

Why Us? Essay Analysis

Introduction

Why do you want to attend a particular college? This is a deceptively easy question, because what the college wants to hear isn't always clear. So what are colleges looking for in this essay, and how do you tell it to them?

What colleges want is not simply why you want to attend their school in particular, but how attending that college will help you achieve your goals and dreams. How will the resources offered by a particular college help you to succeed, and how will you fit into the community offered by the college?

Colleges want to know these things for two reasons. The first is to make sure you truly want to attend their college. The second is to ensure that you will mesh well with the community at a school.

Admissions officers have an idea of what a school's community will look like, and they want to see how each new student will fit into that community as a whole. Admissions officers are building a class rather than admitting individual students, and the cohesion of that class is important.

We'll provide you with two examples of Why Us essays. The first is the long form, written for Tulane. This essay allows for 0-800 words, and asks for a lot. The second example is for Columbia, which only allows for 200 words, and thus requires a more focused approach.

Why Tulane

Sitting in the small room accompanied only by the clickety-clack of the mechanical keyboard and the blinding light from the computer screen, I work for hours wearing down an extensive backlog of payments. My work at Ibn Sina, a low-cost primary care clinic, gave me my first glimpse at the inner workings of a hospital. I began to familiarize myself with ICD-10 and CPT codes as well as the software used to categorize and log patients' data.

Yet, the most impactful lesson was the intersection between medicine and economics. In IB Economics, I was introduced to topics like scarcity, opportunity cost, and elasticity. Working at Ibn Sina, I was exposed to these concepts in real-time. Restocking perpetually low supplies of adhesive tape, syringes, and IV sets, I saw how scarce resources coupled with a large patient base forced the clinic to choose between allocating resources to one sector over another.

Ibn Sina catered to patients from underprivileged backgrounds by lowering fees for those without health insurance, meeting specific market demand for healthcare. Unfortunately, the clinic was bereft with small-scale sacrifices necessitated by their limited budgets, such as limited time spent with patients and manual patient scheduling procedures. While it's easy to dismiss these as the issues of one low-income clinic, the US healthcare system itself is rife with inefficiency.

My experiences at Ibn Sina introduced me to the fascinating world of health economics. While the patient's ailments and medical procedures interested me, the way an individual's choices shaped the function of the clinic interested me even more.

I aspire to study economics to better understand the ways people, markets and government policy affect the healthcare industry. Through Tulane's department of economics, I will finally be able to peer through the looking glass of health economics to learn how to make better choices, so I can help others make them too.

Taking courses like Economics and Healthcare Reform (ECON 3500) will allow me to examine the economic theories and concepts underlying current approaches to health care, while simultaneously demystifying the impact of reform on the United States healthcare system overall. As I begin to understand the reasoning behind current healthcare reform strategies, advantages, and disadvantages, I will slowly build the tools to analyze health management and policy issues that plague small clinics like Ibn Sina.

Meanwhile, core economics courses will broaden my understanding of the problems society faces while exposing me to the techniques and points of view developed by various economists. I plan to make use of these opportunities to

develop logical reasoning and critical thinking skills that will assist me as I work towards a career in medicine.

While majoring in Economics will deepen my understanding of the economic basis of healthcare, pursuing a pre-health track will prepare me for a future as a medical professional. Courses such as organic chemistry, physics, and biology will equip me with the foundational knowledge required to think critically and deduce efficiently in the medical field, invaluable skills for future doctors. On the other hand, courses in psychology and sociology will elucidate the strategies and techniques I will need to form interpersonal relationships as I deal with patients everyday.

Additionally, I will take advantage of the many undergraduate research opportunities available. Dr. Zachary Pursell's biochemistry research concerning the relevance of DNA polymerase epsilon with regards to cancer is especially interesting given my previous experience at an MD Anderson cancer research facility.

Clubs such as the Pre-Medical Society and Doctors at Reach stand out to me. My interest in medicine compels me to be around like minded individuals traversing the same field I am. As an active member of these organizations, I will expand my social circle with peers I can count on to make a difference together.

Tulane will be the perfect learning environment for me, rich with resources and opportunities that will deepen the medical and economic insights I first glimpsed at Ibn Sina.

Why Tulane Analysis

A clear hook: These longer essays allow for a clear hook and development. Much like the personal statement, you have room enough to develop the essay more slowly, and properly introduce yourself to the reader.

The hook in this essay paints a picture for the reader, and intrigues them as to the nature of the scene. It is not long enough to be a distraction from the essay, but instead helps add to it. Beginning in this way introduces readers to your writing style and personality, while also setting up for the core information of the essay.

Sections: This essay has two main sections, as the prompt for this essay is asking two distinct but related questions. The first is why the student wants the particular major they selected, and the second is why the student wants to pursue that particular major at this particular school.

Not every Why Us essay will have room for all this; this essay is this long as it combines components of both Why Us and Why Major essays. The transition between these sections of the essay is important; the essay should read as a cohesive whole, even if it began as two distinct pieces.

Clear Connections: The essay should tie directly into specific aspects of the school which fit into the student's goals and desires. Simply saying you are a good fit for a school doesn't do much to advance your case. This essay shows the student fits well with the school by making specific connections to classes, professors, and research.

Every school has unique clubs, classes, and professors, but what you are looking for from these will likely be similar. You can reuse language and imagery, while drawing the same connections to different schools. In the Tulane essay, the student uses professor Pursell's research to show how they would interact with and contribute to the school's research environment. The student also discusses specific courses they are interested in at the school. The length of this essay allows for more depth of exploration, and a greater variety of topics.

Why Us essays require more effort to transform between schools, but can still serve multiple times. What you are looking for in the school remains the same, while what you find to connect you to a specific school changes.

Clear Values: The Why Us essay isn't just asking "Why is this school great?" rather it's asking "Why is this school right for you?" Admissions officers want to see that the values you hold and the reasons you want to attend fit in with their idea of what the school should be.

This essay clearly shows what the author values, and how they think about things. The author is a diligent worker, intellectually curious, and enjoys drawing connections between disparate pieces of information. The student has demonstrated a desire to learn through doing and in the classroom both, discusses their record of volunteering in

a way which is natural and clearly ties into the essay, and demonstrates the values they find important.

Narrative: This essay does not require a clear narrative arc. While there still must be structure enough to keep the essay cohesive, there isn't as much of an overarching narrative.

The first part of the essay, where the student discusses their time with Ibn Sina, has the closest thing to a narrative arc. This is, however, not continued in the second half of the essay. There is no room for narrative when discussing how you fit with a school. Other essays serve to tell clear stories and narratives, Why Us essays do not.

Why Columbia

Columbia's emphasis on multispection (seeing from many angles by engaging with a wide variety of disciplines) will enable me to tackle the pressing social problems of my generation that so desperately need solving. As an Economics-Political Science major, I am eager to dive into the dialectical relationship between economic pursuits and moral responsibility. While classes like Sustainable Urbanism and Inequality in Urban Spaces will fuel my curiosity about how political systems can advocate for social justice, courses like The Business of Nonprofits and The Evolving Social Sector will ground my lofty ideals in concrete data.

Morningside Heights is more than just a group of Roman Classical buildings filled with endless classrooms. Organizations like the Committee of Global Thought and the Political Science Students Association will allow me to apply what I've learned in the classroom in a real-world urban setting. Furthermore, while engaging with Youth for Debate and Camp Kesem, I will have the opportunity to add a little sweetness to The Big Apple. I can't wait to immerse myself in Columbia's vibrant atmosphere as I munch on NYC's signature bagels, stifling a laugh as I read the latest issue of The Federalist.

Why Columbia Analysis

The Hook?: At 200 words, these essays may not be afforded the luxury of a hook. While it is possible to work one in, this student is fine jumping right into the action. They begin straight off by declaring what about Columbia attracts them, and how that ties into their own desires.

Essays of 150-200 words can go without hooks, especially if you struggle to come up with a good one. 250 word essays are borderline, and should usually have at least a sentence of lead in. Essays of 300 words and up should use something as a hook. These are not absolute rules for essay writing, but are good guidelines to follow.

Connections and Details: The author packs this essay with concrete references to Columbia, and ties each into one of their own dreams, values, or desires. While they are not able to dive too deeply into any single element, the use of a sentence to introduce an element from Columbia and tie it directly to the author's own wants and needs makes the connection between school and author clear.

These shorter essays should either dive deeply into one or two topics, or take a broad and deeply intertwined sampling of many, as this essay did. Use the space however will best aid your own efforts.

Character: The author clearly demonstrates who they are as a person and scholar, and how they will fit in with Columbia. While the essay is short, their personality still shines through clearly. These shorter essays have a premium on space, but you still need to demonstrate who you are as a person. Schools will be looking for that, to see how your personality will fit in with their ideal of the school.

Quick Tips

- Discussing the school's location or weather is ok, but neither should be the main focus. There are many schools in New York or Boston, why is **this** one right for you?
- The shorter the essay is, the more concise you have to be. A 300 word essay can still have a hook, but should be entirely about the school itself, without Why Major elements. A 150 word essay should be all meat.
- Discuss concrete things you want to do at the school, rather than abstract. If the school has a strong science program, point out specific classes that are taught or research opportunities offered which you want to get involved in. Doing the research will make the school believe that you truly do care.
- Emotional language can be a component of an essay, but isn't reason enough alone. Merely "feeling" like a school is perfect is not enough; you need to give solid evidence to support this claim.

- The entire essay should not be about academics, but academics should be the key component. There is more to college than academics alone, but top schools do want intellectually curious students. It is important to strike a healthy balance here. This is true even if you do not know precisely what you want to study, especially for schools which offer space to explore different majors before settling on one.
- When writing about schools that aren't your first choice, don't fake passion. Remove schools you truly detest from your list, but otherwise reuse old material, or do more research on a school until you find some aspect of it which excites you.