

## Goal

To support Ocean Leaders through the drafting and finalizing of college and scholarship essays.

## Steps

### Mentee Pre-Writes

#### Choose Prompts

- Identify your prompt(s) and all parts to be addressed within the prompt.
  - Think of 4 different areas of your life (ie: religion, athletics, family, clubs, work, leadership roles, etc.)
  - Choose a different adjective that describes you for each area that you identified.
  - Think of stories that demonstrate these adjectives, and match those stories with the prompts that are available.
- Consider your purpose of essay and audience.
  - What are they like?
  - Why are they here?
  - How can you best reach them?
  - How might they resist?

#### Brainstorm

- Prompt at a time, jot down as many thoughts as you have answering the prompt.
- Organize the list of thoughts into categories of like-ideas.
- Identify the 2-3 themes that are emerging. These will be your main ideas for each supporting paragraph.
  - Ensure that the main ideas are answering all parts of the prompt (typically multi-part prompts).

#### Outline

- Insert themes into essay structure.
- Develop thesis
  - Does this statement directly answer the question?

#### Free write

- Free write for about 5-10 minutes nonstop.
  - **Be Yourself.** Admissions officers want to learn about you and your writing ability. Write about something meaningful and describe your feelings, not necessarily your actions. If you do this, your essay will be unique. Many people travel to foreign countries or win competitions, but your feelings during these events are unique to you. Unless a

philosophy or societal problem has interested you intensely for years, stay away from grand themes that you have little personal experience with.

- Review your free write with a peer. Ask them to comment on the following:
  - What do you think the story is about?
  - What did you like about it?
  - Where were you confused or did you have questions?
  - What would you be interested in hearing more about?
  - Did you notice repetitive words, sentences and ideas?
  - What distracts and seems unnecessary for the meaning of the story.

### Draft

- Use outline and feedback from peer to start to write first draft.
  - Do not write as a diary or journal. Use the correct essay format.
  - Use SOAR to remember what kinds of details to include:
    - **Situation/Setting** – describe vividly the environmental condition, ie: background, timeframe, geography
    - **Obstacle/Objective** – describe what was expected of asked of you in terms of responsibilities OR the challenges you had to overcome
    - **Action** – what specific actions did you take to overcome the obstacle or achieve your objective?
    - **Result** – how did your actions make a difference? What did you learn from the experience? How have you grown?
      - Think about showcasing your college-readiness – how did your experience prepare you for college? What skills will you carry forward?
- Review your draft with an experienced admissions essay reviewer to get assurance that you're on the right track.

### Revise

- Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose.** The application essay lends itself to imagery since the entire essay requires your experiences as supporting details. Appeal to the five senses of the admissions officers. Example:
  - Okay: "I like to be surrounded by people with a variety of backgrounds and interests"
  - Better: "During that night, I sang the theme song from Casablanca with a baseball coach who thinks he's Bogie, discussed Marxism with a little old lady, and heard more than I ever wanted to know about some woman's gall bladder operation."
- Spend the Most Time on your Introduction.** Expect admissions officers to spend 1-2 minutes reading your essay. You must use your introduction to grab their interest from the beginning. You might even consider completely changing your introduction after writing your body paragraphs.
  - Okay: "I worked long hours for many weeks to train for XXX competition."

- Better: "Every morning I awoke at 5:00 to sweat, tears, and blood as I trained on the uneven bars hoping to bring the state gymnastics trophy to my hometown."
- Body Paragraphs Must Relate to Introduction.**
- Use Transition.** You must use transition within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of your essay. Transition is not limited to phrases like as a result, in addition, while . . ., since . . ., etc. but includes repeating key words and progressing the idea.
- Conclusions are Crucial.** The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualifications. In the conclusion, avoid summary since the essay is rather short to begin with; the reader should not need to be reminded of what you wrote 300 words before. Also do not use stock phrases like in conclusion, in summary, to conclude, etc.
- Note the tense of your essay.** All tenses should be consistent, either all written in the past tense or the present tense.
- Write with an active voice.** Example:
  - The project was done by me. (passive)
  - I did the project. (active)
- Spell check** your word document for spelling and grammatical errors.

### Review Process

#### Mentee Submits 1<sup>st</sup> Draft

- Mentor reviews by providing comments and grammatical fixes.
  - Does the response answer the question?
  - Does the response follow one tense?
  - Does the student include examples to support their response?
  - Can you identify a strong introduction?
  - Can you hear the student's voice through the response?
- Mentee reviews essay and incorporates feedback from Mentor.
- Meet to discuss comments and address writing mistakes.

#### Mentee submits 2<sup>nd</sup> draft.

- Mentor begins to reorganize content and provides grammatical fixes.
  - Review essay for flow, transitions.
  - Does the student incorporate details that speak to the interests and knowledge of the audience?
  - Is there a strong conclusion that showcases the adjective you've chosen that describes you?
- Meet to discuss comments and address writing mistakes.

#### Mentee submits 3<sup>rd</sup> draft.

- Send to Christina to receive expert review and feedback.
- Meet to discuss comments and address writing errors.

**Mentee submits 4<sup>th</sup> draft.**

- Mentor provides a heavy edit, getting the essay to a near final state of completion.
  - Is the essay in a state that makes the student a strong/competitive applicant?
- Meet to discuss comments and address writing mistakes.

**Mentee submits 5<sup>th</sup> draft.**

- Send to Christina to receive final expert review.
- Meet to discuss final revisions.