

* UC Personal Insight Essays Workshop



SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

Transfer Center

Workshop Topics

- **Preparation Before You Write the Essays**
- **Tips for Writing the Personal Insight Essays**
- **Additional Resources and Assistance**

UC Personal Insight Essay Questions

There is one required question that all applicants must answer. You must also answer 3 out of 7 additional questions. The length of each response is limited to 350 words.

Required Question all applicants must answer:

Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university.

Choose any 3 of the following 7 questions to answer:

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

UC Personal Insight Essay Questions, continued

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

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?

6. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

7. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?

Choosing the Questions You Will Answer

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.
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.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.
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?
6. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?
7. What is the one thing that you think sets you apart from other candidates applying to the University of California?

Where Do I Start?

- Before you start writing your responses to the Personal Insight Questions, start with some prep work.
- Think of it like creating a delicious casserole. Before you start cooking:
 - read the recipe,
 - make sure you have all the ingredients,
 - chop your vegetables and
 - measure your ingredients.

It's the same with writing the Personal Insight Essays. Time spent in prep work will make the process go more smoothly.

Where Do I Start?

Two Key Areas of Preparation:

- **Investigate and explore your audience.**
 - Find out as much as you can about the universities and the major you are applying to.
 - Are you competitive for admissions process
 - How do the admissions officers use the personal statement in the admission process.
- **Explore Yourself!**

The more you know about yourself the easier it will be to write your essays.

Role and Use of the UC Personal *Insight Essays*

- The Personal Insight Essays are a required component of your application for the University of California. All students must complete the Personal Insight Essays.
- The Personal Insight Essays are in the online application. It is easiest to write your essays in a Word document then copy and paste them into the designated spaces in the application.
- The Personal Insight Essays provide you the opportunity to be more than just a name — it's where you become an individual, and where you can share your personality, your goals, your experiences, and where you can explain any opportunities or obstacles that have affected your academic record.
- Your responses to the Personal Insight Questions allow you to add information that you couldn't work into the other parts of the application and to add clarity, depth, and meaning to information collected in other parts of your UC application.

Role and Use of the UC Personal Insight Essays

- The Personal Insight Essays are a critical element in the admission review process for UC Berkeley, and UCLA. They are not read in isolation but *with* all the information you provide in your application.
- The other UC campuses typically do not use the Personal Insight Essays in the admission process.
- All UC campuses use the Personal Insight Essays for scholarship consideration. So even if it does not affect your admission outcome, doing your best can assist you in receiving scholarships at the UC campus you attend.
- Your responses to the Personal Insight Questions will never be the sole criteria for determining the admission decision.

Explore Yourself!

- You can use the worksheet provided by UC and available on their website
- You can also use the Transfer Center's Additional Information and Exploration Exercises to:
 - Identify your key personality traits
 - Identify significant life events
 - Identify your accomplishments
 - Identify your skills

Tips for Writing the Personal Insight Essays

- Think of the Personal Insight Questions as an admission interview.
- You are the main topic of the Personal Insight Essays, not the universities, not another person, not the political or economic situation the country is in. The information that you write about always needs to be related back to you and help the reader gain a fuller picture of who you are in the context of pursuing your educational goals.
- Avoid writing from the perspective of “What do they want to hear? What will impress them?” You will never have the answers to those questions and it will weaken your responses.
- Decide what you believe is the most important information the university needs to know and understand about you in order to make the admission decision. Decide what you need to tell the university not what you think they want to hear.

Tips for Writing the Personal Insight Essays

- You are creating the image of the person you are by the information you choose to include in your Personal Insight Essays. Be authentic and choose experiences, skills, and/or accomplishments that provide the reader with the most accurate picture of yourself as a student and as a person.
- Avoid using generalizations like, “My summer trip to Italy was significant” or “After my degree, I want to make a difference in the world.” It’s OK to use those statements but you need to include the hows and whys, the details that are specific and important to you. Generalizations make you the same as everyone else. They do not help the reader get to know you better

Tips for Writing the Personal Insight Essays

- Think about how you got to where you are today and what experiences, individuals, etc. had the most impact on the development of your educational and career goals. What are the significant experiences that brought you here? How are they related? How did one experience lead to the next stage of your journey? By writing from this perspective, you demonstrate self-awareness. Self-awareness is a key indicator of intelligence.
- The strongest Personal Insight Essays are those that clearly demonstrate who you are as an individual. They are written from both the mind and the heart. Write from the authenticity of who you are and the truth of your life experiences.

Tips for Answering the Required Question

" Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university?

- UC Berkeley and UCLA are very interested in how and why you are interested in this major as an academic discipline that you will be studying once you are at the university.
- It is insufficient to discuss the major as a means to an end (e.g. - so I can be a lawyer, so I can get to med school, so I can get a particular job).
- Berkeley and UCLA are looking for passionate and engaged scholars in their chosen field of study.

Tips for Answering the Required Question

As preparation to respond to this question, do the following exercises:

- A. Think about the courses you have taken for your major at SBCC. What information or subject from one of your classes sparked your intellectual curiosity and made you want to study this subject more. Why? How does it relate to what you want to do with your life?
- B. Think about the different theories you have learned in your courses for your major. Have you ever observed one of these theories in your everyday experiences, either in or out of the classroom? Have you ever used a theory or information you learned in one class to help you understand material from another course or to solve a problem in another course? How? What was significant about this experience?
- C. Read the course descriptions for the upper division courses you will be required to take to graduate in the major at the universities you are applying to. What information or subject from these classes sparks your intellectual curiosity and makes you want to study this subject more. Why?
- D. List any experience you have had in the field – such as volunteer work, internships and employment, participation in student organizations and activities and what you have gained from your involvement.” Don’t just list your experiences. Remember to include what you have gained from your involvement and how it has prepared you to be successful in your upper-division coursework.

Additional Resources/Assistance

- **UC Admissions Website**

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

- **UC Berkeley**

<http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/index.htm>

- **SBCC Transfer Center Website - Applying to Universities**

http://www.sbcc.edu/transfercenter/Applying_to_Universities.php

Need More Help?

Meet with an advisor in the Writing Center in the Cartwright Learning Resources Center on West Campus. The Writing Center staff can assist you with developing, organizing, and writing your Personal Statements including editing for grammar and spelling.

Applying to UCLA and/or Berkeley?

The Transfer Center will review your completed Personal Insight Essays prior to you submitting your application. Email your completed Personal Statements to kadams@pipeline.sbcc.edu.

Note: The Transfer Center will not be able to review Personal Insight Essays after the 3rd week of November.

Questions?