

Name:

Career Goal:

Date:

Period:

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE Project

Goal: To empower myself with knowledge, skills, and information about my short and long term academic goals and choices.

Objectives:

- To explore and reflect upon my interests and strengths
- To assess my priorities about my future
- To research the college application process and associated terms and vocabulary
- To prepare for college entrance exams (SAT, ACT, THEA)
- To set clear goals for my future
- To write a polished college admission essay
- To create a well-organized résumé
- To compile a portfolio of information and materials to aid in the college application process

Portfolio Expectations: See the other side of this sheet for a checklist of assignments to be included in your college binder. This will count as your exam grade for this unit. It will also be your college treasure chest.

Extra Credit:

- 1) Visit a college and do a one-page write-up of what you learned, did, saw and what you felt about the college overall. **For extra, extra credit:** While visiting, meet with a professor or talk to several students. Research a club or activity you are interested in.
- 2) Interview someone who has gone to college. (a teacher or mentor, family member or friend, boss) Turn in a list of questions you asked and a write-up of what you learned.

Planning Tips: Because this is a unit with many demands, you need to plan your time carefully. Check off assignments you have already completed on the other side. Make sure to type up assignments that have "TYPED" in bold next to them. You will have some computer lab time to do this, but you should also plan to prepare materials outside of class. Being resourceful is part of being college-ready! Also, you should consider the questions below and make a time-line of mini-deadlines to help you avoid the disaster of not having your binder ready in time.

1. What materials will I need to complete this project?
2. How will I get these materials?
3. What kind of writing will I need to do for this project?
4. How much access to a computer will I need? When (outside of class) will I plan to use the computer?
5. What ideas do I have so far for making this binder extraordinary?

PORTFOLIO FINAL DUE DATE: _____.

Gather materials by _____.

Begin typing papers by _____.

Finish résumé by _____.

Finish all typing by _____.

Put together binder by _____.

Have someone "grade" your binder by _____.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE Binder

This project counts as ½ of your exam grade. I hope you've found the work we've done so far helpful. By putting together this binder, you will be creating what I hope is an invaluable resource to you as you go through the college application process.

How you organize it is up to you, but it must be neat and tidy. Use dividers or see me for construction paper. Label each section in a meaningful way. You can be as creative or as simple as you choose. **This portfolio is for you, so make it work for you.**

Due by FRIDAY, December 2, 2005. Each day late will cost you 15 points.

Portfolio Checklist The following assignments must be included in your portfolio. You will be awarded up to the point value for each as shown.

- ____ Life After High School interests quiz and budget worksheet (4 pts)
- ____ Parent/Guardian Questionnaire (2 pts)
- ____ College Comparison chart (minimum three schools) (4 pts)
- ____ Two Career Conversations write-ups, **TYPED** (15 points)
- ____ Completed Texas Common Application (15 pts)
- ____ Résumé, **TYPED** (10 pts)
- ____ Polished Admission Essay, **TYPED** (15 pts)
- ____ Parent Conversation Multi-genre Paper, **TYPED** (10 pts)
- ____ IMAGINE IT open assignment, one page only (10 pts)
- ____ Introductory/Reflection letter (explained below) (15 pts)
- ____ A "Questions to Ask" page (explained below) (2 pts)
- ____ Neatness, organization, and "extras" (20 pts)

TOTAL PTS _____

Introductory/Reflection Letter: At the front of the portfolio, please include an introduction that summarizes the work you've done during the college unit and how you feel it has helped you. Have you put forth your best effort throughout this unit? What more do you wish you had learned? Also include a bit about why your portfolio is organized as it is. Try to incorporate a second genre in your letter to spice things up. **Length: 1 ½-2 pages**

"Extra" info to include:

- * All college-related handouts received in class (website lists, checklists, financial Aid and SAT info)
- * Brochures and information you've printed from the Internet or received from college fairs and mailings
- * A timeline or checklist of things to do over the next year or two and when they need to be done.

"Questions to Ask" sheet: Include a sheet where you record questions you need/want answered. Leave some spots blank for future questions. Label it and put it in convenient spot in your binder (front cover, back cover, or someplace else quick and easy to find).

Categories to consider: The Application, The Essay, Things to Remember, Self-reflection, Test Prep, Scholarships, School Info, Financial Aid info, Important information, Timelines/Deadlines

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Career Goal: _____

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE Binder

½ of exam grade

Due by TUESDAY, December 12, 2006.

You MAY turn your project in EARLY, but don't turn it in LATE (25 points off per day).

Portfolio Checklist The following assignments together form your PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE portfolio. You will be awarded **up to** the point value for each as shown.

- _____ **TYPED** Introductory/Reflection letter (explained below) (35 points)
- _____ Personal Mission Statement (25 points)
- _____ Your **revised** I-search paper (100 points)
- _____ Fastweb.com signup and college comparison (20 points)
- _____ **TYPED** College Application/Scholarship essay **REWRITE** with **all** drafts (50 points)
- _____ A "Questions to Ask" page with questions you still need to answer about college/your future (5 pts)
- _____ Neatness, organization, and aesthetic appeal (15 pts)
- _____ **Extra Point Items** (115 points)
 - _____ FAFSA pin # (5 points)
 - _____ Personal five-year plan (10 points)
 - _____ Polished résumé (10 points)
 - _____ College/career interest interviews (15 points each)
 - _____ College campus visit w/ reflection paper (15 points)
 - _____ Additional college or scholarship essays (15 points)
 - _____ Information about programs or careers (5 points)
 - _____ Reflection papers on programs or careers (5 points)
 - _____ Your polished "Dream Deferred" reflection (15 points)
 - _____ Print out of your submitted Texas Common Application (15 points)
(or other 4-year college application)

YOUR TOTAL PTS _____

GRADE KEY:

250 points = 100

175 points = 70

225 points = 90

150 points = 60

200 points = 80

125 points = 50

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **PERIOD:** _____ **CAREER GOAL:** _____

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: College Application Essay

Essay #1, typed, due _____ **Essay #1 typed REWRITE due** _____

Your college application essay may be among the most important pieces of writing you ever do; therefore, you should invest considerable thought and time to crafting it.

The Task: You may choose to write one of the essays required by many schools for the Texas Common Application, **or you may substitute an essay for another scholarship or college application you are working on.**

OPTION 1: *Topic for an application of your choice*

Essay Prompt and Guidelines: _____

College Application/Scholarship Name: _____

College Application/Scholarship Website or Source: _____

OPTION 2: *Topics from the Texas Common Application*

(see www.applytexas.org under “University Info” and “Essay” to find out which essays are required for the schools you want to apply to)

Topic A (freshman):

Describe a significant setback, challenge or opportunity in your life and the impact that it has had on you.

Topic B (freshman):

Many students expand their view of the world during their time in college. Such growth often results from encounters between students who have lived different cultural, economic, or academic experiences. With your future growth in mind, describe a potential classmate that you believe you could learn from either within or outside a formal classroom environment.

Topic C (all application types):

What additional personal information do you wish to be considered in our decision? for example:

1. exceptional hardship, setback or personal experience that has shaped your abilities or academic credentials
2. personal responsibilities
3. exceptional achievements or special talents such as poetry, artwork, bilingual proficiency etc.
4. educational goals and choice of major
5. ways you contribute to the commitment that the university has made to create an institution with a diverse learning environment

Requirements:

- Use the **Do's and Don'ts** list. This is your essay-writing Bible.
- Bring your essays-in-progress with you to class every day.
- Turn in drafts of your essay with your typed version to show your writing process.
- Follow the length requirements of your scholarship/college application; usually essays are limited to 500 words (about 2 pages).
- SAVE typed versions; you will revise your work.

This is the rubric I will use to grade your essay. Check your work to see that you meet these standards.

1. You meet the basic requirements: paper is typed and proof-read, you include your drafts, and you have the appropriate length.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

2. You monitor your basic grammar, and you have few or no typos or misspellings.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

3. Your essay focuses on one main idea, your thesis. All the parts of your paper work together to show this idea.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

4. You have a strong lead that "hooks" your reader into the essay.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

5. Your last sentence sends the reader away with a powerful impression that ties back to your lead.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

6. You use detail and personal examples strategically to prove your thesis and include important information about yourself.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

7. You persuade me that you are a good candidate for my scholarship or a place at my college. You show how you are different and what you, personally, have to offer.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

Total points earned _____ (56 possible)

Ten Do's and Don'ts for Your College Admissions or Scholarship Essay

(Adapted from accepted.com)

The Do's

1. Build your essay around a single theme or thesis. The thesis is the main point you want to communicate. Be focused.
2. Before you begin writing, gather your ideas and plan the order in which you want to write about them.
3. Write about what interests you, excites you. That's what the committee wants to read.
4. Start your essay with an attention-grabbing lead--an anecdote, quote, question, engaging description of a scene, your personal mission statement, or use of another genre.
5. Use concrete examples from your life experience to support your thesis and distinguish yourself from other applicants. ("I reached down and stroked my niece's forehead, wishing I could hold her" does a better job of demonstrating your concern for children than the general statement, "I feel connected to children, especially babies.")
6. End your essay with a conclusion that links back to the lead and highlights your thesis.
7. Revise your essay at least three times.
8. In addition to your own editing, ask someone else to critique your essay for you.
9. Use your essay strategically to communicate information that might explain parts of your academic record (absences, low grades, etc.). Emphasize the positive and/or how you have changed and grown since then.
10. Proofread your writing by reading it out loud. Make sure you have thought about your grammar and punctuation in each sentence.

The Don'ts

1. Don't include extra information that doesn't support your thesis.
2. Don't start your essay with "I was born in..." or "My parents came from..."
3. Don't write an autobiography of your whole life or a list of things you have done.
4. Don't try to be a clown (but gentle humor is OK).
5. Don't be afraid to start over if the essay just isn't working or doesn't answer the essay question.
6. Don't try to impress your reader with fancy words; use the words you know.
7. Don't rely exclusively on your computer to check your spelling.
8. Don't provide a collection of generic statements like "I really love helping others," or "I've always dreamed of making a difference." They've heard it all before. Prove it!
9. Don't give lame excuses for your GPA.
10. Don't make things up.

--Your side to complete--

Write the prompt for your essay here if it is not included in your typed version:

Organization/School _____

What is the **most important idea** you wanted to leave with your reader?

What is best about your essay? What still needs the most work? Be specific.

--This side up, stapled to your essay--

1. You meet the basic requirements: paper is typed and proof-read, you include your drafts, and you have the appropriate length.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

2. You monitor your basic grammar, and you have few or no typos or misspellings.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
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6. You use detail and personal examples strategically to prove your thesis and include important information about yourself.

Not really...	Yes, you did it....	Well done.	You go above and beyond!
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7. You persuade me that you are a good candidate for my scholarship or a place at my college. You show how you are different and what you, personally, have to offer.

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Total points earned _____ (56 possible)

Ms. Pérez's Comments:

College Essay Planning

1. My essay prompt: _____

2. My most important quality: _____

3. How could I answer the prompt and SHOW my best/most important quality?

4. How will I PROVE that I have this quality? What stories could I include?
(Remember: show it, don't say it... "I love math" doesn't prove anything. Try: "After I've done my math homework, sometimes I do it again. Not because my calculations are wrong, but because it feels so good to work with the numbers.")

5. Freewrite about your ideas for ten minutes. Just get them out for now; anything goes.

7. Decide on your thesis—the main idea you want to communicate. Then write down the points you want to PROVE in your essay to support that thesis. Write them here.

Example

EXAMPLE

Example

EXAMPLE

Example

Thesis: I am determined to succeed despite all obstacles

I want to prove...	Here's how I'll show it...
My parents don't always support my efforts in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a quote from my mom, "Why do you make your life so hard?" You should be having fun, not studying all the time. - Describe how frustrated and angry Dad gets when I talk about what I need to do to get ready for college. - Give examples of family members who didn't graduate from high school.
I have set high standards for myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show my reaction to my mom's words. Something like, I work hard because I know there are no shortcuts to success. I work hard because I want to achieve my best, not just the minimum. - Give an example of how I worked hard in my Calculus class, always rewriting my homework and thinking about the problems all night. - Show how I am still part of the family at gatherings, even though my cousins who also go to Chavez see me as a "school girl."
My success will benefit my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I will be the first in my family to attend college, and I will be the first to graduate from college. - I won't be the last because my nieces and nephews will see that it <i>is</i> possible... - Describe reading with my niece, Anita: She leans her head down over the book, and her curls cascade over her face. I start to tickle her, but she pushes me away, squealing, "I want to keep reading!" This is when I know that she will grow up loving to learn, she will grow up believing that she can succeed in school, just like her Tía Mariposa.

Your thesis: _____

I want to prove...	Here's how I'll show it...

8. Use these points to guide you through your essay.

9. Make sure you have a good lead to grab your reader's attention in the first line and first paragraph.

Lead Ideas: anecdote (small story), quote, question, engaging description, scene, your personal mission statement, use of another genre (e.g., phone conversation, AIM, email, etc.)

My lead: _____

10. Make sure you have thought about your conclusion. Write ideas for your conclusion here: _____

CONGRATULATIONS! IF YOU HAVE THOUGHTFULLY COMPLETED THIS PACKET, YOUR ESSAY IS PRACTICALLY WRITTEN!! NOW YOU JUST NEED TO PUT IT ALL TOGETHER.

*******Remember that your TYPED essay is due Friday, November 17.*******

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **PERIOD:** _____ **CAREER GOAL:** _____

Scholarly Habit Points:

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: Analyzing Successful College Essays

Assignment: college application in-class preparation (15 points)

Answer the following questions to help you analyze the scholarship essay your group is reading. Use the "Do's and Don'ts" list to help you.

Title of the Essay: _____

1. In one sentence, what is the **thesis or main** message of this essay?
2. How does the writer try to grab the reader's attention from the very beginning? **Give a quote as evidence.** Do you think it works?
3. What **specific examples** does the writer use to prove what he/she says about himself/herself? **List at least three quotes and what they show about the writer.**
4. How does the writer **link** the conclusion of the essay to the lead (beginning)? **Use a quote from the beginning and a quote from the end, and explain how they are connected.**

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1. In one sentence, what is the **thesis or main** message of this essay?
2. How does the writer try to grab the reader's attention from the very beginning? **Give a quote as evidence.** Do you think it works?
3. What **specific examples** does the writer use to prove what he/she says about himself/herself? **List at least three quotes and what they show about the writer.**
4. How does the writer **link** the conclusion of the essay to the lead (beginning)? **Use a quote from the beginning and a quote from the end, and explain how they are connected.**

*****You may come by for a packet of essays after school and do more analyses of essays for extra-credit if you choose. *****

Just Give Me a Chance

by Jaimee K., San Diego, CA

There's a girl who's not your ordinary girl, by any means - she's been through a lot more than you could imagine. This girl not only has faced miles of hopelessness, years of pain, and an ocean of sorrow, but also has been drowning in her own tears looking for an escape. This girl has taken on challenges with fear and fury. This girl is 17 years old, and every one of those years held a new obstacle to overcome. With her eyes full of betrayal and wearing a fake grin, she doesn't complain. From four elementary schools to a middle school and three high schools, she's been through it all. She has been a "mother" to her brother, an angel to God, and a lost soul all at once. She is ambitious, outgoing, and will help anyone who needs it. She wants a chance, a chance to make a difference, starting with her own life. She has a story, one that should be heard. This girl is me.

What do I have to lose? Here I am, with a mind full of thoughts, a stomach full of knots, and a pounding migraine, but that's not going to stop me.

I could write about how hard my life has been, how depressing, lifeless and overwhelming the world seems, or how many schools I've been to, or how many houses I've lived in and with how many people. Or maybe I could just tell you about how I have been betrayed by two fathers, and then by my beloved mother, who overdosed and tried to commit suicide? Or, even better, I could tell you how my stepfather's prescription drug and alcohol problems have affected me. I could ramble on about my best friend's death and how I watched my brother be taken from my mother and given to my stepfather. But no, I'll save you the time.

I may sound blunt, or even rude, but don't judge me just yet. Really, I am shy, quiet, and never disrespectful. My experiences might make me fragile, emotional, and a bit sensitive, but I seem to manage. Confused as I am, I know what I want and what I can accomplish.

What I need right now is not sympathy. What I need is a chance, a very big chance at this four-year school. I know, trust me, that I shouldn't be setting my goals any higher than a two-year junior college with my 2.7 GPA. But the person from my freshman to junior year hasn't been me. I haven't been able to show my true colors.

I have been buried in everyone around me. I am not like the many who don't care about academics and are enthralled with drama and the whole high-school scene. I consider myself the opposite. You wouldn't see me at a football game or a pep-rally because I am home taking care of my brother. I have issues to deal with in my everyday life that few 17-year-olds do. I have been knee-deep in problems, whether my family's or mine. There hasn't been just one bump in the road for me; I am on a never-ending road with a bump every mile, a road that doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

During my high-school career I have been so consumed with taking on responsibilities and family issues that it seems as if my whole experience has passed me by. More than anything, I would love to replace my grades these last few years, but I know that is impossible. How could I run my family and be a star student at the same time? But I am here now, more determined than ever.

I strongly believe that I deserve a chance at this four-year school. I know I can make a difference, that I can turn my life around, and that I can turn my fake grin into a beautiful, satisfied smile.

I would be absolutely honored to be accepted at this university. I do not want your sympathy, because I know I will soar to places never dreamed of, even if my wings have been clipped. Because for me, my life is a different story, a story without an ending—yet.

Changes

by Andrew R., New City, NY

When I walked into the house after school, the first thing I noticed was a box with items I recognized from my dad's office. He is a neat freak, so I found this odd. As I looked through the box, my dad appeared.

"What are you doing home already?" I asked casually.

"Andrew, I was laid off today," he answered, quietly.

I was sure he was joking. "No you weren't. Why are you really home?"

Then I noticed his expression and realized he was telling the truth. My father has always been a hard worker and prided himself on his career. Providing for our family has been his joy, and I guess I had taken his work for granted.

My father's unemployment created many changes in our lives. For starters, he was home all the time, which meant my bed had to be made, my room cleaned up, and my homework done right after school. I would come home every day to find him at the computer searching for jobs. I began to notice how down he seemed, and how losing his job had affected his self-esteem, though he tried to be optimistic. For the first time, I saw my dad as vulnerable. He asked my brother and me to spend less. I gave up my allowance, which even though it wasn't much, felt like the right thing to do. I also found a part-time job.

After several difficult months of searching, my dad decided to go in a totally different direction. He explained that he never wanted to be laid off again, so he was going to start his own business. Day by day, I watched him build it, and I admired how much time and energy he expended.

One evening I asked if he needed help.

"Only if it doesn't interfere with school," he said, which sounded like a yes.

I showed up at his office the next afternoon, and most afternoons after that for two months. I always knew he was a hard worker, but watching him in action really impacted me. Although this was one of the worst experiences for our family, it taught me a lot about dealing with adversity. Now I know that through creative problem-solving, I can always find Plan B, ask for help, and take risks. What I have learned from my dad's understanding of business and his work ethic are two of the most important lessons I will ever learn, and will be my foundations for success.

Double Life

by Pashia Y., Schofield, WI

I am living a double life.

At school, I'm an American, but at home, I'm Hmong. It is very difficult because my elders expect a lot from me, and because I'm a female Hmong student, many doubt my ability to do well. I will, however, prove them wrong and succeed. Their criticisms and stories will just make me stronger.

My grandpa told me a story about the lack of education among the Hmong, and as he began, I could hear his pain and see the tears in his eyes. The education program in Laos is very poor, so as an arbitrary test to attend school, you must be able to take your left arm, wrap it around the back of your head to the other side, and reach for your ears with your palm. This was devised to limit students due to the lack of money and space.

My grandpa encouraged his little brother, Chue Fue, to try out for school, but he failed. Seeing my grandpa go to school every day left him devastated and reduced his motivation. My grandpa couldn't stand the injustice, so when he came home, he would teach Chue Fue everything he had learned in school. My grandfather wanted his brother to have the same education. They did this every day until they could better themselves by coming to America.

After their arrival, my grandfather enrolled Chue Fue in school and went to night school so he could work to support his family during the day. My grandfather never stopped learning. Because of his brother's determination and encouragement, Chue Fue graduated from the University of Minnesota.

I know my grandpa wants me to succeed in my studies and reach my goals. I will carry on his courage because he is my hero and motivation. I sympathize with those who are still in Laos. Like many others, I take what I have for granted. My mother has always told me that since those in Laos will never be as fortunate, I should learn as though I were learning for all of them. That is why I see college as a great opportunity for me to succeed. Someday I plan to go to Laos and teach what I have learned.

But before we can teach and re-teach, we must educate ourselves, which is why I will be a great asset to your college. I am determined and will strive for a better future, not only for myself and my family, but also for those who cannot better their lives on their own.

I must remember that my double life is a blessed life.

Grandmother's Voice

by Marci N., Lowville, NY

Chestnut-colored hair, flecked with silver, frames her softly rounded face; delicate wrinkles encircle rose-tinted lips and cool gPérez eyes. Spectacles perch on the tip of her nose; a pressed blouse and skirt, in muted tones and tailored to fit her short frame, blend with her surroundings. From across a crowded street, it is unlikely you would notice her. Even in a small room, her quiet presence attracts little attention. To many onlookers, my grandmother appears insignificant.

To me, her presence looms.

I believe that her voice, gentle yet firm, has greatly impacted my life. As a first-grader, my passions were art and books. Whenever I visited Grandmother, I brought a new drawing to add to those plastered on her refrigerator. Gazing steadily into my eyes, she would praise my amateur landscapes and stick-figures as if I were the next van Gogh or da Vinci. Afterward, we would snuggle together to read. Ensnared in her warm arms, stPérez wisps of hair escaped from her bun and tickled my face, I gazed not at *The Cat in the Hat's* comical sketches, but at my grandmother's thin lips shaping the lilting rhymes.

Over the years, her hair has gotten even gPérez, her skin more wrinkled, and her figure more stooped. I, too, have changed, now openly admitting my utter lack of artistic skills and my preference for Charles Dickens and Jane Austen over Dr. Seuss. Nonetheless, my grandmother's ageless voice, and my love for it, remains the same.

A recent visit to my grandmother's house resulted in an epiphany. Standing motionless before the backyard's sliding door, she softly called me to her side; together, we marveled at the sparrows and finches fluttering in the oaks. A short time later, squinting with failing eyesight at an arPérez of fabric on her sewing table, she entreated me to help match patterns while she shared the history of each swatch. Standing next to her, I realized the strength of her voice comes not from its volume, but from the unselfish love and simple joy that echoes in it. My grandmother's tender tone, whether expounding on bird species or quilt squares, reveals more about her than her words.

In recent months, unavoidable hardships have taxed her strength. As Grandfather shows signs of Alzheimer's, the uncertainties of his future frighten me. Will there come a time, years or months from now, when he does not recognize me or, worse, his own wife? Even though Grandmother shares my anxieties, she remains his staunchest supporter. Her wedding vow "Till death do us part" holds true after 55 years of marriage and six children. Her smile may falter, her hand may tremble, but her voice remains steady.

Whenever I am frustrated and tempted to use forceful language, the memory of my grandmother's voice reminds me that volume is not the sum of influence. I don't mind if I attract little notice across a crowded city street. I am content if my presence, to those I have influenced, is conspicuous.

Like my grandmother, I, too, speak with quiet confidence.

Half & Half - Behind the Label

by Michelle J., Washington, D.C.

“You mixed?” a girl boldly asked me at my friend’s prom. Our eyes met knowingly, and I could tell she already knew the answer.

When I meet a biracial person, I am ecstatic, and we often share our experiences, including the dilemma of having to “choose.” Sometimes I find that I can relate to a biracial stranger better than to my own parents. Although I feel an almost poignant vibe when interacting with other biracial individuals, I am also aware that my ethnicity allows me to make greater connections with those from diverse backgrounds.

The product of an African-American father and an Irish-English American mother, one could argue that I’ve been surrounded by diversity my whole life. Among my brothers and I, there is a blonde, a brunette (me) and a redhead, which never ceases to fascinate friends and family. When my mother’s sister inspired my younger brother to pursue a version of the Irish step from “Riverdance,” I was “stepping” in an annual Black History Month show. Our family diversity is frequently manifested in foods such as collard greens with Irish soda bread. My background, however, goes beyond food; we sing “The Black National Anthem” in February and whip out shamrocks in March.

Growing up, the frequent requirement of “checking one box” caused me to feel, literally, boxed in, a sentiment I continue to feel when filling out college applications. Being biracial, however, has given me a unique understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

During my involvement in Operation Understanding D.C. (OUDC), I quickly embraced both the black and Jewish members of the group, attending a friend’s seder and bringing her to her first Palm Sunday Mass. When all 23 of us marched across Edmund Petus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, retracing the footsteps civil rights marchers took on Bloody Sunday, I fully understood the importance of bridging cultures, and the implications of my existence.

When two worlds collide, however, there are always obstacles. During this tour with OUDC, a guide singled me out saying, “In order to own a store in the black section of Atlanta during this period, one would have to be ... oh, her complexion.” As I glanced up from the museum pamphlet, I noted 22 pairs of eyes fixed on my “commendable” light skin tone. Unsure of how to respond, I remained silent, and observed 11 curious faces and 11 assessing glances. Was I supposed to be infuriated that I made the cut for a malicious system of oppression? Should I have explained the history of light skin tone in the black community? Or should I have falsely denied that I, during those days, would have had more opportunities? I decided to accept the past as past, and to condemn a system that had divided the black community.

I frequently find myself in situations where people question my blackness or whiteness, but I’ve learned that being me, and not a label, will always be a challenge. Mixed, biracial, half-and-half or creamed coffee, however people classify me, I feel an obligation to bridge cultures and promote tolerance and understanding. I hope I may continue to do that at Brown University.

Writing your Application Essay

As you write, remember your audience. They are good people that want to be convinced of why you deserve an opportunity. Impress them. Be honest and clear. **Try at least TWO of the strategies below in what you write. HIGHLIGHT the section where you use them and WRITE THE NUMBER of the strategy to the side.**

1. Use the BA-DA-BING method to show action:

BA=what you saw/heard, DA=what you did, and BING=what you thought.

EXAMPLE: When I heard my boss call my name, I swung around, thinking, "What will he ask me to do now?"

2. Use other genres if they fit your ideas. Try adding a phone conversation, AIM, email, letter, journal entry, or story.

3. Use figurative language (like you did in "The Raven" adaptation):

SIMILE (comparison with like or as): her words were like hot coals scorching my heart.

METAPHOR (comparison not using like or as): her words are hot coals scorching my heart.

PERSONIFICATION (talking about objects as if they were alive): The money danced in my pocket, begging to be spent.

4. Use imagery/sensory detail to appeal to your reader's senses and create a rich description:

EXAMPLE: The smells of rich chicken soup mixed in the air with the salty breeze. All around me were the vibrant reds and greens of the holiday banners. The shouts of the merchants carried me back to my childhood in Vietnam.

REVISION STRATEGIES

START WITH WHAT'S STRONG.

Instead of obsessing with what you don't like, start revising by identifying a line or section that you're proud of. Ask yourself, where does the piece come alive? Where can my reader really get a sense of who I am **at my best**?

Once you have identified a powerful section of your essay, **revise outward from this section**. Ask yourself, how could I link more of my ideas to this part? How could other sections take on some of the same tone or qualities I've accomplished here? What parts of my paper distract from this idea? How could I make the other sections lead to or emphasize this section?

DO NOW: Highlight the strongest sentence of section of your paper. Think about what makes it accomplished and jot down this reason. Next, look at the rest of your paper and begin cutting/rewriting/adding detail to complement and enhance the section you identified as strong.

REMEMBER YOUR PURPOSE.

You are writing to convince another human being that you are an excellent candidate for the opportunities (college admission, scholarship money) they can give you.

DO NOW: Ask yourself, does my essay reflect the best in me? Do I emphasize my strengths or show how I'm overcoming my weaknesses? Remember, people are not persuaded by talk; we are persuaded by evidence. Jot down any qualities you still need to reveal to your reader. As you revise, try to weave them in.

STORIES, STORIES, STORIES.

Illustrate your points whenever you can with stories. There are several ways of doing this.

DO NOW: Try one of the options below as a way of building stories into your essay.

(1) You can focus on one moment for your essay and explore it fully to **communicate your ideas**. For example: An essay on the impact JROTC had on a student might focus on the first 2 minutes she spent in a JROTC course. Using this moment, the writer could show who she was before JROTC through details and her reactions to the program at first. Then, she could bring the story into the present and describe a moment that illustrates how she has changed.

(2) You can use a few sentences to provide an anecdote or example after you make a point. See what a difference the added material makes to the ideas here:

In the past, when offered opportunities to atone for my academic errors, I passed them up. ***“Tomorrow,” I said, only thinking of today. Now “tomorrow” has come, and I must finally shoulder the responsibility for my choices.*** I am determined to accomplish my goal of becoming a teacher and a writer. ***I walk into my English classroom, and my determination to get to this goal is an anchor holding me fast in the present. No more “tomorrow” talk; today is my day. When my teacher asks for the homework, now I have it ready on my desk. “Make each moment count,” I tell myself as we begin our assignment.***

COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

This sheet is for the student still trying to choose schools to apply to. If you already know where you want to go, please complete the other side.

COMPARATIVE CRITERIA	COLLEGE A	COLLEGE B	COLLEGE C
Environment/Location			
Cost			
Admission requirements			
Tests required			
Majors of interest			
% of commuters			
% who graduate			
% going on to higher degree			
Housing availability			
Application fee			
Enrollment deposit			
Typical aid package			
% of students receiving aid			
Faculty-student ratio			
Average SAT/ACT scores			
% of freshmen having top 10% of H.S. GPA			
Your order of preference			
Your chances of admission			

Smart Moves When You Know Where You Want to Go

Get on your college's website and start gathering the following information...

1. Where are you in your application? Haven't started? Finished? Somewhere in between?
2. Who can write a recommendation for you? Contact your recommenders NOW. It is customary to allow 2 weeks for recommendations to be written. You should also give them a list of info about you (GPA, extracurriculars, career goals, etc.)
3. Who can you contact in the admissions department about your application?
4. Who can you contact in the department you want to join? You should email professors whose profiles sound interesting to you, or email the department coordinator to ask for students you could contact to get advice or ask questions.
5. What next steps do you still need to take to be ready to get to the college of your choice?

A Dream Deferred

by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

"A Dream Deferred" Response

- (1) Pick a few phrases to quote from the poem above. Write them down.
- (2) What does Langston Hughes want you to think or feel about put-off dreams? How does he do this? (Try to use your quotes in what you write.)
- (3) Who do you know who has "deferred" a dream? Why didn't they achieve their dream?
- (4) How do dreams become reality?

Multi-Genre Writing

Now look back over what you have written. Highlight or underline ideas that you are proud of, and think about how you can put these thoughts into a more interesting format. Consider:

- a letter to Hughes, to the person who put off their dreams, to someone you want to inspire
- a poem
- song lyrics
- diary entries
- a story
- a how-to guide
- **ANY OTHER GENRE THAT INVOLVES WRITING AND SHOWS YOUR BRILLIANT IDEAS.**

Résumé-Writing 101

(resources from www.collegeboard.com)

Get Your Résumé in Shape for Jobs and Internships

Before you rush out to find that perfect job or internship, you'll need to write your résumé. And not just any résumé, but the kind that'll separate you from all the people applying to your college of choice or eager to land that dream job. Here are some ways to avoid the pitfalls of résumé-writing and land yourself in the spot light...

First Things First: Getting Started

Samantha was just weeks away from finishing her junior year in high school and still looking for a summer internship. She always wanted to be a nurse, so she sent her résumé to several local hospital recruiters, but was just not getting any responses.

Panicked and sure she'd be jobless for the summer, Samantha passed her résumé to her family for constructive criticism. They all told her the same thing: her résumé did not reflect enough experience and education related to nursing. She did include her volunteer work at the neighborhood health clinic, but she mostly listed jobs as a cashier and her involvement with school sports.

Focus on Relevant Information

A lot of students think a generalized résumé describing everything they've ever done is a great way to get any kind of job or internship. Not true. The first rule of thumb for résumé-writing is to **only include information that is useful to the job you're applying for**. For example, Samantha's experience as a cashier would've come in handy if she was applying for a job in retail or sales.

Be Ready to Write More Than One Résumé

If you're applying for summer jobs or internships in a variety of fields, be prepared to write more than one resume. Once you have the first done, use it as a template and just cut and paste the most relevant information for different jobs.

The Four Key Elements

Four main themes you should always include in your résumé, no matter where you're applying, are volunteerism, association memberships, computer proficiency, and knowledge of other languages.

1. Volunteerism

No matter where you're applying or what you plan to study in college, potential employers want to know you're a well-rounded member of society. Listing your participation in a program such as Habitat for Humanity or your weekly work at a local soup kitchen can definitely add some pizzazz to a résumé short of work experience.

2. Association Memberships

It's also an added bonus for younger high school students to list any associations they've belonged to, such as:

- National Honor Society (NHS)

- National Art Honor Society (NAHS)
- Texas Association of Future Educators (TAFE)

Juniors and seniors probably have more experience in this area, but never underestimate participation in group roles. This includes any other club participation at school or in your community.

3. Computer Skills and Technical training

Let's face it, technology is everywhere. Knowledge of computers will most likely be a requirement for just about any job. List any and all experience you have with computers, naming the actual program names you're familiar with (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Photoshop, etc.) You should also list any additional certifications you have if they relate to the job (lifeguard training, CPR training, lab tech certification, etc.).

4. Other Languages

The world is getting smaller and smaller, especially in the job market. Knowing a second or third language can put you at an advantage in qualifying for a job and will certainly separate you from other candidates.

Putting It All Together

While you definitely shouldn't go over a page, don't feel that you have to use the résumé template that's found in most Word and Office programs. These models, though helpful, are often generic-looking. It's good to go the extra mile and show employers that you are as creative as you are intelligent. Differences in formatting (bullets, borderlines, headings, etc.), fonts, font styles and sizes will catch the eye and draw attention to the most important information.

Organization

You can organize your résumé in many different ways, but the following order is one of the most common. Use it to help you get started.

- **Objective** – state what kind of job or internship you're looking for
- **Experience** – describe your job history
- **Education** – just list your high school unless you've taken college courses on the side
- **Other Skills/Information** – this is where you list your computer or language skills and any associations or memberships to which you've belonged

Action Words

Be sure to describe your roles and accomplishments with strong action words and key terms that will pop out at employers, usually ones that signify leadership and team roles you've had. These include words such as: **team work/player, multi-tasking, executed, organized, performed, maintained, supervised, managed, directed, developed, implemented.**

Writing Style

The wording of your résumé is just as important as the look. You may have to write several rough drafts to come up with one that will really shine. Here are a few writing style rules to keep in mind:

- Use matching verb tenses.
- Keep all descriptions short. Descriptions should generally take up no more than three to four lines on the page.
- Full sentences are not necessary, but be consistent with punctuation.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____ Career Goal: _____

Go to the Texas Common Application Website: www.applytexas.org

- 1) Scroll down and click on the blue writing just below the log-in box that says "new users click here."
- 2) Enter all the required information. (If you don't have an email address, you can sign up for a free account with hotmail or another provider later. Just be sure to update your information.)
- 3) Choose a password that you will be able to remember
- 4) Carefully record the LOG-IN name you are given here, as well as in another safe place:

MY COMMON APPLICATION LOG-IN NAME: _____

My Password: _____

Now you are registered and will be able to start your common application! Once you submit an application, you can copy it and send the same application (sometimes with different essays) to any state university in Texas! That means you only have to fill it out **once**.

Request information from universities!!

- 1) Go back to the main site (listed above) and click on "University Info" near the top left. This will take you to a menu of colleges that accept the common application. By selecting a college, you will be able to see specifics for different colleges (deadline dates, required essays, etc.). Write down any information that you need for the colleges that you are interested in.
- 2) Then follow the links to the school's website.
- 3) Click on the button that says "Admissions."
- 4) On most university admissions sites, there will be a "Request Information Online" or "Learn more about _____" link. Click on this.
- 5) Fill out the requested information so that you can begin to receive materials from the school!
- 6) Repeat steps for other colleges you are considering.

Begin your common application.

Once you have requested information from schools, you may begin your common application. Take your time when entering information. You will have a chance to check over all your work before you submit your application. Raise your hand for Ms. Pérez if you have any questions!