

UC Personal Statement: Prompt #1

What is your intended major? Discuss how your interest in the subject developed and describe 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.

Ever since I took my first math class in elementary school, math became my favorite course. As time went by, I started to think of possible math or engineering careers because it was my strongest subject. My interest in engineering was motivated by my curiosity. Questions such as “How do people make bridges so strong so that they do not collapse as vehicles drive through them?” or “How do they know what are the best materials to build houses with?” have always been on my mind, but none of my friends could answer and did not think much of this. My interest in engineering existed as a child although I was not aware of it. Even though I wanted to be an engineer, I was not sure I could study a discipline considered to be only for men. I stopped thinking about majoring in engineering, not because I was not interested in it, but because in some way, I believed, too, that engineering was a man’s career since I did not know of any woman in the field.

During the summer of 2008 I participated in an enrichment internship for engineering majors at Chico State University. My passion for engineering began to grow again while I was taking my first physics course and at the same time working in team projects such as building a boat out of cardboard as a competition. I learned that working with teammates makes things easier and enjoyable because all the ideas can be combined into one. I also had the opportunity to meet more Latino women majoring in different engineering areas. We encouraged each other to realize that we are as capable as men in this field and can get along with them to find solutions to any problem. By the end of the internship, I gained more confidence and direction in my life; and I also became a stronger person with a positive attitude who will not let anything deter me from following my dreams.

After my internship experience, I began to be more aware of media reports about women who were successful in engineering. That was a motivation for me, so I started to think that if other women

had done it, I could also set an objective to attain a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering. I began to explore and read more about the different areas of engineering, but civil engineering rapidly caught my attention especially because it is an area where I can work on fascinating projects that will benefit others. In addition, I like everything that has to do with construction, building and planning. Every time I see a construction site either of a building or road, I feel that something is pulling me towards it, I feel like I want to be involved with the people who are building structures, measuring walls, or reading plans while deciding what to do next. Now, my main goal is to become a professional civil engineer and work with other engineers in projects that will benefit our ways of living. Moreover, I want to be a motivation for other Latino women interested in careers like engineering but grow up in a field in which men are expected to dominate.

Prompt #2

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?

One of the most important accomplishments that I feel proud of is having participated in the International Student Volunteer Program in the summer of 2009 in Ecuador. As a person who always searches for new challenges, I looked for an opportunity to do volunteer work because I considered it as a means to gain new experiences, different from everyday life, and also as an adventure to travel to a different country. I signed up for a two-week project in Ecuador because I wanted to know more about their culture and traditions. I also was going to have better interactions with the people since I spoke the same language, and it turned out to be a wonderful experience.

During this period, I lived with an Ecuadorian family in a small town called "Puerto Hondo". They treated me as if I was part of their family, and also I felt as if I was in my own country, El Salvador. In Puerto Hondo, people do not know much about the importance of protecting the environment, so as a

way to educate them, I worked with other volunteers and the project leader to paint a mural outside of a small school with a message about taking care of the environment. The next project was to build two bins so that the community could start classifying trash for recycling. I helped by taking measurements of the lumber, cutting it with an electric saw, and finally putting the materials together with the use of hand tools. Digging up holes in the ground and mixing cement with water and sand were other activities in which I cooperated to place the bins in a park. One of the activities that I enjoyed the most was working on the construction of a recycling center along with people from the community who guided us and had experience in construction and building. Seeing how every step of the project was prepared gave me a better idea of some of the activities that I might be doing in my career as a civil engineer.

I feel proud for having participated in all of these projects not only because I gained a better understanding about my major, but also I gained gratification in helping people benefit from the projects. For example, they will now have a better appreciation for their natural resources and will contribute to keep their town clean. Traveling to Ecuador has been one of the best decisions that I have made in my life because I learned from the people, and possibilities of fulfilling projects if one does not give up on. I gained more courage and confidence because I proved to myself that I am capable of accomplishing anything that I want to do.