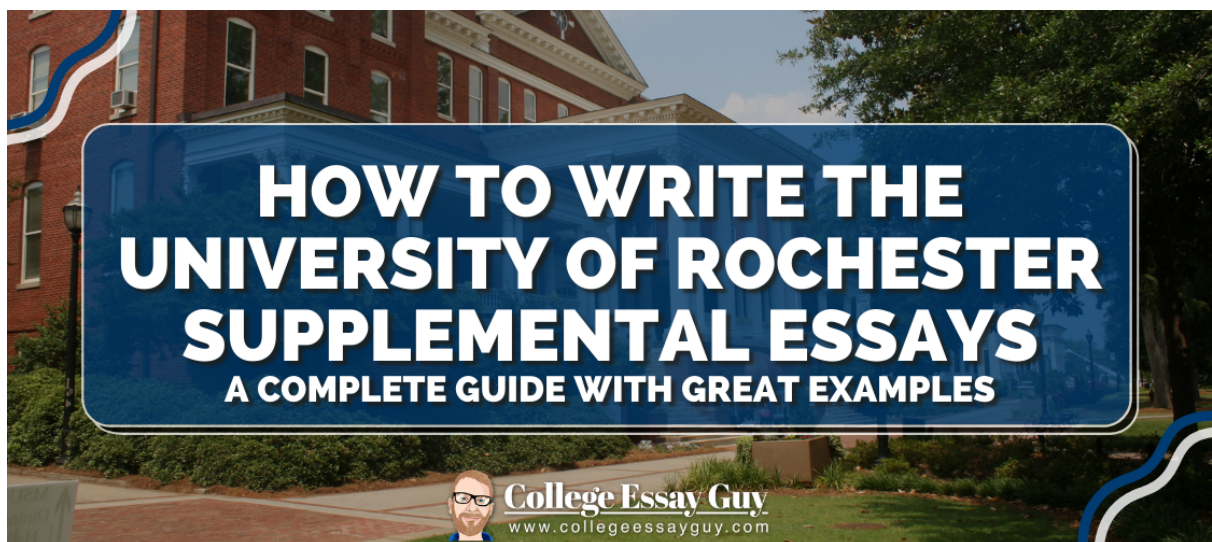


# How to Write the University of Rochester Supplemental Essays: Examples + Guide 2022/2023



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Known for having particularly strong STEM and music programs, the University of Rochester is a great environment for interdisciplinary learning. Although the school

helps you zoom in on a specific major (many students opt to go pre-med), you're given plenty of opportunities to explore outside your comfort zone with a wide variety of majors. While the academic atmosphere is challenging, the student body is collaborative. The administration is also open to change and discourse, constantly working to update curriculums, classes, and community infrastructure to facilitate a better learning environment. If this emphasis on hard work in an interdisciplinary liberal arts environment appeals to you, we're here to guide you through the University of Rochester's supplemental essay prompts.

First, though: Want to get a better sense of what U of Rochester is looking for? You'll find an extensive, by-the-numbers look at its offerings, from enrollment and tuition statistics to student life and financial aid information, on its [Common Data Set](#). For deep insights into how this private research university envisions student success (and how it wants to grow and evolve), read [its strategic priorities](#), which will give you a strong idea of what U of Rochester values.

## WHAT ARE THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPTS?

### U ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

*What field/area of study are you interested in researching? (20 word limit)*

### U ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

*For applicants to the Combined Degree Program: What relevant experiences or insight have led to your interest in this particular program? Describe how Rochester's resources: facilities, faculty, peers and research will meet your academic and personal ambitions. Describe how you see yourself contributing to the challenging field you want to enter as a Rochester graduate. (250 words)*

### U ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #3

*The University of Rochester motto of Meliora – or “ever better” - deeply integrates critical core values into all that we do. These core values of equity, leadership, integrity, openness, respect and accountability define not only who we are, but also who we hope to become. Please use the space below to highlight a time, creative idea or research experience when you put into action*

*one or more of these characteristics in order to make yourself, your community or the world ever better. (250 word limit)*

## **U ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #4**

*Please select one of the following prompts to respond to in 200 words or less:*

- 1. American social reformer, abolitionist, writer and statesman Frederick Douglass said, "Some know the value of education by having it. I knew its value by not having it." Explain ways in which education has directly influenced you and your ability to do good in the world. How will you use the curricular flexibility and co-curricular opportunities of the University of Rochester experience to grow and to promote positive change for yourself, your community and the world? (200 words)*
- 2. Dr. Donna Strickland, University of Rochester alum and 2018 Nobel Prize winner in Physics said, "There's no point in me being anything other than me." The University of Rochester encourages each student to embrace who they are and create their own individual curricular path and experience. How will you use the opportunities here to fully be who you are? What unique perspectives will you bring to our community? (200 words)*
- 3. Susan B. Anthony, champion of abolition and women's rights, once said "Organize, agitate, educate must be our war cry." As you look to join our community of doers and disruptors, in what ways do you envision using both the curricular flexibility and co-curricular opportunities to invoke change for marginalized groups? (200 words)*
- 4. The University of Rochester benefactor entrepreneur, photography pioneer and philanthropist George Eastman said, "What we do during our working hours determines what we have; what we do in our leisure hours determines what we are." Looking forward towards your college experience, what do you hope to do outside of the classroom at the University of Rochester that will enhance who you are as a person? How will specific academic and social opportunities here help you grow? (200 words)*

## **HOW TO WRITE EACH SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT FOR UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER**

## UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #1

What field/area of study are you interested in researching? (20 word limit)

This response is basically what we call a “Why Major” essay, but a really, really, *really* tiny version of it. The word limit gives you just a sentence or two to expand on why you’re interested in a specific field of study. What would your takeaway have been if you had more space? Your thesis? That’s what this short answer is all about. Getting down to the essence of who you are and how that connects to your major of choice. As always, you want to try and imbue your answer with at least 1-2 core values so your reader gets a strong sense of who you are. And don’t be afraid to get creative! Lots of people might say they want to major in history because they liked history classes in high school. Be more specific. What aspects of history interest you? Is there an obscure WWII battle that piques your curiosity? Did you travel somewhere that changed your perspective on a piece of history you thought you knew? Do you have a family connection to a particular part of history? In other words, make it specific *and* personal.

Here are some examples that weren’t written by students but give you a sense of what U of Rochester is looking for:

### Examples:

*Bioethics. What do genetically-modified “designer babies” say about intrinsic human values? I hope to learn about the self through science. (20 words)*

— — —

*Art History: Art is a time capsule, -line, and machine. O’Keefe. Warhol. Wiley. In art, I can visually conceptualize lineage. (20 words)*

### Tips + Analysis

**Identify your intended major.** This may seem obvious, but you must identify what major you’re actually planning on pursuing somewhere in your answer. These two examples put it right up front, which is nice because it makes it clear what they’re referring to. However, you can put yours anywhere that makes sense.

**Maximize space.** You literally only have 20 words to answer this prompt, so make the most of the space you have. It’s not necessary to speak in full sentences. Well-placed and -articulated sentence fragments can be powerful. Don’t waste all your word count saying something like “This

upcoming school year, I would like to major in Art History.” At that point, you’ve used up most of your word count and said nothing personal about yourself.

**Get creative!** While you may have a short word count, using it in interesting ways is a great tactic for sparking your reader’s interest in the rest of your application. Ask dynamic questions (“What do genetically-modified ‘designer babies’ say about intrinsic human values?”), cite specific times/places/events/people (O’Keefe. Warhol. Wiley.), and draw on personal experience to spice things up.

**Specify your interests.** In both of these examples, the authors get specific on where their interest lies *within* the major they’ve chosen. Don’t stop at the major itself. For the first example, it’s about using biological case studies as a way to understand human nature. For the second, it’s about more deeply understanding the concept of time through art. Try to dig into that next layer in your own essay.

## UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #2

**For applicants to the Combined Degree Program:** What relevant experiences or insight have led to your interest in this particular program? Describe how Rochester’s resources: facilities, faculty, peers and research will meet your academic and personal ambitions. Describe how you see yourself contributing to the challenging field you want to enter as a Rochester graduate. (250 words)

This is basically a combined Why Major + Why Us essay with an added question about the future beyond college at the end. It asks you to think in more depth than the first prompt about the major you’re applying to and how the specific resources at U of Rochester would set you up for academic success. We find that it’s helpful to think about this prompt in three parts: Why Major + Why U of Rochester + Contributions to the field. In this sense, the response is like three essays in one that are all connected. Here’s a look in more detail at each part:

### PART 1: “WHY MAJOR”

You’ll find a step-by-step guide to writing this essay [at this link](#), which we recommend reading through, but here’s the short version:

**Step #1:** Imagine a mini-movie of the moments that led you to your interest and create a simple, bullet-point outline.

**Step #2:** Put your moments (aka the “scenes” of your mini-movie) in chronological order, as it’ll help you see how your interests developed. It also makes it easier to write transitions.

**Step #3:** Decide if you want to include a specific thesis that explicitly states your central argument—in this case, what you want to study and why. This thesis can be at the beginning, middle, or end of your essay!

As you're writing, think about how your personal story connects to the resources at U of Rochester. Getting a sense of this will give you an easy segue into ...

## **PART 2: "WHY US?"**

For this, we recommend checking out this [complete guide on how to write the "Why us?" essay](#) and paying close attention to the "Why Cornell" and "Why Penn" examples, which are our favorites.

Here's the short version of how to write the "Why us?" essay:

Spend 1 hr+ researching 10+ reasons why U of Rochester might be a great fit for you (ideally 3-5 of the reasons will be unique to U of Rochester *and* connect back to you).

Make a copy of [this chart](#) to map out your college research.

Create an outline for your essays based on either Approach 1, 2 (recommended), or 3 in the full guide above.

When you write about U of Rochester, try to avoid these common mistakes:

### **Six Common Mistakes Students Make on "Why Us?" Essays**

**Mistake #1:** Writing about U of Rochester's size, location, reputation, weather, or ranking

**Mistake #2:** Simply using emotional language to demonstrate fit

**Mistake #3:** Screwing up the mascot, stadium, team colors, or names of any important people or places on campus

**Mistake #4:** Parroting the brochures or website language

**Mistake #5:** Describing traditions U of Rochester is well-known for

**Mistake #6:** Thinking of this as only a "why them" essay

So, after this section, you should have given your reader a taste of who you are, why you're interested in a particular subject, and what at U of Rochester facilitates

that interest in a more meaningful way than other places. Now all you have left is ...

### **PART 3: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD**

This part is more free form. Think of it primarily as a place to reflect on your future goals and the impact you'd like to make through your academic discipline. It's okay to dream big, but make sure you're qualifying and quantifying the kinds of things you'd like to do so they have substance. Big ambitions are great, but U of Rochester also wants to see that you're thinking realistically about the value you could add to a greater community after graduation.

#### **Example:**

*University of Rochester's commitment to data science would be invaluable to helping me achieve my goal of using data to increase public involvement in the election process as a data journalist. By majoring in data science, I'd have access to world-class professors and research labs, gaining comprehensive knowledge of data analysis to better understand electoral politics. Rochester's programs would allow me to raise public awareness about how political systems work and the importance of data in decision making.*

*By combining statistics with political science to study voting patterns in U.S. elections as a research assistant in The Star Lab, I hope to examine voter education programs. After volunteering for several political candidates, I'd like to study how to reach people more efficiently and expand voting.*

*My interest in politics and elections was sparked by six years in policy debate, where I developed critical thinking and research skills, and coached new debaters. I'm eager to continue debating with Rochester's team, while also helping them develop an Urban Debate League in local high schools to mentor underserved students.*

*Through the Watson Center for Conflict and Cooperation, I'd research international relations and the reasons for conflict, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, building on what I've learned through debate research. I hope to combine statistics with data science to measure the impact of economic interdependence on the probability of war, doing my part as a data journalist to make the world "ever better."*



## Tips + Analysis

**Make sure your roadmap is clear—both when you outline, and when you write your draft.** Remember that roadmap of Why Major + Why Us + Contributions to the Field you created for yourself before starting? You should still be able to see it in your essay once you've written it. This can take a bunch of different forms, but in this piece, each component is in each paragraph. In nearly each block of text, the author highlights her interest in data science/journalism, revealing new aspects of how it originated and changed over time as she goes. She also explains how these interests directly connect to specific clubs, centers, or classes at U of Rochester. Last, she ends each paragraph with a note on how she'll apply what she's learned to future projects or goals. Another way to approach this is to separate each component into its own paragraph rather than have all three parts in each paragraph. There's no right or wrong way, just find what feels most natural to you!

**Include details that bring your essay to life.** This author had a lot less space than you will when you write your essay. That said, she still found spots to introduce specific details about her previous experience on election campaigns and in high school debate. In your essay, you could go even deeper. Get into the visceral experience by placing your readers in your shoes. Engage all five senses in your descriptions. Try *showing*, rather than just telling your reader what happened. This will help you stand out and show the level of care you put into your answer.

**Cite specific clubs, classes, professors, etc.** The great thing about this essay is that it's clear the student has done her research. Take a close look at U of Rochester's course catalogue and list of majors to see what you'd actually want to take if you ended up going there. Citing specific classes, professors, and areas of study is a great way to show your dedication to the university and how you'd make the most of what U of Rochester has to offer. This student highlights a specific major (data science), lab (The Star Lab), club (Urban Debate League/debate team), and some campus resources she'd want to make use of (Watson Center). If you need help brainstorming these kinds of details, check out our BEABIES Exercise to get started (Tool #2 on [this post](#)).

## UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #3

The University of Rochester motto of Meliora – or “ever better” - deeply integrates critical core values into all that we do. These core values of equity, leadership, integrity, openness, respect and accountability define not only who we are, but also who we hope



to become. Please use the space below to highlight a time, creative idea or research experience when you put into action one or more of these characteristics in order to make yourself, your community or the world ever better. (250 word limit)

This prompt essentially asks you to describe and reflect on a community service experience. The possibilities for answers are wide-ranging because the values you can reflect on are so broad. Remember to think about what you got from an experience at the different levels Rochester specifies at the end of the prompt: yourself, your community, the world. There's lots of flexibility to take this in any of those directions, depending on what you did and what you learned.

The essay below was originally written for a different, longer prompt, but it still works for this one, with some tweaks we'll share in the tips/analysis. Let's check it out:

**Example:**

*Inspired to reduce the hardships the Deaf community faces during emergencies, I applied my knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL) to create the Emergency Medical Sign Language booklet with my sister. I incorporated simple medical phrases in 5 sign languages around the world in hopes of mitigating the communication gap between Deaf immigrants and hearing medical professionals. Recognizing how crucial clear communication is to the Deaf community, especially during medical emergencies, I partnered with DeafCAN!, a nonprofit that works closely with Deaf immigrants. After 6 months of diligent work, we distributed over 650 booklets to various health centers.*

*Through this project, I was able to engage and give back to my community, and I'm eager to join those who share the same passionate drive to serve others at the University of Rochester. I'm thrilled to see that the UR Campus-Community Bridge program offers countless service opportunities. I'll undoubtedly continue giving back to my new community through numerous organizations, from the Refugee Student Alliance to Special Olympics to Health Education and Advocacy Leaders (HEAL). At UR, I would be able to bring health information and resources to the low-income population through HEAL. Just as HEAL strategically allocated the Community Engagement Challenge fund to provide free blood pressure readings, I'm eager to take full advantage of UR's grants to expand my booklet's impact to Rochester's large Deaf community. At UR, I'm excited to work alongside passionate students like myself to continue using my knowledge and resources to make a positive difference.*

## Tips + Analysis

**Emphasize personal impact.** In a prompt like this, it's super important to give your reader a qualitative and (if you can) quantitative sense of how your work (creative or otherwise) had an impact. This student discusses her involvement with a non-profit that works with deaf immigrants. After 6 months of work, she helped distribute books to over 650 health centers. This conveys a sense of impact on a quantitative level. In her second paragraph, she reflects more qualitatively by thinking about the values this experience instilled in her and how she wants to continue this kind of work in college. However, in this second paragraph, she could have cut back on stuff about UR and gotten more specific about the impact the project made and how it made the community "ever better." Focusing on the language of the prompt here is important—you want to make sure you're addressing the question that's being asked. There's another prompt you can choose that's a more substantial "Why us?" essay, so this is your chance to choose a different topic and reflect on it in a way that's less directly about the university's resources and more about its guiding principles.

**Avoid overused and cliché words.** This author relies on some words that are often overused in college essays. Words like "passionate" and excessive language like "undoubtedly" or "full advantage" are used by many applicants as filler when they don't know what to say. Rather than rely on clichés, take the time to meaningfully brainstorm the values and sensations you associate with an event, moment, person, or place. Then, when you're writing, you'll have a toolkit of words to help you articulate what you want to say as personally and specifically as possible.

**Provide context to your reader.** Many people choose to write about specific research projects or volunteer organizations for a prompt like this. Just remember that your reader is probably unfamiliar with the organizations you're referencing. And even if you're writing about a group a lot of people know about, assume your reader doesn't! Notice that when this author mentions working with DeafCAN!, she briefly describes what it is and how it relates to her previous work ("a non-profit that works with Deaf immigrants"). This doesn't have to take up a lot of space. Just make sure your reader has the context they need to appreciate the work you've done. Otherwise, the impact won't mean much to them.

## UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY PROMPT #4

Please select one of the following prompts to respond to in 200 words or less:

Option 1: American social reformer, abolitionist, writer and statesman Frederick Douglass said, “Some know the value of education by having it. I knew its value by not having it.” Explain ways in which education has directly influenced you and your ability to do good in the world. How will you use the curricular flexibility and co-curricular opportunities of the University of Rochester experience to grow and to promote positive change for yourself, your community and the world? (200 words)

Like some of the prompts above, this is another take on the “Why us?” essay. It also asks you to think about the value of education and how you see yourself taking advantage of that through your experience at Rochester. However, unlike some of the other essays we’ve seen, this one is a bit more existential. It doesn’t ask you to specify a specific major or set of courses; it’s more interested in the why. It asks you to grapple with education conceptually and think critically about how it intersects with your values. Even though the prompt is broader, your answer should still draw on specific details and insights. Think of this as a chance to reflect on the value of flexibility in education and where it might take you in a post-college setting.

This example was written for a previous, longer version of this prompt, but still works, though it could be strengthened to fit better, as we’ll explain in the Tips +Analysis:

### **Example:**

*As someone who fell in love with programming at nine years old, I believe that technology is good for society. But technology’s rapid growth has created staggering risks to privacy and security—risks I want to study, understand, and solve.*

*Studying Computer Science at The University of Rochester would prepare me for this challenge. I want to grow from finding computer vulnerabilities and developing security software to tackling Rochester’s advanced algorithms and cryptography courses.*

*I learn through iteration and persistence, and research has played an important part in my high school education. At Rochester, I would pursue research on applying artificial intelligence to information security and aspire to work on cryptography in the CS Theory lab. My goal is to graduate with the ability to create innovative ways to protect society’s data.*

*Solving technical problems is not enough, however. Developers like me need to predict how technology will be exploited. We need to become social scientists, not just computer scientists. I would use Rochester's flexible curriculum to study psychology for insight on human behavior, and pursue the unique "Ethics in Technology" cluster and the Social Implications of Computing class.*

*I love sharing my passion for computer science. I teach advanced CS at a summer camp and mentor younger members of my robotics team. I look forward to continuing this at Rochester, where I would organize a group of my classmates and start a free Python course for middle-school students in Rochester.*

— — —

## Tips + Analysis

**Reference language from the original prompt.** Notice that the author here specifically uses the word “grow” in her second paragraph, mimicking the language used in the last part of the prompt. This is useful because it a) orients the reader to which part of the question you’re focusing on and b) shows that you read the prompt in detail.

**Get specific.** Although you have a limited word count, getting specific in your answer will help differentiate you from other applicants. For instance, the author here does a nice job of starting to address the first question in the prompt (i.e., “*Explain ways in which education has directly influenced you and your ability to do good in the world*”) by saying, “I learn through iteration and persistence, and research has played an important part in my high school education,” but doesn’t elaborate further. This sentence alone could have been written by many people. It gets at some interesting ideas of iteration and persistence but doesn’t follow them up with specific examples of when these ideas have been applicable (classes, projects, events, etc.). All he says is that they were important “in high school,” which is probably too broad. Take the time to elaborate meaningfully on your answers to each part of the prompt.

**Reference Rochester resources.** The second part of the prompt asks you to elaborate on how UR’s “curricular flexibility and co-curricular opportunities” would facilitate further growth. This is when you tie the values you’ve gotten out of education in the past to the ways you would operate on campus as a UR student. This is an important connection to make in your essay because it makes your personal experience relevant to what UR has to offer. Otherwise, your essay could be written for any college! Make sure you bridge that gap from past personal experience to future growth at the

university. This author does a great job of this by talking about the research he'd like to do on cryptography and applying artificial intelligence to information science. He also specifically references UR's "flexible curriculum" in the second-to-last paragraph, mentioning his interest in understanding psychology in conjunction with computer science.'

— — —

Option 2: Dr. Donna Strickland, University of Rochester alum and 2018 Nobel Prize winner in Physics said, "There's no point in me being anything other than me." The University of Rochester encourages each student to embrace who they are and create their own individual curricular path and experience. How will you use the opportunities here to fully be who you are? What unique perspectives will you bring to our community? (200 words)

*2. Dr. Donna Strickland, University of Rochester alum and 2018 Nobel Prize winner in Physics said, "There's no point in me being anything other than me." The University of Rochester encourages each student to embrace who they are and create their own individual curricular path and experience. How will you use the opportunities here to fully be who you are? What unique perspectives will you bring to our community? (200 words)*

Like a lot of the prompt options for Rochester, this one is essentially another version of a "Why us?" essay. However, the focus here is primarily on identity and self-expression. If you're interested in talking about values like independence, autonomy, or a strong sense of self, this might be a good prompt for you to choose. If you're thinking about which prompt you want to answer from a content- (rather than value-) driven perspective, this might be a good option for talking about a specific aspect of your identity or a community you're a part of. Essentially, this is a highly personal version of a "Why us?" essay, and it's for people who want to dig deeper into who they are at a fundamental level rather than actions they've taken or education experiences they've had. Ideally, directly discuss how your experiences lead you to want to contribute in specific ways to the Rochester community.

Here's an example that was originally written for a longer version of the prompt but could still work with some edits that we'll explain in the tips below:

**Example:**

*March 1, 2040*

*To the women of tomorrow,*

*I came to Rochester excited to study chemical engineering right in the middle of a revolution to close the gender equality gap. I was lucky to have Dr. Astrid Müller and Dr. Andronique Ioannidis as role models while I cemented a path for women in STEM and explored the potential for the goods we use to benefit to both people and the environment.*

*I studied applications of complex chemical systems through the lens of localized solutions, joining a team that built a wastewater recycling system for campus dining halls. Through projects like this and my philosophy cluster, I learned as much about my responsibility to practice ethical science as I did about chemical engineering. This wisdom prepared me for my life's work: confronting overwhelming global inequities resulting from commodification of the environment.*

*My Rochester engineering principles extended to my career at The Cradle To Cradle Institute upon graduation. Its mission is to promote future products through expertise in chemistry and ecology. Universal product design absent of any sensitivity to natural and cultural diversity at the community level had become an epidemic of monoculture. Changing the industrial design agenda was my purpose then and still is to this day. As the Science and Certification Associate, I advocate for corporate accountability, partnering with manufacturers to engineer clean products and processes.*

*I look forward to passing this wisdom on to you.*

*Warmly,*

*Claire*

— — —

## **Tips + Analysis**

**Be inspired to get creative.** This author gets creative with the format of her essay by turning it into a letter that retrospectively reflects on what she would have learned from her experience at Rochester had she already been accepted and graduated. At a general level, this is a great idea. It's super smart to find new ways of presenting information about yourself in creative formats to keep your reader engaged and demonstrate your ability to think outside the box. But this essay could have been stronger had the student focused more on the resources she took advantage of at Rochester, rather

than experiences outside the realm of the university. The author gets into the specific job and position she wants to work at after college. While this is somewhat relevant to her interests, it crowds out more specific information about her actual experience in college. When you're writing, it's absolutely fine (and even encouraged!) to talk about your post-college aspirations, but make sure you're stating those within the context of resources at UR.

**Describe the self through multiple lenses.** In this essay, the author primarily discusses her academic interests and career aspirations. She doesn't spend time breaking down her values or talking about what personal experiences motivated her to pursue this specific academic track at UR. When the prompt asks you to discuss "what unique perspectives you would bring" and how you'd use Rochester resources to "be who you fully are," it's not asking for a laundry list of classes and clubs you want to take and join (although those might ultimately be a reflection of who you are). Define yourself *outside* of the parameters of the university first, then connect those to the institutional resources. Remember to emphasize the personal and connect that to the perspectives you would bring to campus. Then, and only if you have space, do you need to worry about classes, clubs, and careers.

**Emphasize your values.** This is something you should be doing in every essay, but it's especially critical here because the prompt is entirely about who *you* are. You can't effectively answer what it means to "fully be you" without giving your reader a sense of what drives and centers you. In this essay, the author conveys the importance of values like social/environmental responsibility, justice, equity, and access. If you're not sure exactly what your values are, try our [Values Exercise](#) brainstorming activity before you start writing.

— — —

Option 3: Susan B. Anthony, champion of abolition and women's rights, once said "Organize, agitate, educate must be our war cry." As you look to join our community of doers and disruptors, in what ways do you envision using both the curricular flexibility and co-curricular opportunities to invoke change for marginalized groups?

This option is new, so we don't have any examples written specifically for it yet to share. That said, the approach is similar to the other three options and examples laid out in this guide: use Why Us details focusing on both academics and community, in this case specifically to discuss how you want to work *to invoke change for marginalized groups*.

— — —



Option 4: The University of Rochester benefactor entrepreneur, photography pioneer and philanthropist George Eastman said, “What we do during our working hours determines what we have; what we do in our leisure hours determines what we are.” Looking forward towards your college experience, what do you hope to do outside of the classroom at the University of Rochester that will enhance who you are as a person? How will specific academic and social opportunities here help you grow? (200 words)

This is yet another version of a “Why us?” essay, with a focus on extracurriculars and the community outside the classroom at Rochester. Show the admission officers how you’ve reflected on how you’ve come to be the human you are, how UR can help you become the human being you want to continue growing to be, and how you hope to impact others in UR’s community.

Since this prompt is new, we don’t have a Rochester example for you, but the essay below could work with some tweaks that we’ll address in the Tips + Analysis section.

**Example:**

*My interests and life experiences will guide me in becoming part of the Penn community, and Penn will help bring out the best in me.*

*Joining LGBTQ student groups was an incredibly valuable decision I made in high school. I can’t wait to join the Queer Student Alliance to meet queer friends, explore the Penn LGBT Center, and discuss feminism and gender through events at the Penn Women’s Center.*

*My experiences in soccer and track have taught me that although studying fulfills me, I need an athletic outlet to maintain balance in my life. One of my favorite sports is Ultimate Frisbee, and I hope to become involved in it at Penn. I aspire to join the Venus Ultimate team to find a joyful, supportive community.*

*One of my most essential interests is reading. In high school, I have had many opportunities to broaden my book horizons and find connection through reading and discussing, but I have never been in a formal book club. I’m excited to join the Penn Reads Book Club to meet like-minded peers and make connections in a deeper way.*

*Community is of the utmost importance to me, and I know I will find mine at Penn.*

## Tips + Analysis

**Dig into the “why.”** This student does a nice job of answering every component of the prompt. She tells us what she likes to do and addresses how those needs would be met by specific teams, clubs, and resources at the university to which she’s applying. It could have been even stronger if the student shared more of the why behind her interest in these activities. Notice how every paragraph is kinda general in its detail. Drawing on personal anecdotes, dialogue, or sensory details will allow you to show values like “joy” or “community” rather than just stating them outright.

**Speak to personal growth.** This prompt isn’t just about fulfilling your current interest and needs, but also furthering and enhancing them in a new setting. This essay could have been stronger had the student elaborated on what she hoped to gain from the various clubs and communities she’d like to join. When you write, think more expansively about how resources at Rochester could change your perspective or lead to new, exciting opportunities for connection or action. UR is a space to push past what you already know you like and search for more.

**Connect some “why me” examples to “why Rochester.”** Notice how this student draws from her past experiences to show how she sees herself not just thriving in but contributing to Rochester’s community. Like this: “Joining LGBTQ student groups was an incredibly valuable decision I made in high school. I can’t wait to join the Queer Student Alliance to meet queer friends, explore the Penn LGBT Center, and discuss feminism and gender through events at the Penn Women’s Center.” It’s a nice way to demonstrate, in dating parlance, why you and Rochester would make a great match.

With all of these tips and examples in mind, you’re now ready to start writing!