

Mark Kim

## Personal Statements

As a non-traditional and older student, I have significant experiences that have influenced my educational and professional development. Because of this, they are too numerous to state within such a short space, so I will speak only of my experiences at SFSU.

The greatest challenge I faced while pursuing my education was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This extremely disruptive time had upended the world, and it impacted my studies and personal life. The pandemic also compounded challenges that I was facing in my marriage, which ultimately led to divorce amidst the worst of it. Navigating the separation and isolation while maintaining academic performance and goals were difficult beyond words. Beyond the mental and emotional toll, the divorce drained me financially, which only compounded its effect on my life. Nevertheless, as evidenced by my record, I was still able to succeed through this adversity.

As the US was opening back up, albeit with social distancing measures in effect, I was provided with an important opportunity in an REU program with the University of Houston. This fully remote program gave me my first experience with full-time academic research. This time not only honed my interest in research, but also furnished me with skills in collaborating with other academics and generating actionable results with often ambiguous guidance. This allowed me to further develop my skills with dealing with uncertainty and solving unstructured problems.

My upbringing instilled a deep resentment towards education, and I was not emotionally equipped with dealing with the traumas that produced that resentment. This resulted in my temporary withdrawal from school. I do not believe that elaboration upon this is appropriate upon here, so I will not write any more on this.

Next, since the GRE is a requirement for this program, I will speak briefly about my GRE scores. Please be advised that this is the only program (Quantitative Psychology) that I am applying to that requires the GRE. I was not going to apply to this program because of this requirement as it would put undue financial stress on me. Nevertheless, a last minute gift allowed me to take the GRE, so I was able to include this program in my applications. Unfortunately, because of the limited time, I was unable to study for the exam at all and had to take it blind. Given enough study time, I believe that I would have be able to perform much better, so I do not believe that my poor scores reflect my potential.

I believe it would be remiss to omit my experience as a serial entrepreneur. My journey as a business owner multiple times over provides me with a unique perspective on life and work. Entrepreneurs must be capable of careful planning, communication, implementation, and execution. These are mature skills that I have honed for over 10 years and I truly believe that they would be invaluable in research, teaching, and collaborating with a diverse community of students and colleagues.