

- Please tell us what you value most about Columbia and why (300 words).

My interest in Columbia stems from my desire to attend a rigorous school and explore intellectually. I find politics, history, and international power dynamics fascinating. One of my favorite books that I have read for school was Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. At Columbia, I want to explore this area further through seminars as well as participation in the school's Model United Nations team. Given the opportunity, I would also take advantage of the resources available at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies. With a passion for history and political science, as well as plans to be an Army officer, I think I would find the Institute's programs particularly interesting. The research I have done on the Institute's website has already spurred thoughts I've never had about the needs to appreciate war's devastation while preparing for the ways it will evolve.

As first in my family to go to college, I want to soak up all that higher education can offer. I'm excited about the prospect of leaving the South for the first real time in my life, especially for a vibrant metropolis like New York that I have only heard and read about. I'm excited that Columbia offers the breadth of resources available at a large institution but preserves its small, high-touch feel. With a 6:1 student-faculty ratio and an institutional focus on the undergraduate experience, I know my professors will know my name and push me to grow.

Finally, I love Columbia's focus on diversity, especially the Under1roof program all first year students are required to participate in. It focuses on community development by making students explore each other's cultures through critical dialogue. This safe space helps students build a strong, lasting community. As a student of color, I would feel safe at Columbia.

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I want to be taken seriously. After 18 years of being told what to do, what to think, and how to behave, I am ready to be viewed as a legitimate human being. That's where Columbia comes in. I value the academic rigor that Columbia requires of its students. Programs like the Core Curriculum, which promote critical engagement and dialogue on various issues, show me that this is not a school content to simply pass on knowledge to its students — this is a school that wants its students to be their own knowledge-creators. Within Columbia's liberal arts mission, I would explore all of my academic interests without the constraints that comprise a more rigid education system. I believe that learning should not be restricted by majors or limited to required areas of study. As a student, I'd strive for an education that satisfies every aspect of me, not just my intellect. I appreciate that Columbia recognizes and respects students as individuals, that I have the ability to reach my full potential, and that my ability to learn is not limited to predetermined pathways. I can pave my own way.

I believe attending Columbia would be an opportunity for me to grow, academically and personally. Columbia would force me out of my comfort zone, which I consider to be critical for one's self-development. With a diverse student population, I would be learning and socializing with students from varying backgrounds. This would prepare me for my future occupation as an attorney, but it would also open me to new knowledge and experiences.

The balance of rigorous academics, a diverse student community, and a liberal arts environment are what I find valuable at Columbia.

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Essay word count: 300

What I value most about Columbia is the environment and opportunities it will provide me. Because I deeply value knowledge and learning, Columbia's core value of a dynamic education align with mine. It is a very academically driven school, providing an environment in which I will be surrounded by like-minded, intellectually-competitive peers I can learn from. It is essential to me to find a college that understands its students ambitions, so I am encouraged by everything I've heard about Columbia's career center.

Though Columbia also has humanities and arts, my interest is primarily STEM-based, so the extensive research program is an important factor to me. I'm particularly excited by the SURF program — the idea that I will be given research responsibilities, with the opportunity to present my findings, is simply incredible.

Outside of my future career, Columbia also appeals to my interests and extracurriculars. Because I was raised to be morally-guided and compassionate, politics and its social implications is something incredibly important to me. I believe Columbia's stances align with my own and that the research Columbia's science programs innovates can be used to better the world's communities and affected populations. In this sense, Columbia is rooted in political activism, a major passion of mine.

Another aspect I value about Columbia is the inclusivity of its campus. Because it is a public university and provides a significant amount of financial aid, I believe I will be surrounded by students like myself -- hard workers who have overcome economic difficulties, defying the odds of race and class. In other words, not simply an elite university for white New Yorkers, but a syncretic community of many backgrounds.

Lastly, I believe the students attending Columbia are genuinely interested in and passionate about their school and fields, an attitude I inspire to share.