

The Cal State

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Autobiographical Statements

WHAT IS EOP?

- Designed to improve access and retention of historically low-income students who lack equitable education resources.
- Provides educational opportunities to low income students who have been traditionally excluded from higher education.
- Support services include learning skills development, tutoring, and academic advisement.

WHAT TYPE OF STUDENT DOES EOP LOOK FOR?

An EOP student may be a special or regularly admissible student who has a low income and has the potential to perform satisfactorily at a CSU, but who has not been able to realize his/her potential because of economic, educational, or environmental background.

Students are evaluated based upon the severity of the challenges in their life, taking advantage of past support services, motivation, past academic performance, need for services, and potential for success in college.

There is no GPA requirement. Students can have a range between 1.0 - 4.0+ GPA.

HOW TO WRITE STRONG EOP STATEMENTS

EOP's primary purpose is to offer academic assistance to students who can benefit. They want to believe students will take full advantage of EOP services.

Writing should emphasize:

- Circumstances that prevented students from doing better in school or being more involved in extracurriculars *and* actions students took to improve.
- Examples of seeking support services and using them to their advantage.
- Use strong and direct action verbs.

EOP is need-based, so the more honest, precise, and detailed students are, the more likely the reader will understand how significant getting accepted into EOP will be.

Students must show motivation and preparation to undertake college work in their responses while being honest about how academic support in college will greatly benefit them.

NEW LENGTH REQUIREMENTS

The Cal State EOP application made changes for Fall 2018 applicants.
There is now an increased character count for each question.

For each question:

2,500 maximum character count (excluding spaces)
~450 words

WRITING STYLE:

- Start with the most important facts and details. Get to the point right away and be very direct.
- Don't write it like a story or an essay. This is simply a response to the question.
- Give as many examples and details as possible.
- It is not necessary to use all 2,500 characters. Answer the question thoroughly. This is possible without using the maximum character count.

Suggested Writing Formula:

- 1-4 sentences about what happened.
- 1-4 sentences about how it affected the student.
- 1-4 sentences stating actions taken to get through it and make things better.
- 1-4 sentences examples of how the student sought support.

If a student is starting from scratch

Read each EOP question thoroughly.

The student should use answers to write each response.

Keep asking why and write as much detail as possible in responses.

If a student has prior writing

Read through previously written personal statement drafts.

The Student should write the most important facts and stories of the student's life into the EOP responses.

EOP AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT QUESTIONS: TIPS & EXAMPLES

***Briefly describe your family's economic background.
Include information about your financial challenges.***

2,500 character limit

TIP: Students need to be specific about what financial struggles they have experienced in their lives. *Examples: living with eight people in a studio apartment, receiving government assistance, not being able to pay bills, etc.*

It is crucial that students share details of their financial struggles. The college needs to know why students need this money. It will only improve their chances. **Consider this:** If you go to college, how will you and your family pay for college? The answer to this question should help tell the story of any financial challenges you and your family face.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Are you or your parents ever worried or stressed about money? If so, why?
- Do you ever have trouble paying rent? What happens? Do you have to work or have you ever helped to pay the bills?

Remember to answer all parts of the MAIN question above.

EXAMPLE: My mom was injured three years ago and is now on disability. She can't work and we have less money for everything we need. She borrows from my older sister to help pay the bills. I'm always stressed and worried about money. I see her struggling and embarrassed when she borrows from family for rent. We don't get what we are owed from my dad, he doesn't pay child support. It is impossible to ask for money like I used to for school needs. I ask teachers for paper and pencils. I couldn't join cheer because it cost too much money. I have to tell my friends I can't go out because I'm grounded when it's due to lack of money. Sometimes our money for groceries is low so we have to eat fast food. I can't get a job because I have to help out around the house because of her injury. I feel like I should be able to help with money more, but my focus is on school and taking care of us at home. It is important to me to be financially secure with a degree.

764 characters excluding spaces

WRITE RESPONSE HERE:

[illegible]

Why would you like to attend college? Discuss your career and personal goals. Are there any particular circumstances, school experiences, or persons that influenced your preparation or motivation to attend college (e.g., cultural/ financial background, family, teachers, schools you attended)? Please explain.

2,500 character limit

TIP: Provide direct answers to each question. Ask each sub question out loud. Write down responses.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Are you the first in your family to graduate high school or college?
- Are you first generation?
- What will college mean to you and your family?
- Why is college necessary for your future?
- Who helped you on your path to college?
- Do you have a mentor or role model?
- Who is that and what did you do with their influence?

Remember to answer all parts of the MAIN question above.

EXAMPLE: Since I was little my mom always worked afternoon and nights. I spent a lot of time at home taking care of myself and my siblings. I cook, clean, and manage the house. My two sisters, my brother and I have always lived with my mom since my dad left mom when I was five. Seeing my dad was rare and when I saw him he was intoxicated. Seeing him would always set me back and make me sad. I wanted life to be different. I will be the first in my family to graduate high school and go to college. I want to prove that I am smart and capable and can change our family's history of poverty. I have a strong desire to know more outside my home in Boyle Heights. I want to be a math teacher and was nominated to STEM camps because I am good at math and science. My teachers ask me to help students who don't understand the lessons. I feel proud that I can be helpful to my teachers and my classmates because of my passion and skills in math and science. I've been in Upward Bound for all four years, attended every workshop and took college courses offered in the summer. I ask for their help when submitting applications and finding extra resources. They gave me the knowledge and motivation I needed since I didn't have that at home. They are my mentors and I visit their office all the time. They helped me believe in myself and my abilities to succeed even though life hasn't been easy.

1,110 characters excluding spaces

WRITE RESPONSE HERE:

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Briefly discuss your academic background. Did you utilize any additional support at your high school, such as tutoring? Do your grades in high school and/or college reflect your academic ability or potential?

2,500 character limit

TIP: This is the most important question on the app. It helps the reader understand what circumstances the student has faced, how they supported themselves or asked for help, and what help they may still need in college. This question is asking if there is a reason why the student's grades aren't better.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- *Always ask yourself:* What came between me and my personal best?
- What were some big challenges in your life and how did they affect you personally and at school? Were there any changes in your life that got you off track?
- Did you start off high school with lower grades and then improved? If so, explain how you changed and why.
- Did you receive any tutoring? (That can include seeking teachers, counselors, City Year, or other resources on/off campus) How often and when did you go in to ask for help? If you received help how did you use what you learned to improve?

Remember to answer all parts of the MAIN question above.

EXAMPLE: I am a lot smarter, but my responsibilities get in the way to focus on school. My role at home is to support my siblings and myself so that my mom doesn't have to worry. I take care of siblings at home. I pick them up from school, cook for them, and do homework with them, then I clean the house. On weekends I do laundry for the whole house. I don't do my homework until 9pm after I put the kids to sleep. I am responsible for being the one in charge when my older sister goes to work or school. This makes me very tired at school, hard to focus and stay on top of everything. When struggling with classes I talk to my friends to understand the concepts and I ask my teachers for extra help at lunch. I think I have done a good job at balancing my responsibilities at home and school. I go to tutoring twice a week when my sister can pick up kids and talk to my teachers about my problems so they can support me. I take detailed notes in class to study later. I am excited to be in college and see my potential, I know I am very capable and a strong person and ready for college. Once I graduate I won't be the one in charge of my siblings so I will have all the time to focus on myself and I believe my grades in college will reflect my abilities. I can't wait to get more involved in STEM related classes and activities on the college level. I feel prepared for a higher level of learning and I want to be a female role model for other young girls interested in STEM.

1,174 characters excluding spaces

WRITE RESPONSE HERE:

[illegible]

List any volunteer, extracurricular activities, or work experience in which you are or have been involved in the past two years.

2,500 character limit

TIP: An extracurricular activity is anything students do outside of the classroom, both on and off campus, informal or formal.

- Examples: sports, theatre, clubs, organizations, and anything involved in off-campus.
- Work experience doesn't need to be formal; it is anything the student does regularly, paid or unpaid.
- Examples: helping Dad deliver newspapers every weekend; teaching a cousin how to read; raising a sibling.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Keep asking yourself, *what else do I do?*

FORMAT: Create a list that is specific and resume-like. Each activity should be explained in 1-2 sentences. Use action verbs to offer insight into involvement.

Example if a student DOES NOT have a lot to list: College Ambassador senior year trained by UCLA, football team captain since freshman, worked full time every summer at parent's beauty salon, caretaker for sister on weekends. Volunteer at hospital. **198 characters**

EXAMPLE if student DOES have a lot to list:

College Ambassador

11th grade nominated, trained by UCLA to help students start and complete applications, fill out FAFSA, and write personal statements for a cohort of 35 students. This year spent my 6th period and lunch every day helping students apply to colleges and meet deadlines.

Students Run Los Angeles

Train everyday after school, run 8 miles a day. Mentor new SRLA students, coach them to improve their endurance.

Ran in 3 LA Marathons

Volunteer for Council Member

10th-12th grade. Called registered voters to remind them to vote and re-elect Jose Huizar. Door-to-door campaign, phone banks.

Beauty Salon Assistant

Yearly summer job 9th-12th grade. Managed appointments for all employees, cleaned nightly, prepared for new clients. Helped with long color appointments, learned how to cut and dye hair.

685 characters excluding spaces

WRITE RESPONSE HERE

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Please tell us more about yourself. Is there any additional information you would like EOP to consider in determining your admission to the program?

2,500 character limit

TIP: This is where students can write about anything they haven't already written about.

Copy and paste what is most important from any of the UC Personal Insight Question responses that weren't addressed so far in the other EOP responses.

Students should condense the main points of any other important stories in the student's life that haven't been stated. Or use this space to add more information to a previous story.

If a student did not apply to an UCs, consider talking about your passions, or what's important to you as a student. Do you have a vision or dream for your life while in college or that college will help you achieve?

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Is there anything else you want them to know about your passions, your involvement at school, or the other things you're involved in?

EXAMPLE: Running is my escape, one of my passions, it is my exercise and how I feel better. Running everyday helps my confidence and to feel less overwhelmed. I get out my stress by taking long runs in Downtown LA, across the bridge from Boyle Heights, through Little Tokyo, and back home. I run late with friends to keep safe. I joined running clubs outside of school so I could meet other people who love running as much as I do. Training for the marathons was difficult to plan because I don't have time. Weekends I wake up early before my mom goes to work so I can run at least 8 miles. I made a schedule to keep improving my time and watch YouTube videos on running techniques. I figured out how to stay in the program when my mom hurt herself, I knew I couldn't ask my mom for money. All I asked for was eighteen dollars from her so I can buy a box of candy apples to sell at school. I was selling apples when I wasn't running, and when I wasn't selling apples I was training. I had to go by a schedule to make sure I'm raising the money I needed, training for another marathon and making sure I wasn't lacking on schoolwork. It wasn't easy but I was up for a challenge. I managed time, worked for what I wanted, set a goal and proud I achieved my goal. I put so much work in such little time and I beat my time from my first marathon.

1,069 characters excluding spaces

WRITE RESPONSE HERE:

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