Art History! Art History," my classmates shouted. "Nobody likes Art History."

But they were wrong. I've never touched a violin in my life.

In AP Art History, we saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There's Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men walk forward to their deaths, some cradling their heads, others with their heads held high. There's Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. I particularly adored the damned man horrified by his inevitable doom.

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Roommate

Hello. My name is Thu Le. You are my roommate. Prepare to meet me.

I love movies. They're my favorite way to procrastinate and forget about life for a while. Immersing myself into a whole new world (shining, shimmering, splendid!) has been and always will be fascinating to me. When I'm not watching movies in the cinema with friends, I'm reading books or indulging in webtoons.

I also love music. I listen to music on the train to school, on my nightly workout at the gym, or when I'm cooking up a mean stir-fry in the dead of night. I listen to a lot of pop and K-pop, but I like visiting rap and rock every once in a while. My favorite artist is Frank Sinatra. He's a great artist and a great person, and I think he is quite admirable. Also, "My Way" and "Fly Me to the Moon" are great songs, but not his best. Fight me.

Besides movies and music, I enjoy talking to people. In the words of my friends, I "float around and talk to everyone." I would like to describe myself as chill and dependable. If you need me to do something, I got you >:). I act as a confidant for a lot of people, and honestly, I'm proud of that.

I'd like to extend my friendship to you as well. Let's make this the best four years ever.

Yours Truly,
Thuuuuuuu Leeeeeeeeeee

P.S. I'll bring the vacuum and the clorox wipes :)

Community[250]

Unlike my brothers who got in on their first try, I got into the Gifted & Talented (GT) program on my fourth attempt. My family was overjoyed, as I finally joined the ranks of the “smartest” kids in my grade. At the time, I didn’t quite understand why an intelligence test determined whether or not we should get pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything “gifted and talented” in the actual program, I started to do “gifted and talented” things. My grades improved, my teachers complimented me, and my peers started asking me for help. Being called talented didn’t change anything; the people around me did. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you’re around great people, you do great things.

I remember my high school admissions interview. My interviewer asked me why SEM. I said that SEM was an intellectual’s haven, where talents are nurtured and doors are opened. They laughed.

But for the most part, I was right. We grow because of the people we interact with and draw inspiration from. In college, I plan on having my own tight-knit community. To be a Cardinal is so much more than being an honors student or being called gifted and talented. Stanford’s promise of a supportive community founded on commitment to academic and personal growth appeals to me, and I dare to hope that I will be a part of it.

WashU

Essay

My reasons to study at WashU are personal. After all, my interests in neuroscience started there, and it only makes sense that I would try to end up there. I was writing a paper on the impact of Alzheimer's and Alzheimer's related research, when I chanced upon a page from the Knight Alzheimer's Research Disease Center about clinical dementia ratings and how they are assigned. From there, it was a rabbit hole and I quickly fell in love with both WashU and Neuroscience.

I think it was in the summer that I realized that I was now a high school senior. College applications seemed so far away, but also increasingly nearer. Through surfing the WashU website and after an interview, my reasons for WashU became concrete. It has a beautiful campus, great food, and a good atmosphere. The people I know who study at WashU are equally amazing, and I'd like to study alongside my role models. Perhaps, as a student at WashU, I'll conduct neuroscience research at a lab and produce results that will be seen. Perhaps they'll be seen by another curious individual and they, too, will apply to WashU and bring it full circle. One can hope.

Dartmouth Peer Rec.

To whom it may concern,

I can strongly attest to Harish's character as a person. Harish is a bold, charismatic individual who is no stranger to making his opinions known. His wittiness and cleverness matches my own but he also holds various characteristics that I so secretly admire. As his friend and dare I say confidant, he is at the very least an absolute pleasure to be around, and I hold him in high regard. I know that he has flourished in high school, and I suspect that he will continue to do so in college and in life. I believe that Harish would be an excellent addition to your institution.

I first became acquainted with Harish on my first day of high school in double-blocked freshman English. I was, as always, sitting silent in my seat. If you had asked me how I'd describe myself back then, I'd probably offer my introvertedness nested in some string of various standard qualities. It was not that I was actually introverted, but more as of I had yet to find someone interesting to talk to. Considering that I'm attending a magnet high school, I wonder why it was Harish of all people that had sparked my interest. In hindsight, it was probably because he was simply the first. After all, fortune favors the bold.

I had actually heard Harish before I saw him, which is a bit strange considering the fact that he was and still is easily one of the tallest of us. He was duking it out with a classmate (who'd later turn out to be our future valedictorian) in heated debate. For the first day shenanigans, I found it entertaining, and so I started interjecting myself into these conversations.

From freshman English to sophomore AP Computer Science A, we terrorized the classroom with our intellectual debates. We'd talk about hypothetical scenarios, politics, and the silliest things that would warrant a place in University of Chicago's essay prompts. Our conversation would branch out of the classroom and find the time and place to do so. We'd talk during all of lunch with our mouths talking rather than chewing, afterschool in the back of the school bus while Harish terrorized the bus with the smell of his Indian food, and on call in the dead of night regardless of school the next day.

These conversations not only became the foundations of our friendship, but of his own interests as well. Harish started to develop his interests in politics and argument in our school's debate club, as well as the stock market in his podcasts. Often more times than not, these topics would find their way into our conversations, which I happily welcomed.

Even when COVID-19 hit and started the longest Spring Break ever, these conversations persisted. Junior year went by in a flash, and I remember being on call after finishing up our last AP exams online. It should've been a warm summer afternoon in June, but there we were, reflecting on how mediocre our Junior year had been. It was only about two to three hours in this conversation that we started to realize that we were now officially high school seniors. The fact that we were going to be applying to college in two months was surreal. We were on call till 5:00 AM in the morning, for a record of about nine hours talking about our dreams for the future. They were dreams of how amazing our senior year would be, how we'll make gains at the gym, how we'd ask out our crushes, and how we'd get into our dream colleges.

I write this, 10,000 feet in the air on a plane two days before the end of the year 2021. But more importantly, it is the beginning of the year 2022. I think it is kind of corny, but I kind of have New Year's resolutions. But unlike other years, they're not so far-fetched. With the amount of support I receive from Harish, I've started to think that literally anything is possible, and honestly, the dreams we've had don't seem so unreachable anymore.

I'd like to admit that I was wondering when Harish would ask me to write a recommendation letter for him. I am genuinely proud of knowing him these past four years. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' college applications is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in his story, both in his applications and in his life. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

Best Wishes,

Thu Le

Jack Kent Cooke

Major

In high school, I was given a book with a sunflower on its cover. Never judge a book by its cover. Undoubtedly, Campbell's Biology 11th Edition was not sunshine and daisies. But like any book, it had a story. In particular, the story of life.

I remember reading about photosystems' P680 and P700 and ATP Synthase's architecture. In the summers, I'd learn more about biology at my UT Southwestern research lab.

As a biology major, I want to be fascinated. Uncover the mysteries of the universe. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll have my own story in a textbook.

Pre-professional

"Healing hands." That's my father's nickname for me when I'm massaging his back. He says that it's not the same when my older brothers do it because I have this "hot energy" inside me.

Besides my supposed aptitude for medicine, the prospect of working in medicine appeals to me. At its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

I help strangers on the train during my school commute. I love it. Helping people makes me happy. I intend to pursue that happiness through the path of a physician.

Why Cookies?

When I got into the Gifted and Talented program on my fourth attempt, my family was ecstatic. At the time, I didn't understand why an intelligence test determined my eligibility to be pulled out of class to play board games.

But although I never did anything "gifted and talented" in the actual program, I started to do "gifted and talented" things. That change was invoked by my "gifted" peers. When you're around great people, you do great things.

I believe a community is a gift no talent could ever match. I want to be a part of the Cooke dream to lead and succeed, in both college and life. And hopefully, I will inspire others just as how others have inspired me.

Research

When I was in high school, I had set my sights on the STARS. More specifically, UT Southwestern's STARS summer research program.

After applying and getting past semi-finalist and finalist rounds, I was matched to a radiology lab. There, I helped develop a natural language processing model to read curated hospital reports and identify central venous catheter lines, Swan-Ganz catheter lines, endotracheal tubes, and nasogastric tubes from radiographs. After classifying 69,095 radiographs, we trained a convolutional neural network to detect malpositioned lines and tubes. I presented my research to fellow interns and high school underclassmen as part of an ambassador program.

Through this experience, I have gained a stronger appreciation and love for the sciences, and I plan on doing research in the future.

Obstacle

Despite our financial hardships, my family has always encouraged me to prioritize my education. So I applied to a magnet school and got in. However, it was far away and I didn't have transportation there.

I'm originally supposed to attend a high school next to my house. Every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. I have very much taken the road less traveled by. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

It's exhausting to take four buses and four trains to and from school for a total of four hours. But I've managed.

Leadership

In the summer after sophomore year, I joined MEL Keystone. It's a program tutoring (grades 3-9) kids in mathematics at a small recreation center. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it's also a fervid dream of my own. I would've never been able to get to where I am today without my mentors. Tutoring was an outlet for me to help others, like how others helped me.

It's been two years since. I'm the one leading the meetings and managing all of the students and tutors. I've learned so much about the kids I teach, but also about myself. I love helping others, and I want to continue doing so in the future.

Equitable Excellence Scholarship

The Equitable Excellence Scholarship is designed to inspire and empower individuals to be a Force for Good in their communities while investing in their future success. Please share how you are demonstrating courage, displaying strength or sharing wisdom with others in pursuit of achieving your dreams and making a positive impact in your local community and beyond. Please be specific about how you intend to continue your journey with assistance from the scholarship

Achievement 993 characters

In robotics, we have this saying: "Gracious Professionalism." It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service, leadership, and kindness.

Every year, we park our Mobile Lab at the Dallas STEM expo to teach kids how to code. Every Monday, I lead as President of the student ambassadors of ASP and work with counselors to help kids get into college. Every Tuesday, I teach science to underclassmen in preparation of our Science UIL competitions. Every Wednesday, I teach underclassmen how to work with robotics tools. Every Saturday, I tutor students in mathematics as part of MEL Keystone.

But I think the best way I exhibit gracious professionalism is on my daily commute to school via train. Inspired by my fellow commuters, I'm always charitable, lend my phone to whoever needs it, and give directions to the lost.

With a scholarship, I plan to continue my studies towards a career in medicine, as well as employ gracious professionalism in college and in life.

Tell us about your educational and career goals and objectives. (Space is limited; be concise.) If you need technical help to complete the essay responses, click the link below. (This will open a new tab or window.)

Major 991 characters

"Healing hands." That's my father's nickname for me when I'm massaging his back and right arm. He says that it's not the same when my older brothers do it because I have this "hot energy" inside me.

Besides my supposed aptitude for medicine, the prospect of working in medicine appeals to me. At its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers. I help strangers on the train during my school commute. I love it. Helping people makes me happy. I intend to pursue that happiness through the path of a physician.

To start, I intend to major in biology. I remember reading about photosystems' P680 and P700 and ATP Synthase's architecture in my biology textbook. In the summers, I took the train to UT Southwestern, where I was able to attend research seminars (one of which was by a Nobel Prize Laureate) and conduct research in a radiology lab in developing neural networks to detect catheter lines as well as nasogastric and endotracheal tubes.

Please describe how and when any unusual family or personal circumstances have affected your achievement in school, work experience, or your participation in school and community activities. (Space is limited; be concise.)

Obstacles 989 characters

Despite our financial hardships, my family encouraged me to prioritize my education and attend a magnet school. I'm originally supposed to attend a high school so close to my house that I can hear their marching band play. And every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. My daily commute consists of taking four trains and four buses to school, for a total of four hours.

And the long commute is sometimes the least troublesome. A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. You can distinguish the train stations apart by their smell. There's always police present, along with the occasional ambulance. I got my wallet stolen on my first day.

It's exhausting, but I've managed.

Toyota

Toyota Essay

I'm a student at the School of Science and Engineering at Townview Magnet Center. I grew up poor. I ride the train to school for four hours everyday. I'm good at math and science, but my favorite class is Art History. I want to work in medicine. I'm inspired by friends.

Toyota Essay Finalist Twenty Years

I have long debated about what I want to do in my life. It is only natural to do so, as my years as a budding youth draw to a close and I prepare for the next chapter of my life. As such, I cannot help but find myself reminiscing about my roots. To reflect on myself, I find it more than appropriate to call upon my 18 years of experience on this earth to shape my aspirations.

I strongly agree with John Locke's interpretation of the nature of man as *Tabula Rasa*, that individuals are shaped by their experiences, communities, and inspirations. I've debated the whole *Nature vs. Nurture* argument numerous times now with multiple people and I still stand by my beliefs. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you're around great people, you do great things.

Under my parents' tutelage, I have learned to be a son. From my time in school, I have grown as a student. Through my experiences of genuine compassion with fellow passengers on my train commute to school, I have grown as a person. I strongly believe that my community has shaped me into the individual I am today.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. But what does it take to raise a village? Therein lies my primary motivation in life.

I believe that society is upheld by the leadership of others. If I am to become the individual I aspire to be, I want to pursue the path of a physician. The prospect of working in medicine appeals to me the most, because at its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

Twenty years from now, I will have already finished my 13+ years of training. I'll be done with my four years as an undergraduate, four years as a med student, and my five years of residency. I'll be an attending physician, perhaps a surgeon of sorts. I hope that I can continue to help others, even more so with my position. I don't have a clear idea of who I want to be besides that. It's too far into the future, and if I continue to grow and mature as I have done for the past 18 years, then I would be a very different individual twenty years from now. I do think it is reasonable to ensure that I can attend college hopefully debt-free to lessen the financial burden on my elderly parents. In addition, I'd like to shadow a physician this summer to solidify my commitment to work in medicine.

I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous. It will take a lot of work. I've been told it's an expensive venture, a dream too big for my wallet. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

Belton

Belton Essay

Despite our financial hardships, my family has always encouraged me to prioritize my education. So I applied to a magnet school and got in. I'm originally supposed to attend a high school next to my house. And every morning, I walk to that school like any other student. But instead of turning left towards the school entrance, I turn right towards the bus stop off the side of the road. And in the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

I have very much taken the road less traveled by. My daily commute consists of taking four trains and four buses to school, for a total of four hours. During freshmen orientation, our principal gave us a speech. He said that the journey through high school is difficult. But, he never said that the journey to high school is also difficult.

And the long commute is sometimes the least troublesome. A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. You can distinguish the train stations apart by their smell. There's always police present, along with the occasional ambulance. I got my wallet stolen on my first day.

However, the idea that I have to travel through hell and fire to school everyday doesn't do it justice. Although they aren't exactly the people you'd expect at Platform 9¾, they're certainly just as magical in their own way.

The Hispanic lady who, despite our language differences, never failed to greet me with a polite nod as we boarded the same bus. The elderly African-American lady who passed out tissues when it was below freezing. The many who congratulated me on winning the grand prize in the science fair, my trophy in hand and board in the other. The passing stranger who complimented my shirt. That's my favorite shirt now.

Their kindness has inspired me to be a better person. I'm always charitable when I meet panhandlers. I gave napkins and a plastic spork to the guy with ramen. I've lent my phone to the haggard man who needed to call his family when no one else on the bus did. In the winter, I give out cough drops. I've recently started handing out masks to whoever needs them.

This experience, coupled with other positive memories, have shaped my aspirations in life. I want to be someone who helps others, like how others have helped me. I think the train is nothing short of inspiration. Recently, I've found other role models on the train that I've decided to emulate. Everyday on the train, I can't help but watch the crowd of medical students and professionals disembark at the UT Southwestern Medical Center train station. I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous.

I've been told it's an expensive venture, a dream too big for my wallet. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

House

Three words

Reliable, compassionate, chill.

I strongly like to associate myself with people who care about me and are dependable. But that relation goes both ways, so I strive to be reliable and compassionate myself. This takes form in school when I help others with homework, on the train when I give money to panhandlers, and 10,000 feet in the air on New Years Eve when I write a Dartmouth Peer recommendation letter for my best friend.

As for being chill, you naturally develop patience as the youngest brother of three, one of whom is painfully irritable and impatient.

Covid

In March of 2020, I remember one of my classmates saying how the virus will probably be properly controlled by at most April. We then left school for the longest Spring Break of our lives. It's been quite a few months past April of 2020, and even with the Delta and Omicron variants, my family has yet to be ravaged by COVID-19. It took some time to convince my formerly anti-vaxx parents to not just vaccinate, but also get the booster shot. Our lives have become as normal as one can be during a pandemic. I just hope that this doesn't stay as the new normal however.

Advice

In my last year of middle school, I was stuck on deciding between two equally appealing magnet schools, until I met Dennis, a current Junior at one of the schools in question. I didn't know him; he just approached me, gave me his phone number, and told me to text him later. To my introverted mind, it was baffling that someone would just randomly approach someone and advocate for their school. And even more baffling is what my life would be if I never went to my current high school. I love it here, and I'm gonna miss this place.

Downtime

When I'm commuting to and from school on the train, I listen to music and read manga and webtoons. I listen to mostly pop and K-Pop, but my two favorite artists are Frank Sinatra and Khanh Ly. I listen to a lot of old music. When I'm at home, I usually play League of Legends. If I'm feeling more productive, I hit the gym and workout. Recently, I've started cooking on the weekends and I post my masterful creations on instagram. I call my best friend daily (as we don't have so many classes together) and we talk about life.

Why do you deserve \$500

At my school, I'm one of the few out-of-district students. Basically, we attend a magnet school in Dallas despite not living in Dallas. Out-of-district students usually are thrown in the bottom of the admissions pile and are admitted after all of the in-district students are enrolled. Getting into the school is hard, but getting to school is even harder. I'm poor. Both of my parents work and I can't afford a car, so the only option is the train. It takes me two hours to get to school and two hours to get home. Yet I'm still in the top of my class.

Truth 1: Time Travel and Regret

[REDACTED]

Truth 2: Life and Death Take

We live and die. That is certain. The afterlife is not.

I'm not very religious, despite my upbringing in a cult. Not a satanic worship cult, but more or less the same in craziness. I've always remained doubtful, and I admit that it has made me see religion in a more negative light.

But my lack of faith does not disprove the fact that there is an afterlife. None have come back from death and describe what lies beyond life, save for a few people who claim to have experienced "something" in the interval when they are dead and resuscitated. While many believe in an afterlife and that we should prepare for it, I think it is foolish to consider the life after death in life. We can neither confirm nor deny the existence of the afterlife. Cases that do push evidence of the afterlife are either anecdotal in nature or rooted in a series of postulates that aren't confirmed themselves, often resulting in a circular argument.

I think it is just that the oldest story we know is the Epic of Gilgamesh, a 4,000 year old Babylonian epic detailing King Gilgamesh's conflict with heaven, destiny, and death. Although demigods among men, both Gilgamesh and Enkidu submitted to death in the House of Dust. After Gilgamesh's futile attempt to achieve immortality, Gilgamesh lived out his days managing his empire and constructing the great walls of Uruk.

But the once Great Walls of Uruk have been reduced to rubble and ruins. All that remains of Gilgamesh is simply his story. Although Gilgamesh died a mortal death, in doing so, he has become immortal in the hearts of men. This is the primordial truth. True immortality is not Utnapishtim's flower, but rather the story of the life we live.

Lubell Rosen

Medical Malpractice Insurance: A Gross Injustice

The path of a physician is long and arduous. It takes four years to get a bachelors, four years to finish medical school, three to seven years for residency, and optionally one to three years for a fellowship. After all of that schooling and student debt is the crippling life of an attending physician's hours on call and shifts. With respect to how the world has treated the entire coronavirus situation, it is clear that physicians are undervalued despite being such a sought-after career. The medical industry is facing one of the largest rates of burnout among medical professionals with increasing hours, severely understaffed institutions, and stagnant compensation for their work. With increasingly stressful situations for physicians, it does not help that state governments require medical malpractice insurance. Medical malpractice insurance is a barrier to physicians in providing for patients and should not be required due to its inefficiency and exorbitant price on physicians.

As an aspiring physician, I have long joked about how my pre-law friends will one day represent me in court for medical malpractice. I like to think that my incompetence will never land me in court, but it is statistically probable as one in three physicians have a medical malpractice lawsuit according to the 2016 Benchmark Survey by the American Medical Association.

I believe that the justice system is fair in most regards. But there is a great injustice done upon physicians. According to a 2012 study published in the Journal of American Medical Association's Archives of Internal Medicine, there's 85,000 medical malpractice cases annually,

and half of those cases go to court. Effectively, those are 42,500 weak claims of medical malpractice. They are nothing but accusations of incompetence, which goes to show that true medical malpractice is rather rare. Physicians go through millions of medical operations, and only 42,500 cases are even worthwhile to pursue. But if medical malpractice is so rare, why should all doctors need to pay malpractice insurance?

Of those approximately 42,500 cases, 95% of them are resolved in out-of-court settlements. That's 40,375 cases that are resolved through medical malpractice insurance claims. With these liability claims, physicians will expect to pay even more for medical malpractice insurance. Additionally, patients and their lawyers will earn large payouts, which will create a positive feedback loop that incentivizes more legal action against physicians. Physicians who are required to hold medical malpractice insurance will only lose out on money in settlements and rising insurance rates.

Medical malpractice insurance is no longer a necessity. Malpractice cases rarely ever get to court, and the majority that do cash out on insurance. This is not sustainable as this will increase insurance rates and effectively turn physicians into cash cows for lawyers who pursue these medical malpractice claims. By removing requirements on medical malpractice insurance, we can loosen pressure on physicians and in extension protect both physicians and patients alike.

Taussig Compassion

Taussig Essay

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Dark clouds circled overhead. "Not exactly the best weather for my first day of high school," I mused. Then again, life doesn't always go as planned. During freshmen orientation, our principal gave us a speech. He said that the journey through high school is difficult. But, he never said that the journey *to* high school is also difficult.

I don't belong on the train at all. I'm a kid. Everyone there is, well, an adult. There's the Hispanic lady from my neighborhood. There's the medical student in blue scrubs. There's the occasional senior, sometimes bound in a wheelchair, sometimes missing an arm or a leg. There's always a shoeless man sleeping, curled up on several seats.

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Where You Go

Where You Go Essay

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DCU

DCU essay

In the summer after sophomore year, I was posed a question. “Do you want to tutor kids? It’s called MEL Keystone and it’s-”

“Sure,” I said. And thus began one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Since then, I’ve spent my Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings tutoring children in mathematics at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an underserved area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it’s also a fervid dream of my own. The reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two high schools. He approached me unsolicitedly and just answered all of my questions. As a sophomore, I was itching to pay it forward and an opportunity to do so came right in front of me.

It’s been two years since. I’m the one leading meetings now. It feels surreal. I see bits of myself in the kids I tutor. They’re carefree. They struggle with quadratics. They’re bright.

I’ve done robotics since middle school. As the business captain of our robotics team, the one thing that I’ve always preached was “Gracious Professionalism.” It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service and compassion. I’ve taken this oath upon myself to mentor other kids, whether that be coaching the team in Science UIL or explaining how FAFSA works in ASP.

These experiences have shaped my aspirations in life. I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous. I’ve been told it’s an expensive venture, a dream too big for my wallet. But I’ve just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

Beyond the Boroughs

Discouragement

Have you ever been discouraged from applying to college

Besides the financial aspect of attending college, I have not been discouraged in applying to college. My parents remain supportive of me, but I would like to lessen their concern for me. I've made it my goal to get as much financial aid I can so that I can attend college hopefully for free.

Activity

Describe something you enjoy doing (could be inside or outside of school). Why do you like doing it [4-5 sentences]

This year, I wanted to improve myself as an individual. Working out at the gym has been a hobby for a few months now, and it's really nice to clear my head and work on improving my physique and pushing my physical limits. It's great to relieve stress. I've also started cooking and baking on the weekend, and it's really fun. I think it's nice to diversify my interests, especially as I prepare to enter college.

Why College

Why is going to college important to you?

I have an interest in working in medicine, and I'll need an education to properly pursue that path. Additionally, I see college as a place of growth and academic excellence. If college is anything like my high school experience, I am adamant that it will be a place of individual and academic growth.

Responsibilities

What responsibilities do you have in your home?

I help make breakfast early in the morning before I leave the house to take the train. If I get home early, I help make dinner. On the weekends, I cook and wash the dishes. Every other Tuesday, I take out the trash. I mow the lawn when the grass gets long.

Community

Describe a community of which you are a part (your school, your neighborhood, your family, your church, an organization, etc.) and tell us why it is important to you.

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It's bittersweet in a way. It's March now. I'll be graduating in two months, and I find it strange that I will no longer be seeing their quizzical faces as they grapple with mathematical concepts. I have confidence that the younger tutors will take charge, as I have done before them. Though, I think that bittersweet sentiment is reflected in a lot of my activities. I know that I will no longer be leading them, but I suspect that I will continue to stay in touch and inspire the next generations as an alumnus. In any case, MEL Keystone will always be a family to me, and I'm excited to see what'll happen in my absence as they grow into mature, independent individuals, hopefully with a deeper appreciation of the beauty of mathematics.

Challenge

Describe a time in your life (in school or out of school) when you found something challenging. How did you handle it?

[Redacted]

Who are you

Tell us about yourself. Use your creativity.

In the summer before senior year, I was, like always, cooped up in my room on my computer. But instead of surfing the internet or playing video games, I was on a Zoom call for my Case Western interview. "What would your friends describe you as?" my interviewer asked.

If you had asked me a year ago, I would've offered my introvertedness nested among a string of various standard qualities. And that much is true among my school friends. I'm a person of small words, and I hardly ever engage in conversation. But, it is a half-truth to describe me as a person. At home among family, I am arguably annoying and I chatter incessantly. However, rather than some relation to an arbitrary definition of personality, I believe that this contrast in personality lies more in the topic of the conversation.

And that belief has been cemented recently. Just as how disappointing Junior year has been in terms of school life with the entire world pandemic, my Senior year has been a blast. Since senior year has started, I've never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. This is true, regardless if I haven't talked to them since freshman year or I had just recently learned their name. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I'm a much happier person. I talk to people, they talk to me, and together we dream about our future. I've reconnected with friends I haven't talked to since middle school. I've been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities. I talk to friends in class, during lunch, on my commute home, and at midnight. There are times when I'm quite literally texting five people at a time while being on call with another. Just today, I woke up to my alarm as well as a text from one of my friends regarding the Coalition application.

But it's evolved into something more than just talking. I like to think that I'm well-read, and in extension, a decent writer. Whenever I do share my essays, both friends and teachers seem to like it and I usually get positive feedback. To be honest, it has fed my ego that my teacher said that they enjoyed reading my essays and my counselor commented that I'm an unusually strong writer for my age. Although I know that I'm not a Mary Shelley or a Christopher Paloni, I'm very proud of my essays and I always feel bubbly after these conversations. But it cannot compare to the euphoria I experience in helping others.

I was on the train home with a friend, reading their essay on their phone. Everything just clicked together; reading their essay immediately made me understand why they were like the way they were. It was insight to the person as a whole, uncovering an entire half missing from the one I know at school. It was so honest and true to their person. I honestly was invested in that piece of

writing as if it were my own. For the next forty minutes, I started rambling on how good it was and bounced ideas off each other to perfect it. In that time frame, I had come up with better ideas than I'd ever write for my own essays that I literally had goosebumps. We had the same light in our eyes – that spark of realization that makes your heart race and tremble with excitement. It's the same light that reflects off your eyes when you stare mesmerized at a brilliant flame that warms your very soul. That essay was quite literally fire. I remember getting off my train stop with a hot sweat down my back, the same type you wake up in after a vivid dream.

That was probably the most surreal of my experiences in helping others with their college applications. I've had similar experiences, but none of them come close to what happened that night. I am genuinely proud of these experiences. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' essays is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in their stories, both in their essays and in their lives. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

Goals

Describe one of your ideas or goals that you have for yourself. What have you done or what do you plan to do in order to bring your idea to fruition or reach your goal?

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Newton

Newton Essay

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Superintendent DISD

Superintendent DISD Essay

I have long debated about what I want to do in my life. It is only natural to do so, as my years as a budding youth draw to a close and I prepare for the next chapter of my life. As such, I cannot help but find myself reminiscing about my roots. To reflect on myself, I find it more than appropriate to call upon my 18 years of experience on this earth to shape my aspirations.

I strongly agree with John Locke's interpretation of the nature of man as *Tabula Rasa*, that individuals are shaped by their experiences, communities, and inspirations. I've debated the whole *Nature vs. Nurture* argument numerous times now with multiple people and I still stand by my beliefs. I believe that a community is a gift that no talent could ever match, because when you're around great people, you do great things.

Under my parents' tutelage, I have learned to be a son. From my time in school, I have grown as a student. Through my experiences of genuine compassion with fellow passengers on my train commute to school, I have grown as a person. I strongly believe that my community has shaped me into the individual I am today.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. But what does it take to raise a village? Therein lies my primary motivation in life.

If I am to become the individual I aspire to be, I want to pursue the path of a physician. The prospect of working in medicine appeals to me the most, because at its core, to work in medicine is to help people. And in that sense, it is the noblest of careers.

In order to do so, I'll need to go to college for my four years as an undergraduate, four years as a med student, and my five years of residency. I'll be an attending physician, perhaps a surgeon of sorts. I hope that I can continue to help others, even more so with my position. I don't have a clear idea of who I

want to be besides that. It's too far into the future, and if I continue to grow and mature as I have done for the past 18 years, then I would be a very different individual thirteen years from now.

I know the path of becoming a physician is long and arduous. It will take a lot of work. I've been told it's an expensive venture, a dream too big for my wallet. But I've just started my quest to help others, and I intend to see it to the end.

Ronald McDonald

Career Aspirations

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Influential Person

My life has been especially enriched by a mentor. In fact, the whole reason why I had chosen my high school now was because of an upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two magnet schools. I was submitting my application paperwork to the school office when he just started to talk to me. He was also Vietnamese like me, and a current student. He strongly encouraged me to choose his school and offered me his phone number to talk about it with him. His friends then whisked him away from me with offers of hot chili pepper Takis.

It's amazing how such a small encounter has influenced my future. His decision to casually approach someone who he assumed to be an applicant and help them unsolicitedly was honestly life-changing for me. I love the classes at my school and I know that there's a better community here than I would have at my other prospective school. My teachers are invested in my education, and my counselor even more so.

Back in middle school, my mathematics coach always said "97% student, 3% teacher." It was his way to make us actually study on our own time, but I believe there's more to it than that. Anyone can succeed from anywhere, but it depends on the mentors you have to unlock that full 100%. And it's true. I would've never achieved anything remotely to that 100% without the mentors I've had at the school I've chosen.

In college, I want to unlock my 100%. I want to meet upperclassmen that dare me to dream for more and the teachers to open the doors for me to reach those dreams. As a Ronald McDonald Scholar, I ultimately hope to find a community that will support me in my endeavors.

Character

In the summer before senior year, I was, like always, cooped up in my room on my computer. But instead of surfing the internet or playing video games, I was on a Zoom call for my Case Western interview. “What would your friends describe you as?” my interviewer asked.

If you had asked me a year ago, I would’ve offered my introvertedness nested among a string of various standard qualities. And that much is true among my school friends. I’m a person of small words, and I hardly ever engage in conversation. But, it is a half-truth to describe me as a person. At home among family, I am arguably annoying and I chatter incessantly. However, rather than some relation to an arbitrary definition of personality, I believe that this contrast in personality lies more in the topic of the conversation.

And that belief has been cemented recently. Just as how disappointing Junior year has been in terms of school life with the entire world pandemic, my Senior year has been a blast. Since senior year has started, I’ve never failed to strike up conversations with my peers. This is true, regardless if I haven’t talked to them since freshman year or I had just recently learned their name. Because, as high school seniors, we have the impending doom looming over us called college applications.

And it is glorious. I have been orders of magnitude more social this year. And with that, I’m a much happier person. I talk to people, they talk to me, and together we dream about our future. I’ve reconnected with friends I haven’t talked to since middle school. I’ve been on call with my closest friends for almost nine hours up till five in the morning, manifesting our dream universities. I talk to friends in class, during lunch, on my commute home, and at midnight. There are times when I’m quite literally texting five people at a time while being on call with another. Just today, I woke up to my alarm as well as a text from one of my friends regarding the Coalition application.

But it’s evolved into something more than just talking. I like to think that I’m well-read, and in extension, a decent writer. Whenever I do share my essays, both friends and teachers seem to like it and I usually get positive feedback. To be honest, it has fed my ego that my teacher said that they enjoyed reading my essays and my counselor commented that I’m an unusually strong writer for my age. Although I know that I’m not a Mary Shelley or a Christopher Paloni, I’m very proud of my essays and I always feel bubbly after these conversations. But it cannot compare to the euphoria I experience in helping others.

I was on the train home with a friend, reading their essay on their phone. Everything just clicked together; reading their essay immediately made me understand why they were like the way they were. It was insight to the person as a whole, uncovering an entire half missing from the one I know at school. It was so honest and true to their person. I honestly was invested in that piece of writing as if it were my own. For the next forty minutes, I started rambling on how good it was and bounced ideas off each other to perfect it. In that time frame, I had come up with better ideas than I’d ever write for my own essays that I literally had goosebumps. We had the same light in our eyes – that spark of realization that makes your heart race and tremble with excitement. It’s the same light that reflects off your eyes when you stare mesmerized at a brilliant flame that warms your very soul. That

essay was quite literally fire. I remember getting off my train stop with a hot sweat down my back, the same type you wake up in after a vivid dream.

That was probably the most surreal of my experiences in helping others with their college applications. I've had similar experiences, but none of them come close to what happened that night. I am genuinely proud of these experiences. To have bits and pieces of writing in others' essays is powerful, but also humbling. I have had a hand in their stories, both in their essays and in their lives. And that mere thought excites me. We're all going to do great things. I know it.

Leadership

In the summer after sophomore year, I was posed a question. "Do you want to tutor kids? It's called MEL Keystone and it's-"

"Sure," I said. And thus began one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Since then, I've spent my Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings tutoring children in mathematics at a small recreation center in Oak Cliff, an underserved area in Dallas. It all started out with a couple of upperclassmen with a dream to educate and help others.

But it's also a fervid dream of my own. The reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two high schools. He approached me unsolicitedly and just answered all of my questions. As a sophomore, I was itching to pay it forward and an opportunity to do so came right in front of me.

It's been two years since. I'm the one leading meetings now. It feels surreal. I see bits of myself in the kids I tutor. They're carefree. They like K-Pop and Anime. They struggle with quadratics. They're bright.

It's bittersweet in a way. It's March now. I'll be graduating in two months, and I find it strange that I will no longer be seeing their quizzical faces as they grapple with mathematical concepts. I have confidence that the younger tutors will take charge, as I have done before them. Though, I think that bittersweet sentiment is reflected in a lot of my activities. I know that I will no longer be leading them, but I suspect that I will continue to stay in touch and inspire the next generations as an alumnus. In any case, MEL Keystone will always be a family to me, and I'm excited to see what'll happen in my absence as they grow into mature, independent individuals, hopefully with a deeper appreciation of the beauty of mathematics.

Domingo Rivera

Domingo Rivera Essay

It was a dark and stormy night. Or morning. It was that time in the early hours, when all is pitch black except for the moon and the sun has yet to rise. The train doors opened. I'm greeted by heavy rain and the sickly sweet smell of cigarettes. "If I take one more step, I'll be the farthest from home I've ever been," I thought to myself.

In every way, this was a trip to my own Mordor. After attending a small school for nine years, I transferred to a magnet school in Dallas. And unlike the Fellowship in the Lord of the Rings, I had no giant eagles of my own. My parents worked in the mornings. With no car, my only option was a two-hour commute to school by train.

Thunder rumbled overhead, snapping me back to reality.

I hesitantly stepped forward onto the train platform. The floor was sticky, despite the pouring rain. I weaved through the crowd, pinching my nose as strangers took drags on their smokes.

Dark clouds circled overhead. "Not exactly the best weather for my first day of high school," I mused. Then again, life doesn't always go as planned. During freshmen orientation, our principal gave us a speech. He said that the journey through high school is difficult. But, he never said that the journey *to* high school is also difficult.

I don't belong on the train at all. I'm a kid. Everyone there is, well, an adult. There's the Hispanic lady from my neighborhood. There's the medical student in blue scrubs. There's the occasional senior, sometimes bound in a wheelchair, sometimes missing an arm or a leg. There's always a shoeless man sleeping, curled up on several seats.

And then there's me. I sit in the very front. Mother said to. It's safer there. That way, I won't be pickpocketed again.

I stood out remarkably back then.

Besides that, public transportation can be insufferable. A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. You can distinguish the train stations apart by their smell. There's always police present, along with the occasional ambulance.

However, the idea that I have to travel through hell and fire to school everyday doesn't do it justice. Although they aren't exactly the people you'd expect at Platform 9¾, they're certainly just as magical in their own way.

The Hispanic lady who, despite our language differences, never failed to greet me with a polite nod as we boarded the same bus. The elderly African-American lady who passed out tissues when it was below freezing. The man who stopped the train and assisted an old lady in a wheelchair in boarding. The many who congratulated me on winning the grand prize in the science fair, my trophy in hand and board in the other. The passing stranger who complimented my shirt. That's my favorite shirt now.

Their kindness has inspired me to be a better person. I'm always charitable when I meet panhandlers. I gave napkins and a plastic spork to the guy with ramen. I've lent my phone to the haggard

man who needed to call his family when no one else on the bus did. In the winter, I give out cough drops. I've recently started handing out masks to whoever needs them.

Being kind to others brings a sense of euphoria that I have yet to be tired of. In robotics, we have this saying: "Gracious Professionalism." It means to conduct oneself with tact and etiquette, but also community service and kindness. Every year, we park our Mobile Lab at the Dallas STEM expo to teach kids how to code. Every Monday, I lead as President of the student ambassadors of ASP and work with counselors to help kids get into college. Every Tuesday, I teach science to underclassmen in preparation of our Science UIL competitions. Every Wednesday, I teach underclassmen how to work with robotics tools. Every Saturday, I tutor students in mathematics as part of MEL Keystone.

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Cathay

career

1. In 500 words or less, please explain why you chose your area of study and what you hope to accomplish in your future career.

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In every way, this was a trip to my own Mordor. After attending a small charter school for nine years, I transferred to a magnet school in Dallas. And unlike the Fellowship in the Lord of the Rings, I had no giant eagles of my own. My parents worked in the mornings. With no car, my only option was a two-hour commute to school by train.

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A single late train or bus spells an inevitable tardy. Some seats are wet and warm, despite clear skies. There's always police present. I got my wallet swiped on my first day.

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community service

2. In 500 words or less, describe your most memorable community service experience and how it has impacted you and those you served.

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"Sure," I said. And thus began one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

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But it's also a fervid dream of my own. The reason why I attended my high school at all was because of a fellow upperclassman. At the time, I was deciding between two magnet schools. I was submitting my application paperwork to the school office when he just started to talk to me. He was also Vietnamese like me, and a current student. He strongly encouraged me to choose his school and offered me his phone number to talk about it with him. His friends then whisked him away from me with offers of hot chili pepper Takis.

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It's bittersweet in a way. It's March now. I'll be graduating in two months, and I find it strange that I will no longer be seeing their quizzical faces as they grapple with mathematical concepts. I have confidence that the younger tutors will take charge, as I have done before them. Though, I think that bittersweet sentiment is reflected in a lot of my activities. I know that I will no longer be leading them, but I suspect that I will continue to stay in touch and inspire the next generations as an alumnus. In any case, MEL Keystone will always be a family to me, and I'm excited to see what'll happen in my absence as they grow into mature, independent individuals, hopefully with a deeper appreciation of the beauty of mathematics.

Driven

Driven Essay

I played the violin when I was young. Art History is my favorite class. I was invited to a fancy dinner at the Dallas Petroleum Club. Two truths and a lie.

We were doing introductions in our senior year Multivariable Calculus class. Everyone was in good spirits, as the class was like a homeroom for us. We all knew each other, as we had freshman calculus together four years ago.

“So which one is false?” the teacher asked.

“Art History! Art History,” they all shouted. “Nobody likes Art History.”

But they were wrong. I’ve never touched a violin in my life.

For the longest time, I was the stereotypical quiet, artsy kid. I’ve doodled on my quizzes and tests. I’ve animated my own Youtube shorts on Microsoft Powerpoint. I’ve drawn my own comics, which had their own shelf at the school library. Art was literally my identity back then.

It wasn’t until sophomore year in high school that I revisited art. I swapped a class to AP Art History on a whim, hoping to re-experience that magic that entranced me in my youth.

In our small, dark, yet cozy classroom, we traveled through time and space. We saw civilizations rise and fall. We saw artists of the ages capture great beauty, but also horror, grief, and tragedy. We saw the great wonders of the world, but also timeless remnants of forgotten cultures.

I have many favorites. There’s Rodin’s *Burghers of Calais*. Sculpted men frozen in time, their faces stricken with despair. They’re scrawny and devoid of life. They walk forward to their deaths, some cradling their heads, others with their heads held high. There’s Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement* in the Sistine chapel. I particularly adored the depiction of a damned man in shock and horror as he realizes his inevitable doom. That was my phone’s wallpaper for quite a while.

I’ve come to love art, as well as its people.

I remember my classmates, geeking out over the *Blue Mosque*. We dared to even claim that its beauty rivals that of the *Hagia Sophia*.

I remember talking about art with my older brother until 4:00 AM, way past our bedtimes but awake as if it was day. My eldest brother calls me “art boy” in an attempt to tease me, but I take it with grace. It’s fitting.

I remember my playful banter with an upperclassman, about how Durer’s *Adam and Eve* is superior to Donatello’s *David*. He disagrees. It’s become an inside joke between us. But he’s wrong. Let it be known that I’ve immortalized it here.

It’s funny how art is often synonymous with mastery or beauty. There’s the Art of Problem Solving. There’s *The Art of War*. But there is no art of art. Art *is* art.-To reflect on myself, I find it more than appropriate to call upon my love for art to speak for who I am as a person. Art is my History. And it will be in my future.

