**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. (650 words)**

March 2019: I’m at my first-ever black-belt level tournament. I’ve been practicing karate for six years, but only had my black belt for six weeks. I’m nervous as this was the first time I’d be competing against black belts, most of whom appeared stronger, taller, older, and a higher rank than me. My heart was pounding. I was one of four girls competing among fifteen guys. I approached the mat for my second[hmm, why start with the second match? This whole opener is about ‘firsts’ so it doesn’t make sense to start with the second match…right?] sparring match. The guy I faced was my friend who I sparred with on a regular basis in practice. He usually beats me, so I was nervous.

As our Master yelled, ‘go!’ I quickly jabbed at my opponent’s stomach. The master stops us; I’d scored a point! Relieved, I now knew I had a chance of winning this. After a few rounds, we’re head-to-head, and like a blur, we’re competing for the winning point. As the master yelled, ‘go!’ I get a front kick in on him which he was slow to block. The master calls it as my point, and I hear cheering in the crowd and get a bunch of high fives from my friends. I’d won!

[This opener is great, Riya! Let’s try to keep the tenses consistent throughout. You start in one tense, and then shift back and forth throughout, and it gets a bit too complex.

We’ve helped you streamline this a bit for word count. Accept those changes.]

Whether it’s at Karate, or in my STEM classes, I’m used to being one of the only girls in the room. When I started karate as an eight year-old, there were X[Let’s set a figure for this.] other girls in my class. As the years passed, that number only decreased. Now, as a second-degree black belt, there’s only one other girl at my dojo who’s at the same level. Similarly, in my ninth-grade engineering class, I was the only girl among thirty guys.[Okay, we’ve got the picture now…but why does this matter? Right now you’re just providing facts about gender makeup in your activities…what’s the point? We shouldn’t ask the reader to intuit things or connect the dots. Instead, we need to connect the dots for the reader. Why does this gender disparity matter to you? Why do **YOU** think it’s a problem?]

[this is repetitive]..[This paragraph can be cut. It’s simply repeating information we’ve already covered in this essay. We need to get to talking about your future here. See more below.]

It’s not just the gender dynamics of STEM fields that karate has prepared me for: I see deep connections between STEM and karate. For instance, in order to perform karate moves properly you need to understand the physics behind how momentum works. Momentum is important in karate because you want to make sure that you are putting the correct amount of force into your punch at the correct time. Another example of how karate relates to STEM is pressure points. You must have a good understanding of the human body to understand where to apply force on a pressure point and why it works. Understanding why it works helps immensely in being able to locate the pressure point. Lastly, being able to locate your center of gravity is immensely important. This is because in karate there are different stances you may fight in; all of these stances require your center of gravity to be aligned in certain angles towards your opponent. Karate furthered my interest in STEM.[Okay, Riya, we think you’re on to something really interesting here, but it needs to be pushed a bit further.

The first half of this essay is great, it’s in the moment, vivid, and makes us cheer for your success. That’s awesome. Accept our changes to make it flow better for the next draft. Then, let’s cut that second to last paragraph that’s just repeating or re-wording what’s already been said.

Then, let’s explore this idea of momentum and pressure, and how those relate to your obvious interest in promoting women’s empowerment in STEM. In addition to talking about how the physics concept of momentum is a through line between your passion for Karate and STEM, let’s talk about how momentum is also important in the realm of advocating for girls getting involved in STEM. Have you taken action to encourage girls to explore STEM? If so, how? How has momentum played a part in that advocacy?

The same thing goes for the idea of pressure points. Have you felt pressure to take certain paths in your life, and used your persistence and deftness to push back? How?

Once we’ve established that connection, let’s try to again go beyond the literal physics/STEM-related topic of pressure/anatomy, and dig for a deeper connection about how you see yourself pressuring institutions and driving cultural change in the direction of women’s empowerment in STEM in the future. How will you do that in college? How do you envision yourself using the expanded resources of a university environment to keep that pressure on?

Give this a try for the second half of this essay for the next draft. Looking forward to it!