

Those dreaded essays...

By Lee Shulman Bierer Tribune News Service December 4, 2019

Here are some essay writing tips I've culled:

- Just sit down and do it – Stop worrying about writing the “perfect essay” – there is no perfect essay. Just put fingertips to keyboard and start tapping.
- Don't write what you think the admissions office wants to read; instead, write what you want them to know about you. Tell them how you're different than your peers, share what's important to you, what you care about or maybe better yet, what you don't care about that is so important to other teenagers. Describe how you've matured over the years, give them an insider's look at what's going on inside your head.
- Lee Coffin, Vice Provost for Enrollment & Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid. at Dartmouth University has this to say about your application, “Your application is a story... about you... think about how the “extra” pieces (of your application) might shine a different light on your candidacy. Be candid and straightforward, argue your case. Be authentic and have some fun with it!”
- Communicate fit. Do sufficient research on each college so that you can articulate specifically why that college represents a good fit for you; an academic fit (majors, courses, professors, study abroad and internship opportunities, etc.) as well as a social fit (extracurricular activities, clubs/organizations, athletics, the college location, etc.).
- MIT's website shares an anecdote of a colleague, a Yale admissions officer, who visited a Native American reservation to assist students there with their college applications. He was shocked by their essays. These students, “who had lived vastly different lives than most mainstream applicants – were writing essays that were indistinguishable from those written by applicants in southeastern Connecticut. They were composed of billowing clouds of “my global perspective” and “future potential as a leader” and “desire to leverage my education.” MIT's advice: “Do not allow your essays to descend into an impenetrable bulk of buzzwords and banality. You are an interesting person. Your essays should be **yours**.”
- Don't buy the books that scream “Winning Ivy League Essays.” MIT's website says this about that. “So let me save you the trouble of buying any of those books and close by quoting Kurt Vonnegut's seven rules for writing well, which are as applicable to college applications as they are to writing everything else:
 1. *Find a subject you care about.*
 2. *Do not ramble, though.*
 3. *Keep it simple.*
 4. *Have the guts to cut.*
 5. *Sound like yourself.*
 6. *Say what you mean to say.***Specificity, clarity, and brevity are your keys.** Use them to unlock the writer inside you.”

