

Essay 1

Prompt: Why do you want to go to college?

The air is tainted with unnatural fumes of grease, wood, and burnt electrical tape. Oil slicks stain the floor. Thick wooden shelves sag unnervingly close to buckling under the weight of old house paint and power tools. A workbench lies buried beneath papers, rulers, cans, and metal shards. An uncomfortable growl pours from the water heater. Most people wouldn't describe my grimy garage as pleasant, but I love spending my free time here. It's where I built a 2 ft trebuchet in sixth grade, a 4 ft trebuchet in seventh grade, and plan to build an 8 ft trebuchet this winter break. It's where I built a battlebot and slapped an Arduino microcontroller on top to give it intelligence. Ever since I sat watching jets shake the sky and explosions rock the screen in the movie Iron Man as a stunned sixth grader, I've spent weekends experimenting in my garage, trying to learn everything I can about engineering and robotics.

Sure, outside of my garage I love wildlife and hiking, history, and weird foods. I love classic rock, jazz, and maybe even secretly Katy Perry. Nevertheless, I've always had a life plan centered on robotics: go to a great college, learn robotics, build robots, get a Bernese mountain dog, and live happily ever after in a beautiful forest home. It seems strange that I've committed myself to robotics so easily despite my many interests, but in reality, robotics combines nearly all of them. Computer science, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering are crucial to the robot, but combine them with biology, astronomy, music, or ecology, and that's when robotics becomes amazing. I could help the sick with robots that give surgeons more dexterity while operating. I could help the poor with affordable, robot-made products. I could aid the elderly, replace the limbs of wounded warriors, and keep fire fighters from harm's way, all with robots. Although these robots may not be the crimson and gold Iron Man suit that first got me interested, I love the realistic and heroic possibilities in the field of robotics.

Almost as exciting as imagining the robots I could build, is imagining where I could build them. I could become a professor and research cutting edge A.I. algorithms. I could become an entrepreneur and bring my creations to market. I could even become an employee for a tech company and devote myself to its latest innovations. Maybe next year around this time, I will even be studying on the Freshman Quad. With the LCSR robotics lab, the minor in robotics, a

top-notch engineering program, a beautiful campus, incredible seafood, and what the visiting admissions counselor described as a “vibrant a cappella scene,” Johns Hopkins will both make college fun and satisfy my inner nerd. But for now, I will go on working in my garage, competing for space with the family car.

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Essay 2

Prompt: Please submit a one-page, single-spaced essay that explains why you have chosen State University and your particular major(s), department(s) or program(s).

State University and I possess a common vision. I, like State University, constantly work to explore the limits of nature by exceeding expectations. Long an amateur scientist, it was this drive that brought me to the University of Texas for its Student Science Training Program in 2013. Up to that point science had been my private past time, one I had yet to explore on anyone else's terms. My time at UT, however, changed that. Participating for the first time in a full-length research experiment at that level, I felt more alive, more engaged, than I ever had before. Learning the complex dynamics between electromagnetic induction and optics in an attempt to solve one of the holy grails of physics, gravitational-waves, I could not have been more pleased. Thus vindicated, my desire to further formalize my love of science brings me to State University. Thanks to this experience, I know now better than ever that State University is my future, because through it I seek another, permanent, opportunity to follow my passion for science and engineering.

In addition to just science, I am drawn to State University for other reasons. I strive to work with the diverse group of people that State University wholeheartedly accommodates – and who also share my mindset. They, like me, are there because State University respects the value of diversity. I know from personal experience that in order to achieve the trust, honesty, and success that State University values, new people are needed to create a respectful environment for these values. I feel that my background as an American Sikh will provide an innovative perspective in the university's search for knowledge while helping it to develop a basis for future success. And that, truly, is the greatest success I can imagine.

This emphasis on diversity can also be found in the variety of specialized departments found at State University. On top of its growing cultural and ethnic diversity, State University is becoming a master at creating a niche for every student. However, this does not isolate students by forcing them to work with only those individuals who follow their specific discipline. Instead, it is the seamless interaction between facilities that allows each department, from engineering to programming, to create a real learning environment that profoundly mimics the real world. Thus, State University is not just the perfect place for me, it is the only place for me. Indeed, having the intellectual keenness to absorb every ounce of knowledge presented through my time in the IB program, I know that I can contribute to State University as it continues to cultivate a scholarly climate that encourages intellectual curiosity.

At the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at State University, I will be able to do just that. In a department where education and research are intermixed, I can continue to follow the path that towards scientific excellence. Long-mesmerized by hobbies like my work with the FIRST Robotics team, I believe State University would be the best choice to continue to nurture my love for electrical and computer engineering. I have only scratched the surface in this ever evolving field but know that the technological potential is limitless. Likewise, I feel that my time at State University would make my potential similarly limitless.

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Essay 3

Prompt: What motivates you?

For as long as I can remember, I have dreamed of science. Where others see the engineering, experimentation, and presentation of science as a chore, I only see excitement. Even as a child I constantly sought it out, first on television with Bill Nye and The Mythbusters, then later in person in every museum exhibit I could find. Science in all its forms fascinated me, but science projects in particular were a category all to themselves. To me, science projects were a special joy that only grew with time. In fact, it was this continued fascination for hands-on science that brought me years later to the sauna that is the University of Alabama in mid-June. Participating in the Student Science Training Program and working in their lab made me feel like a kid in a candy store. Just the thought of participating in a project at this level of scientific rigor made me forget that this was supposed to be my summer break and I spent the first day eagerly examining every piece of equipment.

Even at first, when the whole research group sat there doing rote calculations and others felt like they were staring down the barrel of defeated purpose, I remained enthusiastic. Time and time again I reminded myself of that famous phrase "great effort leads to great rewards," and sure enough, soon my aspirations began to be met. This shift in attitude also coincided with a shift in location: from the computer desk to the laser lab. It was finally time to get my hands dirty.

Now things began to get really interesting. During the experimentation phase of the project, I spent the majority of my waking hours in the lab – and I enjoyed every minute of it. From debriefing with my coordinator in the morning to checking and rechecking results well into the afternoon, I was on cloud nine all day, every day. I even loved the electric feeling of anxiety as I waited for the results. Most of all, though, I loved the pursuit of science itself. Before I knew it, I was well into the seventh week and had completed my first long-term research experiment.

In the end, although the days were long and hard, my work that summer filled me with pride. That pride has confirmed and reinvigorated my love for science. I felt more alive, more engaged, in that lab than I have anywhere else, and I am committed to returning. I have always dreamed of science but since that summer, since my experiment, I have dreamed only of the future. To me, medical science is the future and through it I seek another, permanent, opportunity to follow my passion. After all, to follow your passion is, literally, a dream come true.

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<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/504/how-i-got-into-college>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/college-admissions>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays>