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**Sample essays 2017**

**Wake Forest University**

# Passion for Life Gavin Wolf

## What is your academic passion?

My academic passion is learning; from the trivial to the essential, I am excited by all. Until my sophomore year of high school I was completely unaware of the best feeling in the world, that of learning and embracing a new idea or concept that changes your view of the world. During my freshman year of high school I was "academically confused," with no driving force and no outlet for unadulterated expression.

Although I was in higher level classes surrounded by intelligent people, school was not as much a priority in my life as was socializing. Unfortunately my grades reflected this outlook. Sophomore year I had an amazing epiphany as I watched my older sister enter college. Only then did I truly consider my life after high school and I quickly realized that I too wanted to attend college and better myself.

During my sophomore year I made a conscious effort to focus my attention on school and earn good grades. First semester I began to get the hang of it. By second semester I was amazed by how much I had turned around and how my passion for learning had bloomed. Never was I happier than when I received my report card of straight A's, the true proof that I could succeed.

I found discussions with teachers to be enthralling. I remember the satisfaction I felt when I noticed a substantial error in the class's biology book and worked with my teacher to notify the publisher. That same year I joined my school's nationally recognized math team and went on to win an award for excellence. These successes were pure joy for me and this pleasure was buttressed by my family's elation for my achievements. Although this may sound like your everyday success story, there is one aspect that makes mine quite different.

My great turnaround was independent of my parents' influence. As I struggled freshman year neither I nor my parents showed remorse. My parents pretty much let me do as I pleased and I was not awarded or punished for my actions. This kind of independence would cause many kids to go on the wrong track as I almost did. My success was self-inspired; I did it for myself and for no one else. I did not do it because my parents threatened to ground me if I did not do well, or because I would lose privileges at home.

Few things in life bring me more joy than solving a tedious math problem or reading a good book. Embracing my school work has changed my life for the better and enabled me to appreciate the world and its diversity. It has enriched my life experiences with my friends as well as my family. My passion for learning is a major defining aspect of who I represent and it is my inspiration as well as my safeguard against the twisted roller coaster ride that is life.

# Naturally Beautiful James G. LaRonde

## Discuss a piece of artwork that holds particular meaning for you.

Demanding to be looked at, the unique landscape of Zion National Park presents an imposing image of unforgettable beauty to its beholder. It may not be contained in the Louvre, but I consider it a masterpiece nonetheless. It is not that I do not appreciate great traditional works of art, but I have not yet found anything particularly meaningful to me within the walls of a museum. I find art in nature infinitely more spectacular than anything that could be created by an artist in a studio.

The best example of natural art that I have ever seen was discovered accidentally by my father and I while we were on a short trip to the Southwest. Having entered Utah from the south, we noticed an odd-shaped building, which appeared to be a giant beehive, off in the distance. We stepped into what turned out to be the Utah Welcome Center. There we found a delightful older woman who gave us very timely advice for a driving tour of her favorite places around "color country," otherwise known as southwestern Utah. One place she suggested was Zion National Park, and since we had never heard of it, we trusted her instructions would direct us towards a memorable experience.

Entering Zion from the west, the scenery was much the same as the rest of southern Utah: orange rocks, green grass, and blue sky. With only thirty minutes remaining before sunset, we were advised by the national park toll collector to travel through the tunnel immediately so there would be time to see parts of the interior. The Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel provided an interesting link from the regularity of the surrounding area to the unexpectedness of the canyon itself. The mile-long tunnel had windows of rock about every 250 feet, all of which provided quick glimpses into the immense and spectacular scenery below. Upon exiting the tunnel, many yellow signs cautioned drivers of the steep, windy road ahead, but my father paid little attention to them due to the distracting view. Little did we know, a road known locally as "the Switchbacks" was a treacherous system of hairpin turns and steep grades, descending from the top of the canyon to the deeply set floor. The view from the top gradually improved after each turn on the road. The deep red, rust and orange of the rock walls were in complete contrast with the green of the innumerable plants below. The setting sun added another unique feature, as some of the canyon was in darkness, while other sections were still brightly lit. Deer crowded the roadways, and their outlines slowly faded away as the sun set, with all but their shining eyes becoming invisible. The deer did not seem to share my enthusiasm for the view, as they had taken their home for granted for generations.

Although my experience at Zion was short-lived, it was very memorable. I seem to recall looking around during the fading last moments of light and feeling tremendous anguish. How could this place have existed for so long without my knowing of it? Why can't I live here instead of Franklin, Massachusetts? When will I be able to return? It was difficult to put my feelings for this place into words, at the time, because I felt humbled and speechless by its grandeur. I know that somehow this place would remain with me forever, and absence from it would certainly cause my heart to grow fonder.

I have been to the Grand Canyon since my trip to Zion, and it was noteworthy, but even its size and majesty cannot compare to that of Zion. Maybe it is because it was my first national park, my first experience with an immense canyon, or a combination of many factors. I do know that it was a life-changing evening for me, and it instantly comes to mind when someone mentions art of incredible beauty.

# Fufilling One's Potential Gavin Wolf

## What do you expect from your four years in college? How do you hope to change?

Does education have a value? Not one that is measurable. From my four years in college I expect to receive a wealth of knowledge and skill commensurate to the countless hours of hard work and dedication I intend to put into it. I believe my four years in college will be the most important and influential years of my life.

The knowledgeable professors and students and the rigor of the curriculum at a school like Wake Forest University will push me to limits to which I have never been pushed and allow me to explore my academic interests in an environment in which they can be nurtured. It is this premise that lays the groundwork for my expectations from my undergraduate years.

My experiences outside of the classroom will enhance my character just as much or more than those within it. One of the extracurricular activities I will absolutely participate in is Greek life. I have had the great opportunity to hear about fraternities and sororities from my sister who is currently a junior in college and a sorority member. Every aspect of fraternity life thoroughly excites me, especially the long-lasting, deep camaraderie that fraternities provide. I know I will be entrenched in college life, socially and academically, because I am extremely excited and motivated to do so.

I expect teachers who will push me to my limit and expand my range of thinking while at the same time caring about me. I will interact with and learn from students from around the country and the world. I will go into college with an open but critical mind and I anticipate graduating with vastly more knowledge of the workings of the world while retaining this same mindset. Nothing excites me more than the limitless possibilities and innumerable opportunities that a college education will open up.

I anticipate the change I undergo during college will certainly be great in both amount and profoundness. I hope to broaden my scope on life and to thoroughly learn as much as I can, especially about business which I wish to pursue for my career. The surroundings of a college town are perfect for intellectual and social growth. Currently I think of myself as an extremely dedicated and ambitious individual. I love new ideas that challenge my old ones as well as debating nearly any topic. Placing a student such as myself, with such attributes, in a quality institution such as Wake Forest University will allow me to thrive and grow into the person I hope to become.

# "All That Matters" Anonymous

## Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

No matter how old I grow, the meaning of friendship has always remained the same - loyalty, sympathy, understanding, and unwavering support. I learned this lesson early in life, back when my best friend's trampoline was the cornerstone of my social life. It was there that I learned the value of friendship and the understated importance of simply "being there."

For something we depended on so much, the four of us certainly abused that trampoline. Its face had been scorched by summer days, caked in pollen, covered in leaves, and buried in snow. It had even tolerated a sticky rainbow of popsicle drips from days when we would lie on our stomachs, lazing in the sun.

That trampoline heard its share of secrets, and it managed to keep them all. It stayed updated on who had crushes on whom, and kept quiet when the aforementioned boys jumped on with us. It served as our meeting place for devious plan-making, as well as our drawing board when we went back to square one. More importantly, it was a place to lie there together and do nothing - sweet, blissful nothing.

One summer, the trampoline played an even more important role than usual - the summer that Elizabeth's father died. The week before he passed we sat on the trampoline in silence, broken only by the crying of the suffering springs, indistinguishable from the crying of suffering girls. We offered Elizabeth our support, with minimal success. The only thing that helped was our presence on the trampoline, together, as we had been a million times before.

That was also the summer I moved away - away from popsicles and secret plots. Although there was nothing I could do about it, I felt guilty for leaving my childhood friends, especially when it felt as if they needed me most.

So I came back. Last year I revisited the trampoline (and, of course, the friends), and we remembered the giggles, the smiles, and the gossip. When we had finished catching up, we found ourselves in a reverent silence, like we had been years before. Looking down at that trampoline, I realized one very important detail: sometimes simply "being there" is all that matters.

# "The Heart of Empathy" Anonymous

## The motto of Wake Forest University is Pro Humanitate. Explain what Pro Humanitate means to you.

In my eyes, the essence of Pro Humanitate, "for humanity," lies directly in the word itself - human. The most important thing to remember about ourselves is that we are all human. Infinitely diverse in our nationalities, experiences, political beliefs, and perspectives, we are all thinking, breathing, living human beings. As Shylock testifies in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same water and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?" (Act III, scene i). Humanity will always share this common bond. Our struggles may not be the same, but we are struggling together. And for as long as this is true, it is our duty to relate to our fellow man.

Several recent events have exemplified our capacity for relating to others. In the wake of the devastating hurricane on the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005 and the Asian tsunami in 2004, the world rose together in support for victims. Donations of money and supplies flowed to those regions, as did people eager to volunteer their time and effort to those in need. Similarly, people around the world united in sympathy for the U.S. in the aftermath of the September 11 disaster.

Not all of us can volunteer our time in Asia, rescue people from burning buildings, or even send big checks to those in need. But service does not need to be on a large scale. We all have felt the happiness in an unexpected smile and experienced the warmth of a stranger's kindness.

My goal is to be that stranger. I firmly believe that the impact of giving is infinitely stronger than the effort it requires of the giver. For example, I read in the newspaper one day that there is actually a man in Boston who habitually buys two bouquets of flowers every Friday. He brings one home to his wife, and gives one to a stranger on the train. The article was submitted by a woman who had received such a bouquet. The main paid very little for the flowers, yet the woman was so touched that she bothered to write about it for all of Boston.

Those simple acts inspire me, and I truly believe it is our responsibility to perform them. They require only goodness of heart and generosity of spirit - that is, active awareness and practice of the Pro Humanitate ethic.

# Expanding Knowledge to the Human World: Pro Humanitate Mary Kathryn Cornwell

## The motto of Wake Forest University is Pro Humanitate. Explain what Pro Humanitate means to you.

Music has played an important role in the developement of my esteem and character. When I was in middle school band, I can remember my teacher making our class do breathing exercises, playing tests, and scales over and over in order for us to improve our playing. When I first began to play the flute, I remember being out of breath and dizzy after practicing. Soon, that feeling went away as I began to become more comfortable with my playing. I would never have been able to learn about music if it wasn't for the education received from my band directors, music minister, and flute teacher. All of these people provided me with musical knowledge and skill.

I find that music is an education that can be felt by everyone. I have found myself playing in handbell choirs whose mission is to reach people through the music. For example, I was able to see elderly people in a nursing home who are unable to help themselves or think for themselves show emotion as we played simple holiday songs on the handbells. These emotions, both happiness and sentimentality, touched their entire family. Because of their response, our musical education was used as outreach to help others receive comfort in even a small way.

I also learned what it meant to be a music teacher. I took on the challenge of giving a little girl flute lessons. I was excited about teaching her something that has touched my own life, but nervous at the same time. It was very difficult for her to focus on learning, and I did have to push her. The frustration that I felt when she was not playing led me to believe that this was my own fault. I went back to the persistence that those teachers I have had in my past have taken when dealing with my own education. Althought it is not an achievement which involves compensation, I was able to touch this little girl's life by introducing her to music. Her happiness spread through her family, and I felt very grateful for helping her. It was disappointing at first to see little improvement in her playing, and it made me realize how hard my own music teachers must work. But as the number of lessons increased, so did her progression into learning notes and music. I began to understand the amount of cooperation and patience that my own educators have had to take when nurturing me, and it made me develop a new approach and appreciation for teachers.

Pro Humanitate states that there is more to the education process then acquiring knowledge and skills. Education is still an important factor in Pro Humanitate and serves an important and necessary function in life, but Pro Humanitate gives education a broader purpose and altitude which includes a deeper meaning and direction. Using the intellectual, social, and spiritual values that are learned in different types of education, Pro Humanitate encourages taking what is learned and looking beyond the immediate and mundane to the greater questions of life and vocation. Learning is an important part of life; but without using one's talents or gifts, it is wasted. Connecting information into the improvement of society is what is special about Pro Humanitate. Education is not limited to an institution. It is rather a lifelong process transcending formal education. Pro Humanitate is a lifelong commitment which is a rewarding privilege of gaining that education.

The goal of Pro Humanitate in my own life is to take knowledge that I have acquired through education, privileges, and life experiences, and incorporate that into helping humanity, whether by doing something large or something small. My musical skills that I have learned through the institutions of school and church have led me into working with others. I hope in the future I can use my skills in not only a career, but also for the betterment of others.

# Silence in Community Mary Kathryn Cornwell

## Describe an expressive silence.

"So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars'll be out, and don't you know that God is Pooh Bear? The evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rages of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty." (Jack Kerouac, On the Road)

Jack Kerouac uses his novel On the Road to tell about his life-altering experience as he traveled around America with his friend Neal Cassidy (Dean Moriarty). At the end of the book, he reaches a point where he has to move forward from these journeys, and he is apprehensive about how to move on after the experience. He sits in silence, knowing that things are different somehow. My life-changing experience was Governor's School. The academic facet was wonderful; but the social bonding that took place was something that no one back home understands, not even my closest friends. For six weeks we grew up together, learning about each other and becoming a family. The things I learned are indescribable; it was so difficult to come back home.

The last night of Governor's School we had a formal dance. Spirits were up when we piled into our dorm room with several others. We began talking about how we all prayed to get into Governor's School and how now, we were not prepared to leave. We laughed, we cried. It was now three in the morning and about ten girls were spread out on beds, chairs, and the floor. My friend Emily began to sing a beautiful song called "Skylark". When she finishes, we all were crying silent tears.

We knew that leaving Governor's School would be the hardest thing we had ever done. In that long period of silence, our thoughts filled the room. I have never experienced any presence as strong as the spirit of Governor's School in that quiet moment. Just as Kerouac knew he was changed from his journey, I knew that I was a different person and that a new chapter in my life was about to begin. Never again would we all be together like this. We had separated ourselves from the real world and built our own community, and in the innocent silence, we all acknowledged that we did not want those bonds to be broken.

The silence spoke to us all. Governor's School is a book in our past, just like On the Road was for Kerouac. I will always hold onto the memories of that time, and will never forget the depth and meaning of our silence on that final night.

# Piano Conquest Anonymous

## Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

It was a crisp, clear January day in Park Ridge, New Jersey, a few miles from the middle of nowhere. Before me stood an imposing sight: Schubert’s Impromptu. With a length of fourteen pages and a required foundation of meticulous technical skills, this composition would be a challenge for even the best pianist. And I was no pianist; I was a rhythmically challenged, stubby-fingered sixteen-year old girl. Nonetheless, I began the daunting process of sight-reading.

Black, white, black again. The notes were passing by with unexpected ease – but no! I meant to play A flat, C sharp, B natural, and E sharp; I had underestimated these seamlessly placed notes. My teacher urged me on. I felt utterly incompetent. The melody was exhausting but breathtaking. My fingers began to stiffen; my forearms tingled with pain, and my head was waiting to explode. I soon began to regret that I had chosen Schubert’s Impromptu over Bach’s Prelude. As I pushed forward, measure after measure passed me by. I stopped to inhale deeply, in a hopeful attempt to exhale my frustration and mistakes and inhale even the smallest trace of my teacher’s perfected skills. “Schubert isn’t for everyone,” she consoled. I curtly responded that I would be fine and proceeded onward.

Pain tore through my fingers as they climbed over each key. Black, white, black again. The next note flittered in and out of my view, pushing me forward with only dim hopes of success. Time wore on, and the pain faded into numbness. Each note followed the other in a grim succession. With each passing measure, I became more agile in my ability to sight-read. The end grew near. Suddenly, I heard my teacher, whom I thought had fallen asleep, whisper “You’re almost there.” My vigor restored, I pushed on more quickly than before, until I reached the last note. In one final act of endurance, I closed the score.

However, the journey does not end there; it never does. The end of the first journey was only met with another that would last for three months. Those three months were filled with endless hours of a ticking “Energizer Bunny” otherwise known as a metronome, a book defaced by every color in the Crayola box for the sake of musical perfection, and the loss of countless hours of sleep to my beloved Schubert.

Although I may verbally complain about how much I despise playing the piano, in the dark depths of my soul it is impossible to admit such an atrocity. There is nothing else that brings the rare satisfaction that perfecting a piece brings. During the process, disappointing not only my teacher but also myself, I continued to learn and to improve. There is nothing as marvelous as hearing myself play an impeccably constructed impromptu. And every time a piece is played the way it was meant to be played, not only does the music come alive, but also the pianist and the composer are able to, if only for a bit, live vicariously through the melody. There is something about bringing another’s passion to fruition. The grueling process of the initial sight-reading and countless repetitive mistakes drive me to the brink of insanity, but the very thing that drives me crazy also fuels me.

I am a pianist. I may not be the greatest of musicians, and hearing my friends and teacher play is often a humbling experience, but it is the disappointment and frustration that keep me going. I cannot stop until I have reached perfection.

Crescendo, diminuendo, crescendo again. Disappointment, humiliation, disappointment again. Black, white, black again. Perfection, failure, perfection again.

# The Power of Pain Olivia Hudson Gray

## In his inaugural speech in 2005, Wake Forest University President Nathan O. Hatch praised the University for its commitment to liberal arts education, character development, and diversity, and described Wake Forest as “a vibrant learning community, one that weds knowledge and experience.” How might your education, background, values, and life experiences contribute to the Wake Forest community?

I steal into her room when she is away. Borrowing make-up, clumsily applying too much blush, stabbing myself in the eye with mascara, and slicking on foundation like icing, I proceed with one goal: to be my big sister. She is the older one, the smarter one, everything I want to be. I idolize her, admire her, endeavor to emulate her. I eavesdrop on her titillating conversations: the who’s who of high school, the inexorable female drama, and the tender friendships filled with laughter…everything I wish I were old enough to experience.

I had that sister growing up, or so I thought. At the age of eleven, really too young to realize the extent of the problems in my life, I began to acknowledge their existence. The fiery arguments between my parents did not seem so normal. My sister’s thin body was no longer beautiful, but skeletal. The fighting never stopped. I did not have the perfect family; it became quite evident that it was that idea of perfection that had begun to tear us apart.

My sister is bulimic, and has also become an alcoholic in an attempt to appease her inner chaos. Pale skin, more translucent than white, anguish emerging from behind bloodshot eyes, stumbling towards me with outstretched hands, she wants, for that one instant, to be my sister. Jumbled, incoherent words, twisted lies of self-loathing, late-night, drunken phone calls, gagging noises she doesn’t even pretend to hide, the porcelain seat crashing down, and the water flushing: haunting sounds, disturbing images, unwarranted memories illustrating how badly life can hurt you. Her tragedy lives within me.

My sister has changed my life. This statement typically signifies inspiration, motivation, or encouragement, a person who has set an example of sublime proportions. In fact, what my sister has taught me is that I do not want to be like her. I grew up attempting to mature too fast in her image, and my family’s struggles forced that adulthood upon me. Propelling myself forward with lofty goals and ideals, I now pursue perfection and grapple with its futility all in an attempt to be better. Painful memories do not daunt me: they provide me with my power.

The view I had of my sister was how I viewed the world: with innocent eyes. I was selfish. A member of the ‘cool,’ snobby dance team, I made every attempt to fit in. Laughing at crude and cruel humor and flirting with older boys, I assimilated myself using Hollister jeans and Abercrombie tops. I did fit. But I was never happy. I wanted so badly to join the discussions about boys and make-up, but never could. It seemed so immature compared to the life I knew. The day I found out my sister was an alcoholic was the day I decided to leave the dance team. Pointless, superfluous, and inane drama was not what I wanted to fill my life with. I realized what I want is to never be the one who makes my mom cry. I cannot be that person. I will not be that daughter. Weakness has shown itself to me, and I am stronger for it. Life is not something to merely be lived; it must be experienced. Only through suffering have I learned that I can be more, go further, work harder, and fight back. From adversity comes will, and my will supersedes hardship.

I have always been diligent, assertive, and focused, but combine that with goals, a passion for life and learning, and you get who I am. Recently, my class was asked to read the Epic of Gilgamesh for an assignment, and I was the only student in a gifted class to do more than just read, but analyze and question. When the College of William and Mary came up in a discussion, I began recalling facts about William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution, unable to restrain myself from researching the seemingly incontiguous facts. This boiling desire for knowledge manifests itself within me. Organized and disciplined, my life is coordinated onto a twelve-month desk size calendar. I am motivated by a resolute need to understand, and by the idea that perhaps, one day, something I learn will show me how to live my life voraciously. I will never waste the time I have.

I never asked for the family I have. I was never questioned about my preferences, never got to choose. And that is my greatest happiness, because I would not have chosen this life without hindsight; no one would. My family and friends have surrounded me with chaos and pain, but I am grateful nevertheless. The disarray has made me disciplined, and the pain has made me strong. There is no need for big words and excessive letters to describe who I am. I am powerful. I am a leader. I take control.

Although I aim for perfection, I know it is unattainable. Rather than feigning to embody it, I have come to understand that true perfection is imperfection. I feel quite average at some things I do, but my mediocrity is not wrong or misguided...quite the opposite. It is that invisible force which drives me to work harder. My sister and my awareness of my naïveté (for, of course, it is still present) have empowered me with this control over my life. I am me because of my past. Rather than lamenting my experiences, I exploit my pain for growth toward becoming the woman I am already developing into: a successful student, a cheery and optimistic individual, a dynamic businesswoman with an MBA, but most of all, a person with the strength to truly live. So to answer you question of how I will contribute to the Wake Forest community, I simply say this: I will be me.

# The Recipe Olivia Hudson Gray

## What have you read recently that you found enlightening?

Chocolate Pecan Pie

Press together two shells in a 9 x 13 (double filling) pan

Mix:

6 eggs, lightly beaten

1 ½ c. lt. corn syrup

2/3 c. sugar

16 tsp. oleo

4 oz. unsweetened choc. melted

2 tsp. vanilla

Stir in:

2 c. broken pecans

Pour in shell and bake in 400 degree oven for 15 minutes, then bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

I first saw this recipe carefully written on an automobile purchase order form in the sinuous penmanship of a calligrapher, each letter ostensibly mislaid in place of the date, vendor, pattern, and DRB size. Meticulous precision was in every stroke. A blot of blood stained the corner, and coffee spots tarnished the edges, revealing a clear passion for more than food.

I can picture my grandma at her desk, bored with the endless task of pushing paper at Papa’s Chevrolet dealership in Olney, Illinois. Forced to stay yet another hour but lacking in attention-grabbing labor, she slips an order form from the desk drawer. Pen to paper, she transcribes the famous chocolate pecan pie recipe all the neighborhood kids - not to mention her own daughters - pine for after school. She does not want to forget it.

Now I sit, not at a desk, but at a granite countertop. A myriad of recipes scratched in eloquent scripts by an assortment of aunts, sisters, and grandmas on the backs of forms, envelopes, stationary, Christmas cards, and receipts. The smooth sounds of Bing Crosby complement the merry whisper of the snowstorm outside. The storm of recipes itself is pure chaos, and I toil to organize them as a Christmas gift for my mom.

The jumble of recipes is a kind of recipe in and of itself. It is a chocolate pecan pie composed of Hudson women, Franklin women, and Gray women. Replace the eggs with some wisdom, the syrup with a bit of insight, the oleo with kindness, and the sugar remains the same. Add some care instead of chocolate, a touch of zeal for the vanilla…but don’t forget to stir in the ever-important tenacity in place of the pecans.

Each woman in the family adds a bit of herself to the final recipe. Some adventure there and a morsel of ambition here culminate into a pseudo-family tree. I never knew my grandmother, but what is left of her is in the recipes that I have just recently read. Each letter, word, and phrase marks a time in her life: what she was doing (or not doing), where she was, what she cared about, and who she was. These recipes do not merely symbolize dishes yet to be prepared. They represent family and the love that connects us. The writing of Charles Dickens or Mark Twain might hold more clout, but these recipes are more enlightening than any piece of literature I will ever read.

# I Am Not A Runner Olivia Hudson Gray

## Concisely explain your decision to apply to Wake Forest and what your academic and personal goals would be as a student.

I am not a runner, but I do it anyway to improve my fitness and endurance. Forcing my size nine feet into pink Pumas and my body into shorts and a tee is an arduous task, but I do it anyway. "I must." I pound the pavement, driving each foot further and further. “Just a few more steps.” Gaining distance, but losing energy, my muscles howl at me to cease. “I can’t stop now.” Beads of sweat are born out of force on my brow. A heaving pant replaces the steady rhythm of breaths. “I have to make it to that next mailbox. Keep going. Run harder. Push it. You’re almost there.” And then I pass the mailbox, surpass my set goal, running to the next stop sign before I allow myself a rest.

I live like I run. And that extra burst to the stop sign is my run towards Wake Forest.

They are mind games, both running and academia. They involve convincing yourself of what your body can do and then doing more, for that first mindset is always an underestimate. It is more than just a challenge of the body, but also of the mind and soul.

Wake Forest will be that challenge of body, mind, and soul. It is a school where academic endeavors will entice me, but more importantly, it is a school where everything I think I know will be tested. Furthermore, it is a school where my desire to help others will be facilitated through programs like Project Pumpkin, Helping Hands, and Habitat for Humanity: Pro Humanitate.

Being immersed in an intellectual setting with all the perks of a campus pervaded by nature lures me. The environment of Wake Forest is only augmented by The Calloway School of Business and Accountancy. Key knowledge and insights I have gained through an internship in finance provide me the confidence to say that this school is beckoning me. I wish to ultimately earn my MSA degree and pursue accounting. My ambitions of embarking into finance and business as a woman, however, lie not in breaking barriers or in cracking the glass ceiling with my stiletto heels. My aspirations emerge, rather, from my affinity for helping people.

I am a cheerful, outgoing, supportive, and somewhat ebullient person. Wake Forest is where I will flourish.

# Atrocity in Paradise Jordan Curry

## Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

The finely milled sand was white-hot, almost as if a billion microscopic pieces of the sun had rained down and settled beneath the soles of my feet. As I scanned the beach, I took a deep breath of the muggy air, letting the dampness settle in my lungs as I took in the view around me. I was on a gorgeous island where the bleach-white sands were covered with tidy rows of reclining outdoor chairs, the water was an icy-clear blue, and the sound of the ocean was audible from nearly anywhere on land. This isolated strip of heaven on Earth seemed like another planet compared to where I had been just hours earlier.

The streets of Nassau were sweltering in the summer. The stagnant air was a wispy cloak that sat upon the beads of sweat rolling down my temples. Stores that looked like shacks lined the perimeter of the roads, ventilated by the occasional breezes coming off of the rolling ocean tides. A man wearing cutoff jeans, a dark green crewneck T-shirt, and a dingy grey jacket walked down the street. His dark skin reflected the sunlight as he occasionally opened his jacket each time he passed an identifiable tourist. It was obvious what he was doing. The spicy, earthy smell of marijuana wafted off of him, its pungent smell permeating the air that surrounded him. It was just another day dealing, making a profit in a tourist attraction where maybe, just maybe, a person would be willing to have some illegal fun while on a Caribbean vacation. The atmosphere had an easy, bustling vibe. I came across a young boy, maybe eleven at the oldest, sitting behind a plastic table. He was selling straw purses that featured sewn-on patches of popular characters like Hello Kitty and Minnie Mouse. I walked up to the table and glanced at the bags; I wasn’t really looking, though. I watched the boy as he told another woman standing at the table how much he was selling the purses for. He explained that they were well-made, and that the materials were taken from Nassau, a true Nassau souvenir. He was skinny; that made his jaw oddly defined for a boy of his age. I waited for him to approach me. He did. He said that he had a bag that I would like. He removed a basket from under the table and pulled out a straw bag dyed with the colors of the rainbow. Instead of commenting on the bag, I asked if his parents helped him run the stand. He told me no; his father was gone, and his mother was too sick to work. He couldn’t remember what her condition was called; it was something with her heart, he said. He told me that his mother was the reason why he worked. I asked if his mother had been to see a doctor. He explained that she had once, but she couldn’t go again for a while because a doctor’s care was expensive. I bought the bag from him and slipped an extra ten dollars into the stack of bills. He put the money into a Crayola box and smiled, thanking me and telling me to have a nice afternoon.

Nearly 60% of Bahamians will die of a chronic disease. Even with over 20% of government spending going toward health services, basic access to healthcare is severely lacking in many areas. The inadequacy can be seen in the long stretches of baking streets where people of every age sit outside, just waiting for the sun to set and the heat to die down. The boy I met last summer had a lasting impact on the way that I saw my life playing out. He truly affirmed my desire to become a doctor, my desire to help people, my desire to save lives, and most importantly, my desire to reduce unnecessary and preventable suffering. That day, I came to the remarkable conclusion that, without health, there is nothing left. That was my first discovery. The next is going to be learning how to make a rainbow purse match my scrubs.

# Leadership Anonymous

## Using one of the leadership roles or extracurricular activities you prioritized as being important to you,describe what impact the experience had on you, what you contributed, what you learned about yourself,and how it has influenced your plans for the future.

Society must work together. People must endeavor to do everything they can so as to ensure that humanity upholds valuable ethics and a strong sense of goodwill. The I Club, sponsored by Rotary International, seeks to accomplish these goals on a worldwide scale. As the Treasurer of the I Club for the past three years, I have not only learned the importance of global service and international benevolence, but also the indispensable skills that have taught me to be a more effective leader and a more motivated individual.

I was born in war-torn former Yugoslavia and relocated to the United States as a refugee of a war of genocide. I have always felt an obligation to my country to advocate global awareness and peace on an international scale. Accordingly, during my sophomore year of high school, I discovered I Club. I is an international organization of students aged twelve to eighteen with more than 250,000 participants in over 120 countries. As part of its undertaking, it ventures to promote service and global awareness among the youth.

As an officer for my high school’s chapter of the I Club, I am accountable for the organization of a multitude of charitable events that benefit others on either a local or an international scale. In terms of local contributions, I have worked with my colleagues to organize a number of school enhancement and library beautification projects. Our chapter of the I Club has cultivated strong affiliations with local elementary schools and worked hard to make sure that I Club members are always available to offer our services at the schools. Moreover, as a leader of the club, I helped to regulate a number of service projects that contributed to international causes. During the aftermath of the devastating Japanese Tsunami in early 2011, our I Club worked to initiate a charity drive in which we sent boxes of food and supplies to victims of the natural disaster. Our chapter of the I Club also prides itself in having maintained a commitment to providing support for the eradication of the Polio disease worldwide. Today, Polio is impairing the lives of children in four countries – Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Nigeria. Although entirely avoidable with the administration of a simple vaccine, families in these countries live in such impoverishment that such a vaccine is exorbitant to them. Consequently, our club has worked to raise funds so as to help us join in the fight against this preventable disease. With enough persistence and tenacity, my fellow I Club members and I are more than convinced that our work will help to make a positive effect on the lives of hundreds of impoverished children in these developing countries.

I Club has allowed me to raise awareness for those who are being born into the same impoverished and destitute conditions that I was born into, and I feel so fortunate to have escaped. Today, I fight to ensure that all people can have the opportunity that I was given to achieve something and to become successful.

# A Look into the Future Lena Mason

## In the classic historical novel The Sword and the Stone, Merlin tells the future King Arthur: "The best thing is to learnsomething. That is the only thing that never fails." Later in the book he asks Arthur, "Have you learned anything?" to whichArthur replies, "I have learned and been happy."

I come from a small town in a small world; but this small world has a window, beyond which lays a larger world that I have quietly been watching ever since I can remember. From this world a dream was born of seeing new places, meeting new people, learning new things, and finding a career that I love. I imagine my commencement day to be a milestone of my life, and the doorway to that world beyond that of the small window. The knowledge, lifelong friendships, and the pride my family feels are just a few of the intimate details that will bring me to feel learned and happy on that day.

Knowledge is the intangible design that guides people through history and different concepts and philosophies that ultimately manifest into a better understanding of the world. I feel as though I have learned so much but yet so little. I have an endless thirst to learn more about my passions, and the experiences throughout college will lead to that thirst not only being sufficiently satisfied but spurred with a desire to continue learning forever. No matter how wizened my body grows or what people or products come and go, I will still contain and maintain the knowledge I have learned and the ability to continually expand upon it. Knowledge, to me, is the water that causes the streams to run and connect all corners of my being. After these four years, my mind will be filled with more than can be imagined and ready to continue towards my dreams.

My college commencement day will have a tinge of sadness, because it marks the day of so many people parting and embarking on their next journey. College is not only an opportunity to learn but to meet all types of people; whether it is just merely picking up a dropped book for a stranger or the start of a lifelong friendship. These friends that I meet and the inspirational professors that are discovered along the way will help support me through tough stretches in my life, seemingly impossible classes, and anything else that comes my way. I look forward to supporting them too. The parting of ways will not be completely sad though, for there will always be the memories, and the future in which we can meet again.

One of the things that will contribute to my happiness and learning is my family, because having their support throughout college will make me a stronger and more capable learner. As a first generation college student born to a teenage mom, whose water broke in my high school’s office, I will be a great pride to my family. To imagine my grandparents there that day adds all the more drive to continuing my education. My entire life people have set limits for me saying that I would never be smart because I could not learn how to read in first grade. I have proved those people wrong; I not only learned how to read, but I have excelled at it and is one of my most treasured pastimes. As I sit there on commencement day, I will be reminded that I have not only done this for myself but for everyone that has ever supported me, and that will make me all the happier.

In the end, the small world melds into the larger. College is an indispensable part of my dream, in which so many once in a lifetime opportunities are experienced. I am positive with all the knowledge I will have gained, the friendships made, and my family’s smiles beaming down at me that I will feel learned and happy in the most satisfying way imaginable.

# Books Anonymous

## List five books (with authors) you have read that piqued your curiosity. Discuss an idea from one of these works that interests you. (100 - 300 words)

Man's Search for Meaning - Viktor Frankl

A Tale of Two Cities - Charles Dickens

The Prince - Machiavelli

Outliers - Malcolm Gladwell

Art of War - Sun Tzu

Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning spoke to me on a deeper, more emotional level than any song, movie, book, or work of any kind ever has. Frankl takes the reader through the day-to-day life within a Nazi concentration camp, depicting how people survived under extreme conditions and explaining how they persevered with all the odds stacked against them. His ultimate conclusion is actually quite simple: if you can find a "why," you can endure any "how." If you can find a reason to live, or something to hold onto, then it will get you through the darkest of times: in his own case, Frankl held on to the hope of being reunited with his wife. Now, whenever I face a rough patch in life, I turn to a few of Frankl's words for guidance: "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." This statement reminds me that people are not defined by circumstances, but by how they respond to those circumstances. Humans have the power to control their own destinies, whether facing everyday dilemmas or historical catastrophes. We only need to take action.

# How Art Connected My Life Isabella Pittman

## Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. COMMON APP 2015/2016

My story begins in what was once an artist's commune, the Monterey area, an unending canvas of serene beauty. I vividly recall the vibrant colors and the fragrant air as I sat along the coast, watching the crashing waves bleed into the Santa Lucia Mountains, the cool breeze blanketing my skin, imparting endless inspiration. Over two thousand miles east in Savannah, Georgia, I met Florence Martus as her bronze body stood loyal to the passing ships. I wandered the streets lined in Magnolias and careening moss: rich art, architecture, and long history filling Savannah's corners.

Early on, I discovered the gift of transition. This adventurous life has weaved eras, connected disparate places, and fostered a heart that pulses for immeasurable beauty in the most divergent of places: empty buildings become caverns of stories, brick roads provide historic echoes of a "once upon a time" gone by, and careening waves sing sweet songs of serenity.

Just around the country's southeastern bend is a city that has never known the word "dull," New Orleans. Residents dance to live jazz in the dark hours of the night, dining on Beignets and Bloody Mary's in the inspired French Quarter, with trolleys rolling their way down St. Charles Street. New Orleans encompasses everything from cultural traditions and history to art that has proved boundless to state lines. Nine hours north is the "Show Me State" and its most famous city, St. Louis. Here I spent three years developing myself artistically through immersion and instruction. I danced with the Broadway cast of West Side Story and created art that stemmed from my love for the city itself. I breathed in St. Louis' essence, living on old streets with tales of cultural differences and racial divides brought together through the creation of new buildings, homes, and murals.

It was bittersweet coming to the heart of the midwest, Cincinnati. Here, my arts career changed course. This queen city surprised me as one rich in culture and beauty; diverse in the arts and architecture with everything from Byzantine and Gothic to Deco; Churches and Synagogues with Middle Eastern influences; and city parks abounding in natural beauty.This stunning city has been so influential in my walk and afforded me the opportunity to attend an Art History based tour of Europe. Prior to that trip, I felt that I wanted a career in art history, but eventually coming face to face with Van Gogh in his self portrait at the Musee d'Orsay and wandering the Rodin gardens in a quiet solitude confirmed my position. The echo of my heart rang out in the simple fresh air of Provence, boating along the Seine, biking through the Gaudi-inspired streets of Barcelona, and attending Palm Sunday Mass at La Sagrada Familia. I was fortunate enough to discover not simply a passion for the history of art, but a passion for creating it myself.

As distinctly different as these all cities are, they united me through art. Art, that whether created by God or man, has given me a unique sense of "home," even reminding me of the artists that have spanned generations in my family. While I have admired their adventures, and found adventures of my own: walking these city streets, touching walls and mosaics of profound beauty, drowning out the sound of the world around me as I steal moments in the eyes of Van Gogh.; Now perhaps, I can settle, knowing without a doubt what I desire to do, what I'm supposed to do - connect life and art.

# Familiarity Anonymous

## Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

“Entonces, Max, ¿dime porque has venido a España?”

I stared blankly at my host Dad while trying to catch a glimpse of how large his moustache really was, as he glanced over his shoulder towards me, his car narrowly avoided the oncoming traffic. His words were ringing in my head.

"So tell me, Max, why have you come to Spain?"

These were amongst the first words I heard upon my arrival. I nodded and smiled, yet understood nothing but my name. I stumbled upon School Year Abroad (SYA) Spain while exploring alternatives to my daily routine. To some, and understandably so, London is remarkable. To me, London had become the norm. For over 2,000 days I had walked through the same school entrance, passed the same painted letters declaring The American School in London as I bounded up the stairwell, and listened to the all too familiar sound of the morning announcements at the start of each day. My life had become repetitive, and I needed a change from what seemed to be an unending cycle.

As soon as I stepped foot in Zaragoza, I was immersed in a completely different culture: residing with a family that didn’t speak a lick of English and taking a standard American curriculum in Spanish. In retrospect, I wasn’t entirely prepared for such drastic change.

As my host Dad and I attempted to forge some sort of communication during that car ride, a feeling of pure dread overwhelmed me as we neared my new street. I felt like a stranger to everything around me. I was alone, knew no one, and had a house but not a home. As I followed the man with the moustache into the Almingol household, the then unfamiliar smell of paella wafted through the air.

Food became a medium that my family and I could enjoy together. Meals began in speechless unison, and eventually became the foundation of our most memorable moments: my younger brother Markos and I managed to quarrel early on about whether Chelsea or Barcelona was the better club as we heartily dug into our meal. Months later, my father brought a newspaper to dinner, and to our delight opened it to a photo of him taking part in a political protest, his moustache enormous as ever. The passage of food went both ways: I would cook up my signature scrambled eggs on Sunday mornings, before my family prepared a feast of meats and vegetables. We scarfed it down, leaving our fingernails laden with grease.

During these meals, the TV was always on. The Spanish news presenters provided a soundtrack to each moment in our abode whether in the living room, kitchen, or laundry room, and I literally felt I couldn’t escape the flickering screens and unintelligible chatter. But the seemingly meaningless tradition of relaxing as a family in front of the television became a powerful connection. After dinner, we’d sit in companionable silence, as our dog Nemo attempted to clamber onto the couch, and let the voices wash over us, hearing the words yet giving them little thought. Surrounded by the unfamiliar, everyone connects through their similarities, and TV was our channel of communication.

Nine months later, my final banquet, a concoction of cooked yellow rice and stewed rabbit, staked its claim as a paella of the highest grade. We demolished it. I was no longer tentative or reserved; I was one of the Almingol family. With the TV on, my words flowed over our food, yet it was not my fluency that brought us together as a family. It was the cadence of the newscaster and the warm scent of paella.

“So, Max, why have you come to Spain?”

I went to Spain seeking change. I was consumed by another culture, and yes, I have a more global perspective, yet what I truly gained from the experience had less to do with the language I spoke, and the country I was in, but with the family who had embraced me.

# The American Maxwell Roth

## List five books (with authors) you have read that piqued your curiosity. Discuss an idea from one of these works that interests you.

The American, Henry James

Unbroken, Laura Hillenbrand

For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway

A God in Ruins, Kate Atkinson

The Boys in the Boat, Daniel James Brown

In The American, Christopher Newman, an American expatriate in France in the late 19th century, describes his assimilation into Parisian culture. Newman is a self-made man who contrasts sharply with his elite Parisian counterparts, who pride themselves on their heritage and aristocratic lineage. The text’s predominant theme is the clash of two cultures. During my junior year, as an American Englishman in Spain, this book struck a chord. Newman’s adaptation to a new way of life reflects my own journey in developing my own identity.

The entire narrative taps into the idea of acculturation - the absorption of an adapted lifestyle while still retaining one’s initial cultural identity and character. I have come to know that although I will not fully assimilate, the environment that surrounds me shapes me, and each new experience offers me an opportunity to develop myself further.

Newman is exposed to a completely new way of life. By the end of the book (spoiler alert) he finds his place in French culture, though he also realizes he’ll never become completely Parisian. His realization is similar to mine: I am a constantly evolving work-in-progress.

# Outlets of Sound Anonymous

## Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

Every time I strap on a guitar, a joyous juxtaposition of feeling washes over me. Sweet harmony glides on a smooth, still surface of my mind, while nervous anticipation rumbles underneath in a tumultuous undercurrent. Behind the neck of this instrument I feel a perfect duality of absolute calm, coupled with an electric energy. When I plug into my amp, all worries quiet but the mind stays awake, in complete synergy with the hands, working together in a unit to create a third appendage, one more powerful than any physiological one. A working unit of sound and power capable of moving people, capable of tapping into the power of human emotion.

If a guitar is nothing but wood and wiring to a player than he will do nothing more than just play notes, but if he sees the guitar for what it is, a new dimension will open up to him. It is behind this instrument that I feel most creative and at peace with everything.

My true love for guitar began when I first watched my uncle plug his Gibson Les Paul into a massive Marshall amp and rip into an E chord, sending a powerful reverberation into my young ears. After incessant begging, rivaled only by Ralphie in the film A Christmas Story, I received an acoustic guitar as a Christmas gift. What followed were years of annoying my family members as I monotonously repeated scales and chord charts as I taught myself how to play this instrument. As the great Jimi Hendrix once said, there were many moments where I hated the guitar and wanted to give it up for good, but I stuck with it and am currently reaping the rewards.

Learning music on the guitar is one of the longest and most rewarding endeavors I have embarked upon. My first love was rock and roll. Eighties rock and hair metal bands dominated my iPod's most played list for many years. I learned to play the rock ballad classics of the Scorpions, AC/DC, Black Sabbath and ZZ Top. Then eventually I asked myself, what did these artists listen to? And there started my long trip up the musical food chain to the apex of all modern music on a guitar: jazz and blues. Pioneering guitarists in the early 20th century began to incorporate feeling into their music. It is from these innovators on the guitar that I began to understand how to incorporate feeling into music. How to use your fingers as a dynamic source and outlet for emotion. I studied the art of guitarists like Wes Montgomery, Howlin' Wolf, Mississippi Fred McDowell and countless others who pour their souls through the six strings. From this discovery on I began to see the guitar as an outlet for emotion and feeling and it went on to become an introspective and meditative practice.

After your mind becomes trained and conditioned to know the neck of the guitar and the construction of a song, the cognitive side of the mind quiets and lets the creative force take over. Anger is released by hammering out a thunderous power chord, excitement is reflected by the repetitiveness and volume of a punk rock song, while sadness sings its sweet voice on the melodic E-major blues scale. My mind wanders in a spiral of freedom around a column of concentration as I sing out notes with my mind and hands, both unrestricted and unbound but focused at the same time. This is the duality that discordantly collides within me to produce sweet harmonies on a grand instrument of power, one I am proud to say I have taught myself and use as an outlet for emotion and stress. An escape that demands full mental concentration yet provides boundless liberation.