

RA Application Workshop

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Agenda

- 1) What is the purpose of an application essay?
- 2) What distinguishes good from less-than-good application essays?
- 3) How should we apply these lessons to actual writing?
- 4) What does good idea generation and brainstorming look like?

Purpose of the Essay

- Defining the Genre: Statement of Purpose vs. Personal Statement
- Statement of Purpose:
 - Professional
 - Expository
 - Often for graduate school (M.A./Ph.D.) applications
- Personal Statement
 - Tends to be Narrative-based (though it does not have to be).
 - Tends to be grounded in personal experiences and reflections
 - Tends to be narrower in scope.

The RA Application Essays

- (1) What has inspired you to become a great RA? (250 words)
- (2) RAs strive to create welcoming and inclusive communities. What does building such a community on a residence hall look like for you? (250 words)
- (3) Describe a time where you experienced personal growth. Be sure to emphasize how you experienced personal accountability and resilience. (250)

Qualities of A Good Personal Statement

Center on experiences you care about

Focused on the role, position, etc.

Focus on specific values

Appropriate, professional

Explain how you live with those values

Informative

What you bring to a team

What makes you unique

Clear, well-organized

Concise

Common Pitfalls of the Personal Statement

- Lecturing/Preaching: Informing your audience what they already know
- Too much narrative, not enough reflection: All story, no explanation
- Too much reflection, not enough narrative: All explanation, no story
- Inauthenticity: Not being true to one's own experiences

Preaching/Lecturing

- (Bad) Example: Without RAs, students simply could not live together within dorms. Someone must manage the various affairs related to dorm-life, including handling disputes, enforcing policies, and caring for the residents. This requires empathy and leadership skills.
- What's going on here? Why might this be seen as being preachy or lecturey?

Inauthenticity

- People often fall into cliché and trope when writing personal statements.
 - The best essay is the one you feel accurately represents your emotional experiences.
- Not every story you tell has to be your summer internship or volunteer experience.
 - People often want to discuss these kinds of stories because they think it is impressive
 - They often do not actually have sincere emotion about what they communicate.
- Pick the story which best reflects you as a person rather than you as a resume.
- Avoid overly emotional or strong language
 - Being an RA likely won't change your life.
 - Ask yourself: Was that really the greatest moment of your life? Will this be as life-changing as you say?
 - Hyperbolic, exaggerated language detracts from authenticity and specificity

Too Much Narrative, Not Enough Reflection

- Narrating personal experiences should reveal something to your audience
 - But if there's no explanation, is anything actually revealed or conveyed?
- Consider: You encounter an essay where the author recounts their upbringing
 - Suppose the essay only consists in this narration
 - Is this informative?
- Absent reflection or explanation, the personal narrative is ineffective
 - There should be an explanation as to the exact significance the event/experience had on your life (as it relates to the prompt)

Too Much Reflection, Not Enough Narrative

- Just like having a narrative without a upshot is not informative, having a conclusion without evidence or illustration can be equally uninformative.
- Anybody can say which qualities would make a good RA
 - Showing that your understand the qualities enough to recognize them in your past experiences is the interesting part.
- (Bad) Example: Over the summer I volunteered in Haiti building houses. There I saw how much compassion and hard work can do for people. As an RA, I would like to use the diligence and empathy I have learned to help each and every one of my residents.

How does the passage fall into the problems discussed earlier?

As a second-year-student that has been engaged in plethora of events on campus, I believe I am getting the best out of my college experience and in the same time I am giving back to my community. The opportunity to become Resident Assistant will enable me to develop my skills and to become a successful role model, listener and an advisor. Additionally, it will equip me with the necessary knowledge and interpersonal competence, so that I can become a conflict solver, caregiver and event organizer. Being an RA will be a cornerstone in my personal development, because it will prepare me for my future career as a business person, as well as for the teamwork and interactions with my future fellow workers. As part of the RA team, I will become more communicative, organized, punctual and with great time management.

Idea Generation & Brainstorming

Write down three experiences that you think will inform your answer to this question:

- (1) What has inspired you to become a great RA?