

UC Personal Statement: Prompt #1 (freshman applicants)

Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

At the beginning of my adolescence, I moved from a cramped apartment in Chinatown to a two-bedroom complex in Oceanview district. Chinatown was very familiar to me; it was a sanctuary for people that were similar to myself—straight black hair, burnt brown eyes, golden skin tone, and fluent Cantonese and Mandarin dialects. I felt safe within its borders. Moving to an entirely new community was a frightening experience. Unknowingly, this new change in my life would lead me not only to mature into an independent and strong woman, but also would pave the way for me to find my love for the medical research.



I do not live with my parents anymore. They sent me to live with my grandparents who emigrated from China six years ago because they wanted me to have a better education. However, I miss the neighborhood I called home. I never felt lonely squeezing beside the crowd in Chinatown as I helped my father carry the pink grocery bags through fish markets. Every weekend, I crossed the street to my cousins' houses where we played video games and watched Chinese soap operas to keep our evenings exciting. I miss the coziness of the one-room apartment where I snuggled through the nights on my blue fold-up couch bed, faded sheets, and deflated pillow.

I lost all this when I moved to Oceanview. Despite this sudden loss of friends and contact, I learned to use the tranquility of my own room and develop my own interests. I immersed in volunteer work in the Oceanview library and utilized the local youth center to find summer jobs. I gradually stopped attending Chinese school in Chinatown. Instead, I became a translator for my grandparents in our diverse neighborhood. I motivated myself by searching for scholarships from the school bulletin. After earning a scholarship to a health and medicine conference at UC Berkeley during the summer of my sophomore

year, I received the opportunity to intern at J. David Gladstone Institutes where I studied P-TEFb, a protein that affects immune response to HIV. I had the opportunity to work with a team of professional researchers. Pipettes in hand, we worked on lab benches crowded with Petri dishes, blotting paper and rows of different colored chemicals. I learned to use antibodies to find specific proteins in rabbit serums, to perform western blotting, and to be patient with the trial and error process of experimentation. The internship not only gave me a chance to experience hands-on work with professionals, but it also opened up my eyes a new career opportunity.

Despite moving to a new neighborhood, I learned to appreciate Oceanview as my home. I adapted to changes and busied myself in new options that would have been unavailable to me in Chinatown. I learned to become task oriented and independent. I gained a passion for the field of science and research and learned to make the best out of my situations.

UC Prompt #2 (all applicants)

Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

As a little girl, I stared at a pair of wooden rings in the Chinatown playground. I remember leaping for them with my stubby fingers, but always falling short. But just when I began to feel disappointed, I would feel a pair of warm broad hands lifting me to the rings. My eyes lit up as my dad brought me to them, but quickly sank for I knew I did not get there myself.

I wish my dad had left me staring at those rings because then I would never have had to feel dependent upon my parents. I was never allowed to climb the metal ladder to fix the burnt out light bulb because my parents thought I might topple over or electrocute myself. When I got my driver's license, my father forbade me to drive without him by my side. He always keeps his hands close to the wheel and

screams, “Slow down!” at every intersection. I never really faced my struggles on my own because my father was always there. That was the world I grew up in.

Five years later, I stared at these same rings once again, but this time without my father behind me, and instead of the Chinatown playground, I stood in Lowell’s gymnasium. As I stood on top of two blue soft landing mats, the gap closed between the wooden rings and me. I jumped to grasp the rings around my slender fingers, but my body still seemed heavy as I dangled above the glossy floor. I wished to overcome my weak arms and poor posture. I began lifting weights to tone my feeble arms. I practiced on the rings in between classes, and held my body in a pike position, testing how long I could hold still. I later discovered that rings are a male apparatus, because girls were assumed to be too weak for the rings. However, setback did not stop me from trying. My palms stung with open blisters and my arms ached with throbbing pain, but I refused to stop challenging a sport designed for a man. After many practices and solo trainings, my body felt like a feather. Now I can flip and turn on the rings, almost like a dancer performing in the air.

Through great effort and dedication, I no longer find rings to be beyond my reach. Instead, they became a symbol of my accomplishments. I learned to become more independent, trust myself, and follow my instincts. However comforting my father’s support was, I am glad I can grasp these rings myself, and hold my head high.