

EXAMPLES OF ESSAYS FOR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (SUS) APPLICATION – the common application for the state university system offers three essay choices from which students are asked to complete TWO. The essays are required for UF and FSU, and strongly recommended for UCE. For all other SUS schools the essays are optional. The essays along with your extracurricular activities are an important part of the admissions process at UF and FSU. The essays should be no longer than 250 words each or a total of 500 words for both essays. The best essays are succinct and offer a “voice” to characterize you as an individual. UF views the essays as a critical part of the admissions process as well as an opportunity for the student to show how he or she has contributed to the community.

- 1) Describe an activity, interest, experience, or achievement in your life (this could be a book, movie or an activity or experience at work, home or school) that has been particularly meaningful to you.
- 2) **How has your family history and culture influenced who you are?**
- 3) **From your perspective, what have been the most important developments during the past twenty years that have improved the quality of life for our society and for other societies in the world?**

COMMON APPLICATION (100+ schools including Harvard accept this application) Discuss in 250-500 words one of the following:

1. Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
2. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
3. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
4. Describe a character in fiction, an historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.

NATIONAL MERIT/ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION: In your own words, describe personal characteristics and accomplishments, as well as plans and goals that you feel are important to readers in forming a comprehensive picture of you as a person. What sets you apart? Include major contributions to your school and community, primary interests, and volunteer and paid work. Must be typed and approximately 500 words.

PRIVATE/SELECTIVE SCHOOL APPLICATION:

1. What has been the biggest challenge you’ve faced? How did you respond to it?
2. If you were given the time and resources to develop one particular skill, or talent, or area of expertise, what would you choose to pursue and why?
3. Let us know something about you that we might not learn from the rest of your application. Limit your response to one page. In the past, applicants have used this space in a great variety of ways. They have written about family situations, ethnicity or culture, school or community events to which they have had strong reactions, people who have influenced them, significant experiences, intellectual interests, personal aspirations, or –more generally– topics that spring from the life of the imagination. There is no “correct” way to respond to the essay request. In writing about something that matters to you, you will convey to us a sense of yourself.
4. Using a piece of wire, a (Johns) Hopkins car window sticker, an egg carton, and any inexpensive hardware-store item, create something that would solve a problem. Tell us about your creations, but don’t worry, we won’t require proof that it works.

What college admissions staffs say about the college essay:

- “Write from your soul, write from your heart, and reflect upon your experiences.”
- Be personal.
- Select a subject you can write about with feeling and authority, yet unusual enough to distinguish you from the mass of other applicants.
- Use vivid and precise language; avoid typos, misspellings and grammatical errors.

Having read 200 essays for the UF admissions office this year, Mrs. Waters has a few recommendations for students:

- It is easy to write about one’s parent(s) as influential, but it is difficult to make a defining difference between your wonderful parent and all the other influential parents the readers will snooze through.
- The death of a grandparent can be moving and emotional but not unusual.
- It takes time, thought and some intellectualism to write about a particular book, world/local issue or historical figure; perhaps you might interest the reader in your ideas, feelings and analysis of such items.
- Choice of topic is not as important as the level of insight, meaning and analysis offered.
- Tasteful humor is always appreciated; arrogance or fluff turns readers off.
- Personal adversity that affected your academic performance can be the topic of an essay but not as an excuse or to be whined about.
- The most successful essays show curiosity and self-awareness