

How to Write the College Essay

Lisa Hanson, Seton Hall University
Nhien Quach, University of New Hampshire
Ruth Schauble, Whitworth University

6,200 Students

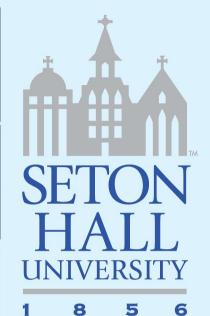
55% 45% Female Male



From All 50 States 70 Countries

80% of Freshman Live on Campus

14:1
Student-to-faculty ratio
21
Average Class Size



Hackensack Meridian Health



Interprofessional Health Sciences Campus



90 Academic Programs

150 Clubs & Organizations 25 Greek 14
Division 1
Sports

organizations Sp

In the Nation for Internships

93% Employment Rate



50%

Higher Mid-Career Earnings than National Average



30-Minute Train Ride to NYC















admissions.unh.edu

Nhien.Quach@unh.edu





What is the college essay?

Why is it Important?

You are Unique

Tell YOUR Story

Colleges want to know YOU

Another way to show academic ability and personal contributions

Types of Essays

Personal Statement (Common app/Coalition App)

Supplemental questions

Major/Program Specific

Scholarship Application



What the college essay is NOT

A narrative resume

A biography/story about someone else

Making excuses

A book report

A time to try out a new writing style

What Makes a Great Essay?

- A captivating hook
- Focused Topic
- Organized Structure
 - 1/3 Narrative/Story and 2/3 Reflection/Analysis
 - Clear beginning, middle, end
- Personal yet appropriate tone
- Sincerity and authenticity
- Sound grammar and proper spelling, formatting



Whatdolwnite about?

Divide a piece of paper into four squares and label:

- Obstacles/Challenges
- Strengths/Successes/ Accomplishments
- 3. What makes you, YOU?
- 4. Goals/Dreams









Obstacles/Challenges: How did it affect you and what did you learn?

- Athletics: Injuries, not making the team
- Family finances, challenges
- Moving and/or changing schools
- Physical/Mental Health: Depression, ADHD, accident, COVID*

Strengths/Successes/Accomplishments

- AVOID a laundry list of successes
- $_{\circ}$ Can be large or small why is it important for YOU
- Have you had a positive impact on community or school?
- Can you show dedication, focus, persistence, ambition, vision, leadership?

What makes you YOU?

Questions to ask yourself: How do you see yourself? How do others see you? Is there a checkbox you've always checked off? What are you comfortable sharing?

Background topics: Has family background impacted you?

Identity topics: Religious identity, stereotypes, twin/triplet, adoption...

Interest/Talent topics: What are you very good at? What is your individual talent? Does NOT have to be a "classic" talent (e.g. piano virtuoso)

Goals & Dreams

What is your career goal and/or dream major?

Why should the college accept you into their program?

Why are your goals your goals? How do you intend to get there?

Connect the dots from previous accomplishments to impacting your future goals

ONLY FOR college-specific essay: connect your goals to their specific program and do your research

Have you taken specific classes/internships/volunteered to prepare you for these goals?

Top 10 Tips to Keep in Mind

- 1. Take time to brainstorm.
- 2. Hook the reader and give them a reason to keep reading.
- 3. Give yourself options with the prompt you select don't force it to fit your story. Your story should fit the prompt.
- 4. Think small you're not making a movie, just a snapshot!
- 5. Think about what drives you to do what you do.
- 6. Target your audience by going to the website and finding key buzz words the university uses then showcase your ability to offer those specific qualities.
- 7. Avoid bragging. This is a behind-the-scenes glimpse into who you are.
- 8. Show your personality.
- 9. When in doubt, take a break and come back later.
- 10. Consult a mentor for advice and proof-reading.

dont?s

The "Don't" List

- Don't write what you think they want to hear
- Don't be cynical, condescending, vague, or offensive
- Don't just rewrite your resume
- Don't forget your audience
- Don't forget to answer the question/prompt
- Don't submit without another editor





The "Do" List

- Know your essay will be read
- ☐ Start early; be prepared to write multiple drafts
- Give them a reason to keep reading
- □ Focus on the message you wish to tell the reader (have a thesis!)
- Keep it personal and specific but know you don't have to relive or share trauma
- KNOW the essay requirements, topics, word limits (typically 500-1000 words MAX)
- Edit (content, not just grammatical)
- Make it interesting for a long-lasting impression
- Leave plenty of time to write supplemental and additional writing samples required by major

Final Tips

- Submit ON TIME
- Editing and rewriting are not the same as proofreading
- Stay within word count limits
- Have *multiple* people read your essay for feedback
- Be consistent throughout your application changes in writing quality raise flags for admissions counselors

Helpful Resources

- The College Essay Guy College Application Hub
- Purdue Owl Writing Lab
- https://www.commonapp.org/apply/essay-prompts
- Google Docs & Google Sheets
- https://www.usnews.com/education/bestcolleges/articles/how-to-write-a-college-essay

Questions?







Lisa Hanson

Assistant Director of Admissions Seton Hall University <u>lisa.hanson@shu.edu</u> (862)216-5748

Nhien Quach

Sr. Assistant Director of Admissions University of New Hampshire Nhien.Quach@unh.edu (608)862-3286

Ruth Schauble

Associate Director of Admissions Whitworth University rschauble@whitworth.edu (509) 777-3578

