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**Sample essays 2017**

**University of Wisconsin - Madison**

# The Total Package Lawrence Schlossman

## Write a concise statement with any additional information that is important to convey to the admissions committee. Information that may be important might include your aspirations, work experience, creative talents, factors affecting your academic record, or why you are applying to UWMadison. You may wish to attach a separate page for your statement. This is an important part of your application.

I know University of Wisconsin- Madison is right for me. At a school like University of Wisconsin I can not only succeed and flourish as a student, but even help contribute. Wisconsin can also offer me everything that a serious yet excited student could ask for: academics and a social life.

When choosing a college, the first things that came to my mind were excellence in academic programs and reputation. Wisconsin offers a wide range of classes and majors, a distinctive reputation, and it is a place where I know I can succeed. As are many students my age, I am unsure of what I want to study as a major. Part of me loves psychology and the human mind, yet I am fascinated with history, and another part of me enjoys English and creative writing. Wisconsin, being a large University, offers a wide array of classes and by the time I graduate I will have a degree in a major that I truly love. As a student of Wisconsin I can bring the willingness and excitement to succeed. I feel strongly about my academics and have a desire to learn. Education and learning is never an area to cut yourself short on and doing the most challenging things are always worth the struggle in the end. Hopefully my willingness to learn and succeed will contribute to the campus environment and hopefully I can lead by example.

Academics aside, Wisconsin also offers it students an amazing social life. I am a huge sports fan, and the Big Ten conference offers some of the best college sports in the country. I can think of nothing better then rooting for the Badgers on the field or on the court; I want to be part of the sea of red. Wisconsin also has over 600 student organizations, and I know that I can find my niche. I have always been someone who likes to get involved on campus. In high school I had a wide variety of activities and leadership positions. I did everything from my high school's Latin Club, to varsity soccer to the political club. I tried to be a leader wherever I saw fit and I got others involved and excited. I know my leadership qualities and my wide array of interests will benefit Wisconsin and those around me. I also have done work to help others in worse positions then mine. Throughout my high school career I did volunteer work at my community's Center For Food Action. I feel it is a person's duty to help those less fortunate then themselves. It is my desire to help bring leadership, excitement, and compassion to Wisconsin. I want college to not only be a learning experience, but also a thrilling one. I know Wisconsin can provide all this and more.

Wisconsin is the total package. It has academics that serious students crave, but is also a place to enjoy the greatest years of your life. I know Wisconsin can serve as a vehicle to help provide the most desirable future available, but without sacrificing the present.

# My First Flight Robin Bates

## Describe an important experience in your life.

"Northwest, this is La Crosse Tower. Hold-short runway three-one for Cessna on final."

Knowing that I had personally delayed a plane full of commercial passengers on my sixteenth birthday was not what I had in mind for my first solo flight. Regardless, the hold-short command, a matter of little importance to the Northwest pilot and tower operator, made it impossible to ignore the reality of my success.

Unlike the fortuitous Peter Pan, who needs only to "think of a wonderful thought," it did not take me long to reach the conclusion that more than a bit of pixie dust would be required to make my young aviation dreams come true. My quest soon brought me to Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the official volunteer auxiliary of the United States Air Force, which flies more search and rescue missions than any other organization. I joined CAP as a cadet almost four years ago, attained the Cadet Officer rank of Captain (the Amelia Earhart Award), participated in numerous national Cadet activities, and served in state and national Cadet leadership positions. Never did I abandon my dream of flying, however, and it was through CAP flight training that I found the key to my box of pixie dust.

Before I was allowed anywhere near a magical flying device, however, I attended hour upon hour (upon hour) of ground school sessions, learning the mechanics, instrumentation, physics, operation, and navigation necessary to be a safe pilot. Of course, I could never forget the joys of FAA regulations that make tax law seem like a thrilling novel. Then again, the woes of these early days were forgotten the moment I first stepped (or, rather, jumped) into the pilot seat of a Cessna 172.

It would be disingenuous to claim that my first experiences were anything but stressful and terrifying. Suddenly I was in charge of an airplane, my own life, and even the life of my instructor. Although I knew on some level that my Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) would not allow me to come to any real harm, my new responsibilities were daunting nonetheless. After months of practice, countless landings, and more than one rough day, I was prepared (at least theoretically) to take to the sky. Alone.

The weatherman was right; it was a perfect day. The sky was magnificently clear. The slight wind was perfectly aligned with the runway. The late spring afternoon merrily unfolded with dazzling brilliance. For the first time, I started the engine...alone. I taxied down the runway...alone. And then, I was flying...alone! The exhilaration immediately hit me with unimaginable force. Thousands of feet in the air, looking down on the Mississippi River and the abundant signs of spring, I realized there was no place I would rather be.

The pixie dust worked. My wonderful thought transformed into a marvelous reality. While I may have momentarily inconvenienced the passengers of that afternoon Northwest flight, I could not have had it any other way.

# Hindsight is 20/20 Robin Bates

## If you could change one development in history, what would it be?

"Hindsight is 20/20." This common saying, while a comforting way to console someone who can not accept a past decision, is far from accurate. The problem with changing history - even just one little fact - is that the consequences of the supposedly superior option never occur. In an attempt to prevent one calamity, a change to history could simply cause another. I would never choose to alter history, but it is interesting to explore the possibilities that a change would have made. Instead of preventing the Holocaust, the colonization of Africa, or even slavery, I would choose to change something rather more mundane-the development of the textile industry.

Traditionally, an entire family worked together as a team to create cloth. Children would card wool by the bucket from an early age. The wool was given to the wife and other women of the household, who spun it into smooth thread on a spinning wheel. This thread was used by the husband to create the finished product-fabric-on the family loom. This system allowed families to earn a living working as a single unit. Without the concerted effort of each individual, success would have been impossible.

The introduction of textile factories certainly led to an increase in productivity, but at what price? An industry that had once flourished as a family enterprise began brutally ripping those same families apart. Mill towns, complete with shoddy housing, non-existent schooling, and insufficient regulations, sprang up along rivers in both England and America. These towns forever changed the process of textile creation.

The automation of the textile industry, while responsible for providing more consumers access to higher quality fabric, had some brutal consequences, as well: abysmal quality of life for factory workers, degeneration of the family as a work unit, and the rise of product uniformity. Although I would not alter history to prevent a calamity, I firmly believe in workers' rights, which could have been symbolically preserved had the mechanized wheel of progress not been thrown into motion.

Keeping textile production within the home would have prevented the developments that followed in the "successful" steps of the textile industry. Instead of a modern world governed by mass consumerism of uniform products, clothing and other amenities would still be made individually, allowing for the creator to take pride in the work and giving the consumer a piece with greater character.

Individualized production promotes a level of workmanship that is conspicuously absent when giant factories become involved. Both the creator and the consumer are denied the practically tangible allure that pride and individuality bring. No longer would cloth be wasted by changing seasons and fashions; conservation would become key. Although the industrialization of the textile industry did lead to many improvements, I would rather keep my individuality.

# Hidden Interests Anonymous

## In an essay of about 300 words, tell us more about yourself, describing interests and accomplishments which are not indicated elsewhere on this application.

The question was "1. Having a diverse and exciting community of students is an important component in determining a great university. How can I contribute to that population?"

As I sat at my desk pondering this question, I grabbed my 7-year-old Easter bunny pouch and took out a tiny strawberry-shaped eraser to wipe out an awful idea from my outline. Looking at the eraser, I realized that I had received it in a goody bag from a 5th grade birthday party. It suddenly dawned upon me that I have a unique subconscious interest in garbage collecting.

Don't get me wrong, I am not a trash lover. Seldom will anyone see me rummaging over trash cans the night before garbage pickup. Rather, I just can't seem to throw anything away. The Easter pouch that once held colorful chocolate eggs is still sitting on my desk, now containing an assortment of erasers. Intermingled with all my stylish necklaces and bracelets are old worn out Barbie lockets. There is even a large cardboard box in my closet that houses hundreds of my "one day these will be worth a fortune" beanie babies.

Not everything I keep is trivial though. I have a nice pouch of pins that I collected from my summer at the National Student Leadership Conference in Chicago. My favorites are the pins from the Chicago Board of Trade and the Federal Reserve Building. A haphazardly painted paper plate mask hangs on my wall, a remembrance of my times volunteering as a children's art teacher. Ribbons of all shapes and sizes flow down my wall, representing anywhere from wins at badminton tournaments to piano competitions to old spelling bees.

My parents especially dislike my interest in collecting. Every now and then they complain to me that my junk is exponentially increasing since I never throw any of it away. They don't seem mollified by my explanation that I am merely building memories. The entire top drawer of my night stand is a large box containing all my movie and ticket stubs since middle school. Whenever I add to my collection, I often look through the others and reminisce on the good times of the past. Who would've thought that I watched Spice World four times?

There is a story behind every piece of "junk" that I keep. Today, I can still remember my best friend and I fighting over who found the cute strawberry eraser from the goody bag first. Saving up memories has been an interest of mine for years. I hope to add a lot more to my collection at the University of Illinois.

# The Chemical Reaction That Is Nicholas A. HarrisNicholas Andrew Harris

## The University values an educational environment that provides all members of the campus community with opportunities to grow and develop intellectually, personally, culturally and socially. In order to give us a more complete picture of you as an individual, please tell us about the particular life experiences, perspectives, talents, commitments and/or interests you will bring to our campus. In other words, how will your presence enrich our community?

In one hand you have a beaker filled with a diluted solution of hydrochloric acid, which is one of the strongest acids you can concoct. In the other, you have another beaker filled with one of the strongest bases, sodium hydroxide. If anyone would digest either of these chemicals, there would be severe consequences for them, but when mixed together under the right conditions, a chemist can create water and salt. Nothing is ingested more than water and salt. This is the fascinating part of chemistry, the ability to mix two things together to form a compound that is 100% different. I see this process evident in my own life. I hope the final product of my life is a successful engineer who has made a name for himself as a hard-working person, who balances his demanding job and his loving family, while still managing to give something back to the community whenever he has the opportunity.

My first reactant, the hardworking trait, began because I am the youngest of four boys in a family of seven. Each of my brothers had a unique personality. While this allowed me to experience all the trials and tribulations of my brothers’ paths of life, I needed to make my own path. I explored many different possibilities throughout my life, but I knew that the chief gift I was given was my intelligence. I worked hard all through my early academic career, striving to be that "great student." This attitude carried through to my high school career, where instead of taking easier courses and receiving the 4.0 GPA, I took the hardest courses the school had to offer, such as both levels of AP Calculus, AP Chemistry and AP Biology, to challenge myself and prepare me for the future.

The next component of the reaction I learned from my oldest brother Robert, the UW-Madison graduate. I always looked up to my brother. He was able to balance school, family, and sports. He showed me a full life is one that has a balanced perspective. I have tried to practice this in my own life by balancing my rigorous academic schedule, demanding sports, and accountability for my job while always making sure that I leave time for my family, friends and myself. Something else that developed my open-minded perspective is that my three older brothers all brought something different to the table. Robert was the logical and analytical mathematician, while one of my other brothers was a social, caring teacher and the other a culturally aware Spanish student. These three cover many aspects of the personality spectrum, and my experience with their diversity will help me throughout college as I interact with many groups of unique individuals.

While I looked up to my brothers, my sister looked up to me. Now the roles were reversed, and I was placed in my brothers' shoes. The final factor in the reaction developed because I needed to show my caring and compassionate side to her, while still making sure she wasn't veering off of her path. I realized that life isn't only about me; I need and want to help others reach their potential as well. In order to help my peers, I formed an AP Calculus AB study group. There were a variety of sessions, where we would either dive into a concept one-on-one, or a group would come to re-learn a difficult concept. Through these sessions, I developed even more interpersonal skills with my colleagues, which is another important reactant in my life.

During some chemical reactions, an outside force needs to be applied in order to make the reaction complete. In the chemical reaction that is my life, this outside force is a great education. I believe there is no better place to take this step than UW-Madison, which offers me twelve different engineering majors that I can explore in my quest to be that successful engineer I've always dreamed about becoming.

# A Week of Discovery Anonymous

## The University values an educational environment that provides all members of the campus community with opportunities to grow and develop intellectually, personally, culturally and socially. In order to give us a more complete picture of you as an individual, please tell us about the particular life experiences, perspectives, talents, commitments and/or interests you will bring to our campus. In other words, how will your presence enrich our community?

While most of my friends were deciding how to spend their first Saturday of summer vacation, I was packing up my belongings for a week of hard work that seemed to have little reward. I was headed to Ripon College for the 66th annual Badger Boys State program. I wondered how I would last on my own for a week surrounded by over 700 strangers my age, while bringing only a moderate interest in government and politics, which I believed were the cornerstones of the program. Trying to keep an open mind, I left early that morning unsure of what I was truly in for.

Arriving in Ripon, I checked in, unpacked my belongings, and kissed my mother goodbye. I soon realized that everyone there was in the same situation, and from initial conversations I found out I was not the only one feeling the way I did. On the first night I learned probably the most important lesson of the week. The staff told us we were all selected to attend for a reason, whether it was excellence in academics, leadership, volunteering, or most likely a combination of all three. They told us to throw our egos out, and that it did not matter who you were or where you came from. When you are surrounded by the best of the best, a laundry list of accomplishments does not matter, because everyone else in attendance has one equally impressive. This wisdom gave me newfound confidence, and I realized I could make a difference that week.

As the week progressed, I began to make friends and ease into our rigorous daily routine. Each day I learned something valuable, often not about politics or the American government system. Instead, I learned how to live with people different from myself. Growing up in a suburban community with only 20,000 people, and attending a high school with around 750, I was not exposed to the diversity that our state – and indeed our world – has to offer. I was forced outside my comfort zone into the more challenging space where real learning takes place. I never considered myself narrow-minded or shallow, but these encounters opened my eyes to the beauty of diversity. Everyone had different beliefs and values, but I respected them all because the program and our personal qualities connected us.

Overall, my experience at Badger Boys State is one that I will never forget; more importantly, I believe it helped me prepare for life after high school. Although the camp’s emphasis was on patriotism and civics, I learned more from simple, daily interactions with the fellow Boys Staters. I am confident my experiences will allow me to contribute to the college community, and I know that I will not be intimidated by the excellence of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I was surrounded by other young men at the tops of their classes, and I feel more confident than ever that I am fully prepared to join the best of the best at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

# Value of Diversity Anonymous

## A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.

There simply was no solution. With tears of frustration in my eyes I went through the options for the hundredth time. I had come face to face with one of life’s many brutal truths: no one can build a sand-castle by herself. About to give up in despair, I spied something that made my heart leap. There, between the little red slide and the big-kid swings, sat another five-year old girl. It did not matter that as a native of the country I was visiting, she only spoke German.

All too soon we were casting long shadows in the fading sunlight, and I had to say goodbye to my architectural partner. I knew nothing but her name, which I have long since forgotten. After all, this was simply one of many such encounters.

By the time I realized how lucky I was to do so, I had traveled to most of Europe and some of Asia. My father’s job dragged our family from country to country. We lived for a few months in Israel one year, a few months in Switzerland the next. If I were to go back to any one of the many countries to which I have traveled, I would naturally be drawn to the famous monuments, historic landmarks, and local museums. But the memories of my international playmates are some of the most valuable souvenirs I could bring home from my travels. With their help, I learned to both respect and appreciate others’ differences.

At times this respect came with difficulty, particularly when the culture in question clashed with my own. When I was twelve my father was invited to teach a class in South Korea, and so off we went. One day we visited a small art museum, where we met the only curator, a small, hospitable woman who spoke no English. I responded politely when she welcomed us to the museum, and then not quite so politely when she started running her hands through my long, curly hair. I stood rooted to the spot by shock and horror as she neatly braided my hair. After a few minutes I was released, and with a great sigh of relief I set off to explore. I had hardly reached the door when, to my dismay, the hair-braider returned – brandishing a comb. Gathering my dignity, I suffered her ministrations. The result was a breathtaking French braid, shaming me for resenting the curator’s lack of respect for my personal space. Never again did I hold other cultures to my own standards.

In Belize, I saw that other cultures have different economic as well as personal standards. My family and I stayed in the small village of Armenia, a town built for refugees from the surrounding countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Most residents made their living as hired hands at the local grapefruit orchards or selling handmade souvenirs to the tourists. The wealthier townspeople owned horses for transportation or pack animals, but most simply walked.

At first I pitied the locals for their poverty. As I spent more time with them, I began to see that they did not consider themselves poor, nor lament their lack of luxury. The concept of wealth meant something completely different in Armenia, something that had less to do with possessions and more to do with family. While I appreciate the comfort in which I live, the Armenians make me thankful for the little things in life, the beautiful days and loyal friends that no amount of money could replace.

To this day I value diversity. Many of my friends speak imperfect English; for most it is their second language. Few are citizens of the United States. As I make the transition from high school to college, I hope to meet students from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds with whom I can share my unique experiences. Though I have traveled in four continents and met people of numerous cultures, I have not yet been to college, and sometimes the thought makes me apprehensive. That said, I know that if I approach my college years with the same open-minded curiosity I learned from my family’s wanderings, I will be amazed.

# Perfect Fit Anonymous

## Write a concise statement with any additional information that is important to convey to the admissions committee. Information that may be important might include your aspirations, work experience, creative talents, factors affecting your academic record, or why you are applying to UWMadison. You may wish to attach a separate page for your statement. This is an important part of your application.

Growing up in a family of doctors, I have always been fascinated by the medical field. This fascination has prompted me to involve myself in many science related areas, from taking numerous science classes to participating in the many scientific extracurricular programs offered at my school. I have shadowed physicians at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Marshfield, and I have observed medical research in progress at a laboratory. These experiences have given me insight into the rigorous daily routines of physicians, as well as the intricacies of research. Although at this time I have not determined what specialty I would like to go into, I have set my ultimate goal at becoming a physician, and would like to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) Medical School. However, for me, attending college means more than studying just one particular area – the wide range of academic programs at the UW-Madison offers me the opportunity to pursue my goal of becoming a physician and also allows me to pursue my other interests.

I am a person who seeks and excels at academic challenges and who has a variety of academic and social interests. Upon graduation from high school, I will have taken over 10 Advanced Placement (AP) classes and tests. I believe that this experience has prepared me for college, as the rigorous classes demand a high level of commitment. The excellent grades I have received on AP tests reflect on my ability to meet the demands of challenging classes. My dedication to academics is also seen in my achievements on the ACT and SAT, as well as my high school rank.

Apart from the classroom, I am very active in music. Madison’s prevailing music scene is an excellent fit to my passion for music. With a friend, I have co-organized a performing local band, which has been playing together since Junior High. Our band performs a diverse range of music, including old rock, funk, rhythm and blues, and pop; we have played at garden parties, performance centers, and dances. I also have found ways to incorporate my passion for music into my other interests. Within school, I have integrated music in academic projects and have volunteered to play for the American Cancer Society Walk Against Cancer. Additionally, I contribute a portion of the money I earn at performances to non-profit organizations such as the Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation. I also excel at solo instruments such as the piano and clarinet, and have won several state Wisconsin School Music Association Solo/Ensemble Festival awards. I am excited about the musical opportunities available at UW-Madison and throughout the city, and I look forward to partaking in these events.

I seek a university that offers a variety of academic subjects to keep me challenged as well as one that reflects my wide range of interests. I believe that UW-Madison is an excellent match for my interests both academically and socially.

# Music Man Anonymous

## Describe an activity or experience that has been or is especially important to you. Reflect on the meaning of this experience, and how it has prepared you for college and the Medical Scholars Program (500 words or less.)

Music has been an especially important activity for me. Although I have chosen to be involved in a variety of activities, the one that has been most rewarding for me is performing in a band. In junior high school, I organized a band that has since been playing for local functions. Involvement in music has not only given me enjoyment but also has given me a positive outlet for self-expression and given me the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for success in all aspects of life.

Learning to balance rehearsal with studying and other extracurricular activities has helped me to develop time management skills. While I have spent countless hours practicing and performing music, I have continued to take many advanced placement courses and have maintained an excellent GPA. I believe that the invaluable skill of time management has better prepared me for higher education and will allow me to take advantage of the wide variety of opportunities available at UW-Madison and its Medical Scholars Program.

Teamwork and leadership skills are also key components of success. In order to meet the demands of all our band members, as well as the demands of diverse genres of music, compromises had to be made. Although at times made reluctantly, these compromises were vital to the band functioning smoothly as one. While collaboration was a main part of our success, a sense of purpose and direction was needed to keep the band focused and on task. By directing each practice session, I learned effective leadership skills.

Music has also provided me with opportunities to help people. I have donated my time to perform for charity functions, such as the American Cancer Society’s Walk for Cancer, and I have contributed the money I made from performances that I was monetarily compensated for to non-profit organizations, such as the Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation. Seeing the enjoyment on the audiences’ faces, especially residents of nursing homes, has given me immeasurable and unexpected rewards and has made any hard work in preparation for concerts worthwhile. These experiences have been ingrained in my memory and are ones I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Music is not only an activity that I love, but also one that allows me to give something back to my community.

Through music, I have learned time management, dedication, cooperation, and leadership. These skills, in addition to my academic preparedness, will allow me to gain a higher education at an accelerated pace. My ability to prioritize my schedule will help me keep up with the rigorous courses I plan to take and will allow me to participate in a variety of other activities, while teamwork and leadership skills will allow me to conduct study groups to help myself and other students succeed. The enjoyment I have given others through my music has furthered my desire to become a physician so that I can help people on a daily basis.

# Cultural Persistence Anonymous

## If you wish, write an optional essay providing additional information you believe I important and relevant to the evaluation of your candidacy. Examples include significant challenges in your background, e.g. family hardship, working a substantial number of hours per week during the school year, changing schools, etc.

I was three years old when my parents chose to emigrate from China to Canada in order for my father to pursue his medical career. It was a difficult journey for my parents because of cultural and language differences and for me, as a small child, leaving the familiarity of my home and relatives. We relocated several times during my childhood and with each move I had to change schools and become acquainted with new environments and make new friends. These frequent changes in my family’s home gave me opportunities to develop the social skills necessary to adjust to new situations quickly and have made me a more resilient person.

While my father worked late into the nights preparing for his medical board exams and writing his research papers, I watched how his dedication and persistence paid off; he is now a licensed physician and a productive research scientist. I learned that dedication, determination and persistence are important aspects of commitment to one’s goals. Even thus, I am no stranger to the difficulties that lay in the path to entering such a profession.

My parents’ work has always fascinated me (both my parents are involved in medicine and medical research) and has stimulated me to become involved in many science pursuits. I have taken science classes, participated in extracurricular science programs, shadowed physicians and observed medical research in a laboratory. These experiences have given me insight into the rigorous daily routines of physicians, as well as the intricacies of scientific research and have helped me to formulate my ultimate goal of becoming a physician. I believe these activities along with the more than 300 hours of community service I have performed have helped me to develop the skills and instill the dedication necessary for success with my future studies in the Medical Scholars Program.

# How I Can Contribute to the University of WisconsinHyun Jung Ham

## The University of Wisconsin values an educational environment that provides all members of the campus community with opportunities to grow and develop intellectually, personally, culturally, and socially. In order to give us a more complete picture of you as an individual, please tell us about the particular life experiences, perspectives, talents, commitments and/or interests you will bring to our campus. In other words, how will your presence enrich our community?

“It is your turn to speak, Hyun Jung.” This was the moment that I had feared the most when I was first accepted to an international school. My English skills were terribly poor, which often led me to avoid difficult interactions like this one. In my mind I could see the answer, but the words coming out of my mouth were never the right ones.

In my Korean school, we rarely spoke to one another in English. Our teachers focused only on the grammar, leaving us at a loss when it came time to have a conversation. As a result, in my new school, I did not always know how to express my thoughts. I became isolated and found myself shying away from the non-Korean students.

In English 11, my teacher once mentioned his experiences in the Model United Nations. His story of all of the different students from all around the world interested me. After I asked my teacher about it I found out it would count as a required extra-curricular activity. I had become tired of being shy, and decided to force myself to try something new.

I heard that students in the MUN are very vigorous, arrogant, and persuasive speakers. I began to worry. I was not in the habit of eloquent debate. At first though, I was surprised. Students at MUN were agreeable; they said hello, shook hands. Once a debate started, however, they turned into the energetic, active, and aggressive speakers I had heard about.

After walking around for a while, my friend asked me to join a discussion about a resolution on climate change. When it was my turn to speak I became very nervous, but I knew I had some important points to bring up. Carefully, I outlined my ideas for the resolution.

“Oh, that is a very good idea. Let’s add that,” a group leader said. I was so relieved! Excitement rushed through me. I was hooked.

As the day wore on, I became able to explain my resolution with detailed accounts in front of many delegates. With my newfound confidence, I approached every delegate first, not waiting for them to come over to me. I asked for their support and signature in order to pass my groups resolution. As a result of my hard work, along with the help of others, our resolution passed by a majority.

In an international setting, with people from all over the world, it can be difficult to make yourself understood. After my experience persuading and garnering support at MUN, I learned how to deal with moments of misunderstanding. I learned to show respect as well as the fine art of “compromise”.

I am certain that an international university will have a similar environment. Since my success at MUN, I am ready to welcome cultural differences with an open mind and an open heart. I am not afraid of being wrong because I can always learn from my mistakes.

# More Than A Number Arkajit Mandal

## "If there is additional information you would like us to consider in reviewing your application, please share this with us as well. This is your opportunity to tell us things about yourself that have not been asked elsewhere if you believe they will help us become acquainted with you in ways different from courses, grades, and test scores."

GPA. SAT. ACT. AP. In our society these acronyms essentially define a student. I wish to go beyond these objective criteria in evaluating who I really am. Far too often, students focus merely on the grade; nonetheless, this grade is worth absolutely nothing if one cannot apply that knowledge to a real-life setting. Throughout my academic career I have tried to take a variety of courses to attain the knowledge, instead of just the grade.

Beginning with sophomore year, I had the option of choosing a broader array of courses. I decided to take classes that would allow me to learn things that I did not already know, such as AP European History. This was the class I spent the most time studying in, though the grade did not show it. I challenged myself, and I do not regret it. A grade is only relevant through high school; knowledge however, lasts forever.

Although I feel as though a grade cannot accurately evaluate one’s intelligence, it can give a good ballpark. My grades were not stellar throughout my sophomore year, though they did improve throughout my junior year in which I finished the last term with all A’s. By the end of my first term this year, I also managed to earn an A in each of my four classes. I wish to maintain a high GPA throughout my senior year even when I get accepted into any college. I will use my thirst for knowledge to help push myself to perform better throughout my entire senior year.

The reason I wish to attend Madison is so that I can reach my full potential in a strong academic environment. So far I am inclined to pursue a science-related career, and more specifically, the pre-med track. In spite of my science-oriented preference, I am still open to learning about anything. I do not want to pre-plan everything one hundred percent. Instead, I want to be able to try a bit of everything by taking a broad variety of courses. I want to find what I am good at, and then be able to apply that ability to a meaningful occupation. I firmly believe I can accomplish this goal at Madison.

# Getting Involved Arkajit Mandal

## The University of Wisconsin values an educational environment that provides all members of the campus community with opportunities to grow and develop intellectually, personally, culturally and socially. In order to give us a more complete picture of you as an individual, please tell us about the particular life experiences, perspectives, talents, commitments and/or interests you will bring to our campus. In other words, how will your presence enrich our community?

The medical field has always fascinated me. This curiosity stemmed from my interest in watching medical dramas. One such drama which keenly appealed to me was the television show House. A typical episode consists of Dr. House solving a mysterious medical problem for a patient. Watching all these wild cases sparked my own hunger for knowledge. How would an actual medical environment feel like? How did certain diseases affect the human body? How are different types of medicines created? These questions served as a catalyst for my inquisitiveness towards the medical field.

My first course of action was to begin volunteering at Methodist Hospital. What better way to learn more about the life of a doctor than to volunteer at an actual hospital? My primary job at Methodist is to work at the Information Desk. The main duties of this job include directing visitors to the rooms of patients, answering any questions they have, and looking up the room numbers of patients on the computer. There are also many times when I am required to escort handicapped visitors to a room. One day as I was pushing an elderly visitor in a wheelchair, he told me how much he appreciated my assistance. It felt good to know that I was making a positive difference at the hospital. Interacting with these patients made me realize that becoming a doctor is not only about learning the art of doctrine, but also learning how to talk to patients. In addition to experiencing the hospital environment, I also wanted to expand my knowledge about science.

Junior year is arguably the most important year for a high school student. It is vital to pick your courses carefully in order to reflect what truly interests you. In order to learn more about the human body, I took the brunt of my science courses this year, including Chemistry X (Honors), AP Biology, and Physics. It was amazing how all three courses related to one another. For example, the neutrons, protons, and electrons create atoms. These atoms are the building blocks of DNA, the foundation of all human beings. In AP Bio, I also learned a lot about the immune system and how white blood cells are responsible for fighting off diseases caused by bacteria. While these courses only gave me an adequate idea of how the body works, it also made me realize how much is unknown about the human body.

I finally got an opportunity to explore more about the body during my internship at the University of Minnesota. I worked in Dr. Marna Ericson’s Dermatology Department. My job was to be the lab attendant and perform a variety of miscellaneous tasks in the laboratory. One task involved shaving and skinning mice to use as skin samples to test a drug. This was a unique hands-on experience for me, and gave me a feel of surgical procedures. While I did not have my own experiment, I took part in one involving transdermal drug delivery. We applied a DAPI (a type of stain) solution to the skin samples in order to better analyze them on the confocal microscope. My entire experience at the lab was remarkable. Upon completion of my internship at the U. of M., I was certain that I wanted an undergraduate education involving some sort of research.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is well-known for its intense research. In 2007 alone, over $900 million was spent on research expenditures. Wisconsin alumni or faculty have also received 17 Nobel Prizes. To be a part of this university would be an honor. My interests and experiences would directly accentuate Madison’s goals. My interest in research would allow me to further explore the boundaries of science. This desire for knowledge will allow me to enrich the community by pushing others to also find a meaningful passion. I hope to meet others that share my infatuation with knowledge, and perhaps together, we can combine our strengths and pursue new discoveries.

# Getting Involved Arkajit Mandal

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# Another Ingredient Into the Melting Pot Tina T Zhu

## What qualities, experiences, etc. will you contribute to the University?

College brings together a melting pot of students and a buffet table of classes, internships, study abroad programs, and clubs. Yet students must give back to their schools, or else who’d be attending classes or playing in the orchestra?

To college, I add my civic responsibility: a member of Youth in Government and Girls State, I appreciate the democratic processes which govern our country. In school, I will promote citizens’ duties and get involved in campus student organizations, telling my peers to also take responsibility in school and community. However, social responsibility is not limited to voting in elections or knowing one’s Congressmen. As president of my high school National Honor Society and an active volunteer, I value community service. Because I’m interested in medical school after college, I shall seek volunteer opportunities in local hospitals to help people in their time of need. Perhaps I can convince friends to join in. As a proud representative of my college, I will show the world that young adults are driven, hardworking, professional, and ready to make a difference in our world.

To college, I also add my musical passion: a clarinetist since fifth grade, I have attended three Honor Bands and two All-State bands, and played as principal clarinet in my school band for all of high school. Playing clarinet is a way for me to express myself emotionally as well as refining a talent. It has also taught me dedication and a positive attitude. When I tried for my first Honor Band, I inadequately prepared my audition and placed fourteenth out of fifteen. I found it embarrassing at first, but then I worked harder on my auditions for the next year and placed first! From that I learned to keep a ‘don’t up’ attitude, because a little extra effort can help me a lot. College, too, will be tough, with difficult classes and separation from family. However, by never giving up and putting in my best efforts, university life will be all right.

To college, I add my ability to have fun: just recently, I organized a Sadie Hawkins outing for all of my single friends. We dressed as flowers and went to a late dinner at Teresa's Mexican Restaurant. Although most of our friends brought dates to the dance, we single girls ensured that lack of dates didn't mean we missed out. I also make room for fun and jokes in my extracurricular activities, such as Math League. Math-related jokes like “What do you get when you divide a cow’s circumference by its diameter? Cow pi.” This remarkable team chemistry carried us all the way to the State tournament, where we were bantering and quibbling through the tests. I know how to have fun and keep upbeat. This is most important to me because when college pressures are overwhelming, I can relieve stress by sharing some laughs with friends. The best part of high school is enjoying my final years as a kid; but college will be a blast!

# I Am Me Anonymous

## Personal Narrative/ Interesting Story

I will never forget the look of the freshly fallen, pure-white snow that blanketed the streets just outside the car when my mother said, “I don’t even consider you my son anymore.” The white snow was suddenly blinding, glaring at me with its purity. I never imagined that those eight words could have such a profound effect on me. Eight words simultaneously shattered my world, and opened a whole new world. It was in this moment that I had a choice; I could let these words define me, break me, ruin me, or I could overcome these words, rise above my mother’s shallowness and become a stronger individual; I chose the latter.

The whole ordeal began in February 2012 when, finally, I realized that something was wrong. There was an unexplainable weight on my shoulders. A weight I was no longer willing to bear. For years I knew that my relationship with my mother was unnatural, unbalanced, and chaotic. Not knowing any better, I figured that the constant barrage of yelling, the continual arguments, and her sporadic need to verbally unload her anger upon me, was normal, something every child went through one way or another.

However, it was on an early February day that I realized this wasn’t normal by any measure, this was emotional abuse, and I was no longer going to withstand it. Fortunate to have a supportive father, grandmother and aunt (who was once technically my grandmother), my father and I petitioned the Wisconsin Family Court System for a change in custody, allowing me to escape my mother and live with my dad in Georgia.

In the ensuing months after my decision, I experienced numerous ups and downs with the progress of my case; one moment I was moving, the next something still had to be signed off on and I wasn’t moving. Needless to say, on top of dealing with my now infuriated mother I was on the brink of a situation I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy. I would tell myself, You’ll get through this… You’ll be a stronger person because of this… You cannot let this destroy you… Ultimately, I was right, and within six months my life was vastly different.

In July 2012, I packed 16 years of my life into three moving boxes and a carry-on suitcase. But I also packed something that was more valuable than anything found in these boxes or my suitcase, I packed something inside of me, I packed something that has become so integral to every part of my soul that it is almost indescribable. I packed a never ending supply of confidence. I now find that those moments when I was down in early 2012, the moments when my future was in the hands of people I didn’t know, people who didn’t really know me, those moments when all I had to rely on was myself, I found that I could survive. I could thrive. I could live. I turned an incredibly complex, difficult, life-altering moment into fuel. Fuel to push myself to be the very best I could be, in everything I do. I found that I was no longer fighting to make my mother, my father or anyone else proud, I was fighting to make myself proud. I discovered that in the end of the day I was in the driver’s seat of my life. What I wanted to achieve was up to me, and me only.

Fast forward to August 2013: a little more than a year after my life-defining ordeal began, I was living as a completely different person. Awakened to my new power, I took my junior year at a new high school, in a new city, in a new state, by the horns and began building my life from the ground up again. I became involved in a program called Future Business Leaders of America, in which I was fortunate enough to be elected President for the 2013-2014 school year. Competing at the state level, I placed first in Management Decision Making out of more than 500 competitors, allowing for me to attend the national level competition in Anaheim, CA. There I place tenth in the nation.

Additionally, I was awarded the unique ability to attend Boys State this past summer. At Boys State I spent a week with the most politically and civically engaged juniors Georgia has to offer. Together we formed a mock government and furthered our knowledge about government. Being unable to sit still for more than five minutes, I was also selected to attend both the Air Force and the Naval Academy Summer Leadership Programs - selective programs for rising seniors who are prospective candidates for the Academies. So while my life was uprooted, without the weight of my mother’s oppression, I have become the person I’ve been dreaming of being for years.

Ultimately, while my childhood is by no measure one to brag about, I feel I’m ultimately blessed beyond comparison with regard to the lessons I have learned. Without going through the past year of my life, I wouldn’t know that in the end of the day I am my biggest secret weapon. My sheer determination to succeed despite the roadblocks placed in my path is so pivotal to everything I am today that I honestly don’t know where I would be without it. To this end, my mother is right, I am no longer her son, I’m someone entirely different from who she raised me to be, I am someone who looked oppression in the eye and rose above it. I am me.

# The Windy City Anonymous

## Consider something in your life you think goes unnoticed and write about why it's important to you.

I come from a place where the Sears Tower dominates the glitter of the skyline, the glorious silver Bean lives, and the notorious winters leave us all to witness weather that would even have Demeter herself question the decision of her revenge: the Windy City. You will stand in the middle of downtown and see a plethora of not only towering buildings, but people from all walks of life. Most importantly, you will see that most people are coming off of the one system that keeps the vast, bustling city together- the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority). Trains roar and busses speed past the cars, all carrying stories of a diverse group of people all wanting to leave their mark on the world. There you will also see me every morning and every afternoon with my hour commute to school.

Approximately 1,560 hours of my high school career have been spent either standing on the blue platform or getting lucky and finding a seat hoping that my backpack would reside itself comfortably on my lap but never reaching this goal as the strong breaks would have it launching through the air. You really cannot have the best of both worlds here but that is perfectly fine because my commute has given me a lot more.

Come with me on my ride through Chicago.

The Foster and Western stop holds the anxiety of my first day of school and my clumsy fall as I accidently shoved a senior who did not get mad. He rather smiled and told me about his first days at Lane and the amazing experiences I would have there. By the corner of the Science and Industry Museum, the bus is filled with my apprehension of the City Fair judging and the collaboration with a group of people who all wanted to use their experiments to make a change. I met a senior who planned on finding a new treatment for colon cancer through RNA and a girl whose dream was to build the perfect artificial pancreas. They all had stories behind their endeavors, and they fueled my energy for my scientific research. By the Blue Line in Jefferson Park, I was greeted daily by the beautiful harmony of a violin playing by a budding artist. On her side stood a young teenage boy who profoundly stood for the Black Lives Matter movement and delivered poetry that woke you up to the reality of inequality that exists today. The Ashland bus knows the story of my first real scientific failure with cancer research but it also knows my perseverance through it as I remembered the people I had met back at the City Fair. Subsequently, it also literally holds my success after perseverance when on the side of the floor there lies a copy of my gel electrophoresis that I had accidently dropped. The Addison bus I take every morning is filled with the laughter of me and my friend and our multitude of feelings we have for the day we were about to step into.

Through the CTA I have met audacious writers, budding singers and future scientists. I have unequivocally spent my high school career in a commute that has given me more than just a ride, but a background of experiences, stories and my own history in the city. My stories and experiences lie all over Chicago and the commute tends to be an unnoticed entity. However, it holds the pivotal memories of my past and present which without, would have left me with a different perspective from what I have now. It has shaped me to become a person with more than just my own perspective: one who comprehends others as well, in the Windy City and beyond.

# Presidential Scholarship Essay Anonymous

## Why do you want to go to college? What are your goals for after college? What made you feel this way? Explain in 250 words or less.

“Chance, if you pull my hair one more time you’re going to be in big trouble!” I threatened. The boy in front of me sat in his wheelchair, grinning wide with a devilish look on his face. “Chance, no one will want to be your friend if you hurt them.” His face fell, and for the first time I saw apology and understanding in his eyes.

I was a seasoned four-year-old at that time, and a participant in the KUSD Peer Program. In this program, academically advanced preschoolers were buddied up with academically, emotionally, and physically challenged children their own age. In my mind, although my buddy Chance was in a wheelchair and thought yanking hair was funny, we were no different.

On the first day of school , I learned a massive amount patience in a very short amount of time. It took a few weeks, but Chance eventually stopped yanking on my locks. I grew with him that year, and we learned each other’s favorite colors, favorite coloring books, and favorite playtime activities. I realized that I loved watching people grow, and growing with them. I wanted to do that my whole life. From that point on, I began to intuit that I wanted to be a teacher. I often reflect on my year with Chance, and sometimes I wonder who benefited more from our companionship. I want to be around special kids like Chance for the rest of my life, even if it means a few hair tugs.

# The Stigma of Mental Illness in Asian Cultures Anonymous

## Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?

Asian people do not discuss mental illness. While “Asian” is a broad term that cannot possibly encompass all the nationalities and ethnicities of the Asian continent, this is a solid fact in the most prominent cultures: China, Japan, Korea, and--slightly less prominent, but more relevant to me--Indonesia.

To be mentally ill in an Indonesian family is a weakness--shameful and embarrassing. To have that sort of “invisible” disability--something that could, in some cases, cripple someone to the point of being unable to give even the illusion of functioning like a neurotypical human being--means you’ve tainted the bloodline. In Indonesia--a country whose culture is a conglomeration of Islam, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Confucianism--familial ties are what drive society. The cultural subjugation of women is just another layer of shame that drives Asian women to ignore or even hide their symptoms until it’s almost too late. Depression, though, is what really holds the stigma.

I suspected it--and, somewhere deep in me, I knew it--but I never said it, my mother never said it, and I carried on with my slipping grades and dirty room. Even now, after months of therapy and antidepressants, the word “depression” was never used in direct reference to myself until I forced it out a few days ago, when I asked my mother her opinion on the stigma of mental illness in our culture:

“What do you mean?” She had asked.

I remember hesitating--steeling myself. “I mean, you know, mental illnesses.” She still seemed confused. I reached in myself and found the part of me that had learned to open up and be unapologetically fierce. “You know, like, well, my...depression.”

She blinked, and said, “Oh. Right. Well, I know what you mean. I agree.”

This journey is an eternal one. The fact that it took me four years to even say the word in front of my mother--the most important person in my life--because of my mortification at feeling like such a broken disappointment is a true testament to the damage this stigma enforces. We, as the Asian race, need to talk about depression. I don’t care about the years of cultural and social issues that hold this discussion back. The disparity between the number of American born Asians who have reported having depression and the suicide rates of American born Asians is staggering and, frankly, shocking. We need to unlearn our shame, and learn to seek help before it’s almost too late. I don’t want future generations of Asian American children to ever have to feel as isolated and helpless as I felt. I want to open up this particular can of worms, I want to stand up, and I want people to hear my voice and the voices of all the Asian American lives lost to depression when we say this isn’t a weakness, it is a biological illness, and we need to do something about it.

# Tofu Anonymous

## Consider something in your daily life you think goes unnoticed and write about why it’s important to you.

The off-white, slimy cube looked back at me with a concentrated gaze that matched my own. I tentatively picked up my fork, poked its side, and watched it jiggle and sway under my fork’s careful teasing. “The time has come,” I thought to myself. “Today is the day I will eat tofu.” I stabbed the dang cube with my fork, raised it to my mouth, and swallowed it—along with my dignity. A dumb decision made in the spur of the moment can change one’s life forever, and, that week, I made the dumb decision to take part in a bet that I lost.

Now I found myself face-to-face with a block of pressed baby soybeans and with what seemed like an impossible challenge: be vegetarian for a week.

While a vegetarian diet is easy for some, I grew up in a carnivorous family. A trip to the Brazilian Steakhouse, Costco hotdogs, and rotisserie chickens were not out of the norm. Being vegetarian would require commitment, perseverance, and daily battles with leafy, green-eyed monsters. Out of desperation during my first week, I combed internet for recipes and flipped through the pages of Vegetarian Times. Somewhere along the way, I was blinded by a blog’s neon green background and emphasis on graphic factory farm photos; despite the awful visuals and clear propaganda, the blog had a message that stuck with me: in the future, we will all be vegetarians. Whether this message is true or not, it made me contemplate human responsibility to mother earth.

As my internet searches shifted from quinoa recipes to the ethics of vegetarianism, I learned more about the damage human behavior inflicts on mother earth. I didn’t know it required 2,464 gallons of water to produce a pound of beef, nor did I know that nine billion chickens were slaughtered each year. I did, however, know that vegetarians were notoriously high-maintenance, preachy, and deficient in a million vitamins. Never in a lifetime would I have predicted a future as one of them. Today, I have become the high-maintenance diner who orders the BLT without bacon and subs black beans for pulled pork in tacos. I have also become the “preachy vegetarian” who leads the school Herbivore Society and who probably would have been mocked by my former self. A simple challenge initiated by a friendly bet has changed the way I view the world around me and has fostered my eagerness to try new things. More importantly, I learned that being a vegetarian was more than a change in diet. Being a vegetarian meant being aware of the effects of my actions and learning to immerse myself in a challenge.

Choosing to live life as a rabbit was no exception to the rest of my life: I thrive on challenges. Challenges that make my brain ache (or in this case, my stomach) excite me. I chased challenges in the classroom by deciphering Dalton’s law and memorizing 1,000+ locations on a world map; on the road, every step during the last few miles of my half-marathon is a lung-busting, calf-aching challenge. I’m drawn by intellectual debates-- whether they be about the origins of Thanksgiving or Kafka’s intentions-- that challenge my mind’s preconceived notions. Yet, I find it comforting to know that logic is always by my side on even the most challenging derivatives and computer science projects. The challenges I seek go beyond a simple diet change; rather, challenges are the way I satisfy my curiosity and embrace my love of learning.

# The DNA of Life Anonymous

## Personal Reflection

Vigorously shaking the two milliliter eppendorf tube, the bubbles sprawled out from the bottom, captivating the threads into a structure that engulfed me in a trance. Then the trance was broken. I looked at the scratch left on my hand when I pushed the nylon glove off. A month’s worth of work had just been tossed into a trashcan. The Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) would not show any bands of DNA, and I was left to carry my disappointment all the way to the bus stop.

While sitting on the bus, I recounted every second I spent pipetting and the hours put in that left me with only a few bands of DNA. Sitting there with the end of my pursuit in science, I realized at that moment there sat many more stories beside me. They surrounded the medical student who had jumped on the bus as she eagerly pulled out her Netter’s Anatomy ; the nurse who stared blankly at the floor as if she just delivered new noone would want to hear. Millions of stories stirred on the bus and the triviality of my end to my pursuit came into light as I found that I could make the next story on the bus completely different. The moment right then was just one moment. Our life was meant to be the culmination of these moments, all mustered with failure, brutality and raw strength. The world would move on, a reminder of philosopher Giovanni Pico’s eloquence: “thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer”. We can be as great as we aspire, but the converse also holds: we can create ourselves lower.

I refused to live this converse, and decided that my story the next day on the same ordinary bus would be different. Breaking out of my trance, I glanced at the extraction instructions taped on the side of the fume hood. Step thirteen stated, “Add 60 ul of isopropanol and gently invert the tube until white strands form”. This line did not do any justice to the moment that captivated my thoughts. This was not just a thread of DNA, but an infinite time capsule of the universe. It held the philosophy of Pico and brutal failure, the understanding of human discovery and scavenger, the evolution of man and the time of the past, present, and inevitable future. It held the millions of stories of my love for academics and my strive to excel academically and personally. It captured my intrigued nature for the arts and literature and also my trials within the realm of science.

Science has given me more failure than success, as failed penicillin trials sprawled my research papers and unruly PCR left me standing in front of a room of Ph.Ds and graduate students. I had to muster up the courage to say that I had no conclusion yet and only two gel slides to prove at least 112 hours of extractions and troubleshooting. For me, the helix did not only hold adenine and thymine, it held my diligence and failure which have led to my success and love for observance, discovery and exploration. I walked into the Orjala Lab that summer looking for anti-cancer compounds - but instead I found that the things I truly love are the things that challenge me, the things that Pico saw, and the things that I see in myself. Within the helix, I discovered my own story in the world of science.

# Rising Importance Katelynn Samuelsen

## Consider something in your life you think goes unnoticed and write about why it's important to you (you may enter up to 650 words)

The first time I truly appreciated the sunset was when I was 11 years old. My family decided to take a day trip to Devil’s Lake State Park where we spent the day swimming, hiking and lazing in the sun. Towards the end of the day my mom and I snuck up to the top of the bluffs and watched the sun disappear behind the horizon. I can’t picture what color the sky was, or the arrangements of the clouds that day; they were rather unremarkable. What I do remember, however, is how I felt at that moment. Sitting with my mom and watching the sun disappear below the horizon I was forced to be entirely present. I felt a sense of peace and well-being as I focused only on enjoying the moment. As the sky began to darken we made our way down the bluff and drove home, back to jobs and school and homework and friends; back to life.

Fast forward three years and a cancer diagnosis and I’m watching my mom take her last breath. The day my mom passed away, I was surprised as the sun crept lower and lower in the sky. It seemed as if it was only right that all time should stop. Previous to that moment, it was impossible to envision life moving forward without her. It only made sense that the world stop spinning on its axis; however, it kept turning despite the occurrence of a seemingly earth shattering event. I went outside that evening to watch the day end and tried to remember the time I sat on the bluffs with her, watching the sunset. I recalled the sense of peace and well-being, and reminded myself that there would always be a part of my mom in the sky. Although never completely, time had a hand in slowly closing the wound left by her death and helped me adjust to a new reality.

Two summers later and I’m thousands of miles away from home on my biggest adventure yet: a 30 day canoeing trip in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The sunset’s are later there, usually around 11 p.m. Most nights, we watched the sunset from the tent, hopefully on our way to bed. Day 26 of our trip I watched dusk from the beach on our campsite. I sat with my toes in the sand and couldn’t help but feel the familiar sense of peace in such a wildly unfamiliar place. Unlike at home, I had no way of predicting what the next day would have in store. I couldn’t have known if there would be rain, 35 mile an hour winds or if a bear would eat our food, but I knew with absolute certainty that the next night the sun would set and time would keep going.

Many denote sunsets as a measure of time, as an indicator to cross a day of the calendar. Because of dusk’s consistence people tend not to notice it, believe it not important. For me, however, it is the very consistence of sunsets that make them so special. Regardless of where I am, what is happening, or who I am with the sun will always set. With each sunset, whatever is breaking my world at that moment becomes more manageable. In turn, it serves as a reminder to cherish what makes me happy, because that too is fleeting. When all else in life is unpredictable, amidst chaos and calm, I know the sun will always go down, and I will always be okay.

# The Importance of Being Nice Isabel S. Hanes

## Write about something important about your life that goes unnoticed.

In my life I find myself practicing a certain sort of attitude that is subtle but impactful in its own way. While I do tend to look at life with positivity and a sense of adventure, I would be lying if I said I was always chipper---or even always optimistic. However, there’s an approach I take to my interactions with others that I pride myself on, and though it does not receive much recognition, I believe it’s an important part of my personality. People overlook the importance of being amiable. We tend to concern ourselves with being bigger and better---more courageous, more intelligent, more popular, more exciting. The stress and confusion of applying for colleges has confirmed this in my eyes irrevocably. At this point in time, my friends (and I, as a matter of fact) are uncomfortably focused on their grades, their test scores, their high school transcripts and their academic strengths. It feels unfair that the admissions officers who read their applications might not see what I see---their empathy, sensitivity, thoughtfulness and warmth. I wish that loyalty could be measured by a grade; I wish that kindness could be reported on a transcript. I wish that more value was placed on making others feel comfortable and content.Friendliness is one of the most underrated traits in human beings. True greatness can be found in everyday interactions that end with a little smile, or a warm feeling, no matter how slight. That’s why I turn being a good friend into a way of life---inclusion, appreciation and affection are three pillars in the temple of friendship. I give frequent, genuine compliments and authentic, attentive support. I notice new hairstyles, pick out thoughtful gifts and give valuable advice. I care about the people around me, even if we’re not incredibly close. I offer help to anyone who needs me, even if they didn’t ask. These things seem so small, but they make a big difference. There is power in being the one your friends come to for support; there is fulfillment in taking care of those around you, even if all you can do is sit beside them while they cry. My objective in life at this moment is not to be the protagonist or the hero. It is not to be more interesting, funny, attractive or successful. Those qualities are beautiful, but they don’t sustain me. My objective is to create lasting, meaningful relationships with the people and places around me; to do everything I can in service of acceptance, joy and love. I will embrace softheartedness without shying from the vulnerability it brings. I will make sure the people around me feel appreciated and included. I will be kinder than I have to be, listen attentively even if the story isn’t exciting, practice peacefulness even when I’m upset, without seeking recognition---and I want others to do the same. I don’t need to be noticed; I don’t need to be told that I’m special or exciting or talented. I get the same thrill from being told that I’m fun to talk to, that I give good presents, that I take the awkwardness out of uncomfortable situations. I know that, like many others, I have a great destiny, and I will someday achieve it--but along the way, I will make friends.

# Tenacious, Dauntless Chloe Christiaansen

## Consider something in your life you think goes unnoticed and write about why it’s important to you.

Here, on top of this duvet there exists a sun-soaked, silent universe. I pick up the object in my lap, lazily stretch out my legs and fill my world with the sound of its cracking spine. A gentle shhhhh, smoothing the page beneath my hand. The adventure tucked inside this space unfolds only for me. Yes, everyone else is rendered unaware to the excitement and color and story which explodes into my mind and bursts into the room with the scanning of these first few words. For a few hours wizards can cast spells, two boys are discovering how to love each other, Greek Gods fight to defend their realms, and no one but me will notice. I am submerged; happily enamored with the story until I slam the cover shut.

From literary wall décor to my frequent Boswell Bookstore trips, reading is a clear and quintessential part of who I am. The moment I pull a volume off my shelf and peel back the cover, the adventures and experiences and emotions and memories become part of me. Each book adds to me. It slips beneath the surface of my mind and settles, building on my beliefs, my personality, my desires and my ambitions. The book ends, and life moves on. No one else has noticed, but I have changed. If only in the tiniest of ways, each story has affected me. It has become a new and subtle addition to the fabric of my being.

I have lived victories on the battlefield in this way, endeavored to become a published young author in New York City. I have been on top secret espionage missions and daring heists. I have fallen in love, travelled through time, and fought demons. Now, too, I have decided to chase adventures outside of my bookshelf with unmatched tenacity. I seek to feed my mind with experiences, as many of them as I can possibly amass. So I do. I follow my friend into our Athletic Training room after school a few days a week and learn how to wrap ankles and examine injuries. I expand my knowledge of history and culture by tackling AP Art History, and snatch a perfect score on the AP exam and a newly born passion for studying art. I get involved as the only high school member of our local “Friends of the Library” chapter, and employ my self-taught website design experience to build a new site we can be proud of. I make history as the first Sophomore Captain for my Mock Trial team. I throw myself into Student Council until I am finally elected President of the organization. Senior year brings recognition of my community-minded history of volunteering as I am awarded the DAR Good Citizen Award.

Like the books collected on my shelves, I chase adventure in my life. I chase experiences, knowledge and diversity. I seek to make positive impact. The unobserved space in my brain where the fabric of my personality lies is ever-expanding and changing. I am compelled to add to my bank of explorations by the same drive which attacks my unread novels and hungrily devours their stories. So too, do I approach my life, every day, with strength of purpose. I am reminded there is so much excitement in this world, so many experiences waiting for me to grasp them and it urges me to chase them. To chase studying journalism and creative writing in hopes of capturing my dream position editing for a publishing house, to be ravenous and dauntless in everything I do.