



MID-PACIFIC INSTITUTE

Importance of the College Admissions Essay

“Where’s the rest of me?” -- Casey Robinson, King’s Row

Significance: In our opinion, the personal essay is the most important part of your admissions portfolio. A well-written personal essay that captures your character – your energy, motivation, inspiration, adaptability, perseverance, passions, etc. – can help offset mediocre or subpar SAT or ACT results.

Strategy:

CHICAV-OOOP

Stanford’s Advice on Writing the Personal Essay

Concise: Focus your essay topic. Do not exceed the requested essay length. Follow directions.

Honesty: Do not feel the need to impress the admission officers with world record performances or exotic exploits. If telling the story of what happens around your family dinner table best describes who you are, then go right ahead and tell that story.

Individual: Admissions officers want to know what makes you unique. If relevant, tell them about adversity you have faced – family losses or illness. Perhaps this aspect of your life will help explain an inconsistent academic record. Similarly, what are your passions? What drives you? Feel free to discuss political and/or religious beliefs as long as you avoid condemning others.

Coherent: Avoid going off on tangents when you write. Keep your story focused.

Accurate: Proofread, proofread, proofread. Do not submit an essay with typing errors, grammar problems, or factual inconsistencies. Clear your essay with the College Counseling Office before mailing it.

Vivid: Fill essay with concrete details and examples which bring the story to life. Your essay can contain both thinking and feeling.

Obnoxious: Avoid blaming others for your shortcomings or adopting a condescending attitude toward your high school experience.

Obscene: Do not use profanity or discuss obscene situations. You can be funny and entertaining without resorting to these.

Plagiarize: Do not copy someone else’s essay or lift an essay out of a book.

Source: Adapted from “A Tip for Getting Into Stanford: Be Sure to CHICAV-OOOP” in the 1992 September-October issue of the *Stanford Observer*.