**Why do colleges require essays?**

* To evaluate your writing. Most schools are reading and writing intensive and admission officers want to know that you will succeed in the college classrooms.
* To learn about you. When admission officers read your essay, they often ask themselves: Would I want to be his/her roommate? What is this person like? What would this person bring to the freshman class?
* To learn about your maturity. The college essays can really highlight your maturity and the quality of your thinking. It is important to show depth/maturity in your writing; this insight provides perspective to your readers.

**What is the essay bottom-line?**

* This is not an English essay. It is okay to use I and me. The essay is about you and your experiences, so give it your voice.
* The best essays write themselves. Make it real and tell your story.
* The essay is your opportunity to show admission officers who you are and to provide information about yourself that did not fit in other areas of your application.

**The 5 Most Important Tips/Rules/Advice About The College Essay**

Top two tips: Be yourself and

start early

1. **Do not try to impress the admission officers. Do not try to give your reader what you think they want to hear rather, give them what you want to tell them.**

* Be yourself. Be genuine. Make it personal.
* Do not try to suck up.

1. **Own your story and write in your own voice**

* Present yourself as you are.
* Choose a topic that will highlight YOU
* Write something that no one else has written.
* If you are having trouble taking ownership, then do not write about it.
* The story you tell can be cathartic; it can allow you to release emotions while you tell your story. Ask yourself, would you be able to remember this story when you are 70 years old? Would the details be fresh in your mind? If you can identify a story like this, then write about it.
* Give it color. Help the reader to see it and feel it.

1. **Do not repeat what you have already talked about in your application**

* The essay is a window into your resume, it is NOT your resume. Do not list activities/awards you received.
* Have you ever heard a joke that you already know? If you repeat aspects of your application in the essay, it bores your reader. If you want to talk about one significant activity, then share it with a story that provides depth and perspective about you.
* Include specific details, examples, and reasons to develop your ideas.

1. **Proofread**

* Do not turn your essay in without proofreading it, and do not rely only on your computer’s spell check to catch mistakes.
* Who should you have proofread: You should have someone who knows you well (friend/sibling), someone who doesn’t know you very well (distant friend), and a teacher/advisor/counselor (to correct grammar/spelling).

1. **Avoid cliché topics**

* Athletics – be careful, teamwork essays are common. Make sure yours is different
* Community service – be genuine. If you only did community service a couple of times for school, do not blow it out of proportion unless you really mean it. If you are writing an essay on how community service changed your life, make sure you can back it up with continuous service.
* Anything about “learning the importance of life” is cliché because at 16 or 17 years of age, you have experienced very little. A lesson is different. Talk about the impact of the lesson in your young life.