

# Class of 2018 College Essay and Application Workshop

JUNE 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

4:00 PM – 7:00 PM

# Today's Schedule

- ▶ 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm: Welcome, intro, and UC prompt prewriting
- ▶ 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm: Writing / Brainstorming Exercises
- ▶ 5:00 pm – 5:30 pm: UC Prompts in Detail
- ▶ 5:30 pm – 5:50 pm: Prewriting Round 2
- ▶ 5:50 pm – 6:00 pm: Break
- ▶ 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm: Common Essay and other College Essays

# UC Personal Insight Questions, Common Application, and Other Essays

- ▶ Your college essays are an opportunity for you to let readers of your application get past the numbers, scores, grades, and boxes to check off on the application to see a glimpse of you and get a view about your life, views and experiences.
- ▶ You are evaluated based on the context of your High School.
- ▶ Think about:
  - ▶ Why would a college want me?
  - ▶ What do I have to offer?
  - ▶ What can I tell them about me that is uniquely me that they can't see from my resume, grades or test scores?

# UC Personal Insight Questions, Common Application, and Other Essays

- ▶ Be AUTHENTIC AND BE HONEST. This is not necessarily confessional, but you do have to come up with topics of significance. You also need to have a cohesive narrative. Your story needs a beginning, middle, and end.
- ▶ Start brainstorming and thinking of multiple topics and don't toss any away. You may think something is a bad idea now but it may serve another purpose or be able to be incorporated in another way.
- ▶ DO NOT delete any drafts. Number them and save them all in a folder titled "College Essay." You may write something on a prior draft that you really like or want to have back! Keep all your drafts, just in case.

# What you need to know: UC Personal Insight Question

- ▶ Freshmen must select 4 questions to respond to from the 8 options.
- ▶ Each response has a limit of 350 words.
- ▶ Students cannot respond to more than 4 questions in total; cannot use additional comment box to respond to more questions.
- ▶ All questions are equal: All are given equal consideration in the application review process, which means there is no advantage or disadvantage to choosing certain questions over others.
- ▶ There is no right or wrong way to answer these questions: It's about getting to know your personality, background, interests and achievements in your own unique voice.
- ▶ Use proper spelling and grammar.

# UC Personal Insight Video

- ▶ <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/how-to-apply/personal-questions/index.html>



# Time to prewrite!

Quick write for 2 minutes for each UC prompt

# Writing Exercises and Brainstorming

- ▶ If you really knew me . . . So what!
- ▶ Values List
- ▶ Four Ways I've Been Challenged in My Life
- ▶ The Feelings and Needs Exercise
- ▶ Exercises to do on your own: How Do I Lead, 21 Details, Extracurricular Brainstorming Activity
  - ▶ Do these with your friends/family over the summer!



# 1. **Describe** an example of your **leadership experience** in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts **over time**.

- ▶ A leadership role can mean more than just a title. It can mean being a mentor to others, acting as the person in charge of a specific task, or taking the lead role in organizing an event or project. Think about what you accomplished and what you learned from the experience. What were your responsibilities?
- ▶ Did you lead a team? How did your experience change your perspective on leading others? Did you help to resolve an important dispute at your school, church, in your community or an organization? And your leadership role doesn't necessarily have to be limited to school activities. For example, do you help out or take care of your family?
- ▶ You might consider discussing several ways you have shown leadership through a particular club/internship/class/sport/religious organization.
  - ▶ You would then have two connective themes for your essay – describing the leadership activity AND how you took on a leadership role, what was accomplished, successes/challenges, etc.
- ▶ You might also consider starting with a challenge or series of challenges, then describe what you did about it, and include a few lessons you learned.

2. Every person has a **creative side**, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. **Describe** how you **express** your creative side.

- ▶ Creative does not only mean ARTISTIC! You can be creative in the ways you problem solve or how you make your thinking original and innovative = different!
- ▶ What does creativity mean to you? Do you have a creative skill that is important to you? What have you been able to do with that skill? If you used creativity to solve a problem, what was your solution? What are the steps you took to solve the problem?
- ▶ How does your creativity influence your decisions inside or outside the classroom? Does your creativity relate to your major or a future career?

### 3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

- ▶ If there's a talent or skill that you're proud of, this is the time to share it. You don't necessarily have to be recognized or have received awards for your talent (although if you did and you want to talk about it, feel free to do so).
- ▶ Why is this talent or skill meaningful to you?
- ▶ Does the talent come naturally or have you worked hard to develop this skill or talent?
- ▶ Does your talent or skill allow you opportunities in or outside the classroom? If so, what are they and how do they fit into your schedule?
- ▶ Add in your experience! Make the reader see you understand your talent or skill.
- ▶ Try to pick an *uncommon skill* – if common, try to make your experience *uncommon*.
  - ▶ Look past common values such as hardworking, works well with others, efficiency, collaboration, etc.
  - ▶ Replace with more personal and thoughtful values such as self-expression, bravery, personal development, and accountability.

## 4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

- ▶ An educational opportunity can be anything that has added value to your educational experience and better prepared you for college. For example, participation in an honors or academic enrichment program, or enrollment in an academy that's geared toward an occupation or a major, or taking advanced courses that interest you — just to name a few.
- ▶ If you choose to write about educational barriers you've faced, how did you overcome or strive to overcome them?
- ▶ What personal characteristics or skills did you call on to overcome this challenge?
- ▶ Educational barriers can include school in general, be specific to one class or concept/project, or relate to parent involvement/first generation.
- ▶ How did overcoming this barrier help shape who are you today?
- ▶ Think of this essay in 3 parts:
  - ▶ Opportunity or barrier
  - ▶ What you did about it
  - ▶ What you learned from it

## 5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?


- ▶ A challenge could be personal, or something you have faced in your community or school. Why was the challenge significant to you?
- ▶ This is a good opportunity to talk about any obstacles you've faced and what you've learned from the experience. Did you have support from someone else or did you handle it alone?
- ▶ If you're currently working your way through a challenge, what are you doing now, and does that affect different aspects of your life?
- ▶ For example, ask yourself, "How has my life changed at home, at my school, with my friends or with my family?"
- ▶ Sample structure:
  - ▶ Challenge(s)
    - ▶ What does the reader need to know in order to understand why this challenge you faces was such a big deal?
    - ▶ What circumstances made the situation worse?
  - ▶ What you did
    - ▶ What did you do first that didn't work/help? If that did not work, what did you try next and why?
    - ▶ After you found what worked/helped, what else did you do?
  - ▶ What you learned
    - ▶ How can you go beyond the obvious take away?
      - ▶ Ex: "Not only did I learn the value of working with others, but I also learned that there is a time when working alone is actually okay, in fact sometimes it's exactly right."
    - ▶ How did you meet a deeper need? Spend time reflecting on this.

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. **Describe** how you have **furthered this interest** inside and/or outside of the classroom.

- ▶ Many students have a passion for one specific academic subject area, something that they just can't get enough of. If that applies to you, what have you done to further that interest?
- ▶ Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe any experience you have had inside and outside the classroom — such as volunteer work, internships, employment, summer programs, participation in student organizations and/or clubs — and what you have gained from your involvement.
- ▶ Has your interest in the subject influenced you in choosing a major and/or future career? Have you been able to pursue coursework at a higher level in this subject (honors, college, or university work)?
- ▶ Are you inspired to pursue this subject further at UC, and how might you do that?

## 7. What have **you** done to make your **school** or your **community** a **better** place?

- ▶ Think of community as a term that can encompass a group, team or a place — like your high school, hometown or home.
- ▶ You can define community as you see fit, just make sure you talk about your role in that community.
- ▶ Was there a problem that you wanted to fix in your community?
- ▶ Why were you inspired to act?
- ▶ What did you learn from your effort?
- ▶ How did your actions benefit others, the wider community or both?
- ▶ Did you work alone or with others to initiate change in your community?
- ▶ Sample structure:
  - ▶ Identify the problem – why did you feel the “need or push” to make your school or community a better place?
  - ▶ Why now? – why did you choose to get involved after knowing about the issues?
  - ▶ Articulate the vision – how did you anticipate you would be able to help?
  - ▶ Describe what you did to help
  - ▶ Clarify your role – what did YOU do that helped “fix/change” the problem?
  - ▶ **Impact you had, lessons learned, or values gained**



## 8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe **makes you stand out** as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

- ▶ If there's anything you want the UC's to know about you, but didn't find a question or place in the application to tell them, now's your chance.
- ▶ What have you not shared with us that will highlight a skill, talent, challenge or opportunity that you think will help us know you better?
- ▶ From your point of view, what do you feel makes you an excellent choice for UC? Don't be afraid to brag a little.



# Prewriting . . . Round 2!

Quick write for 1 minute and 30 seconds for each UC prompt.

# 2017-2018 Common Application Essay Prompts (650 word essay)

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

Prompts 2, 3, and 6

2. The lessons we take from *obstacles we encounter* can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Prompts 4 and 5

3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? What was *the outcome*?

Prompts 1 and 7

4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

Prompt 1, 5, and 7

# 2017-2018 Common Application Essay Prompts

5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

Prompts 1, 2, 3, and 7

6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

Prompt 3

7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Any prompt!

# What to do next?

- ▶ Take a breather! Look back at your pre-writes and brainstorming after a few days.
- ▶ Complete additional brainstorming worksheets and do a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, . . . Round of pre-writes.
- ▶ Narrow down your questions.
- ▶ Make a schedule! How will you carve out time to work on these essays over the summer? Next Fall?