



SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

Transfer Center

SS 140 (805) 730-4347 www.sbcc.edu/transfercenter

## UC Personal Statement Tips

### Role and Use of the UC Personal Statement

- The Personal Statement is a required component of your application for the University of California.
- The Personal Statements 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.
- They 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.
- The Personal Statements are a critical element in the admission review process for UC Berkeley and UCLA. The other UC campuses typically do not use the Personal Statement in the admission process. It is not read in isolation but *with* all the information you provide in your application.
- All UC campuses use the Personal Statement responses for scholarship consideration.
- The Personal Statement will never be the sole criteria for determining the admission decision.

### Tips for Writing the Personal Statements

- Think of the Personal Statements as an admission interview.
- You are the main topic of the Personal Statements, 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.
- You are creating the image of the person you are by the information you choose to include in your Personal Statements. Be authentic and chose 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.
- 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 Statements 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.

### UC Personal Statement Prompts

You will write two essays in response to Prompts 1 and 2. The length of each response is up to you, but neither one should be less than 250 words and the combination of both responses **cannot** exceed 1,000 words. There is also an Additional Comments section that is optional. The length of the response for the Additional Comments **cannot** exceed 500 words.

**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.**

### Tips for Prompt #1

- This is the most important question for transfer students, especially if they are applying to UCLA and/or UC Berkeley and should typically be the longer response. Because of the way the prompt is worded most students fail to provide a complete answer.

- **There are 2 parts to the question:**

**Part 1 - " Discuss how your interest in the major developed" -** This is what students tend to skip over but it is very important. 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. It is helpful if you can identify a particular topic that fascinates you in the academic discipline and discuss that. As preparation to respond to this part of the 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?

**Part 2 - "describe any experience you have had in the field...and what you have gained from your involvement."**

Because there are so many examples that are provided in the prompt, students think this is the only thing being asked and fail to answer Part 1 of the question. Usually students do not have a problem answering this part of the question. **Students who answer both parts of the question will stand out from the majority of other applicants.**

**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?**

### Tips for Prompt #2

- Think about what makes you unique.
- Imagine yourself with your friends, what quality, skill, accomplishment, or life experience makes you stand out from your friends? What makes you different in a good way?
- Pick one thing to write about, not all of the options provided as examples.

### **Additional Comments**

**Prompt – Describe anything else that you have not had an opportunity to include elsewhere in your application.**

### Tips for Additional Comments

You can use the Additional Comment section to clarify or expand on important details. Some possible information to include, if applicable:

- Your family's socio-economic, cultural, educational history.
- Specific challenges/obstacles that you encountered and overcame on your educational journey.
- Explain reasons for poor academic performance or sub-standard grades.
- Explanation of taking transferable math course required to meet minimum UC eligibility in the last term prior to transfer. Example: Student has not taken any college-level math and will be taking transferable math course for UC eligibility in the last term prior to transfer.
  - \* Should include information on math courses completed in high school and grades and your SBCC math assessment placement level (e.g. you assessed into Math 117, Psychology 150, or Math 120).
  - \*Indicate if you were admitted to a UC campus as a freshman or if you were UC eligible from high school—only if you were.
  - \*Discuss what you will do to make sure you pass the math course.

### Additional Resources/Assistance

- UC Admissions Website <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/personal-statement/index.html>
- UC Berkeley <http://students.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement/index.htm>
- Honors Transfer Council of CA <http://www.honorstcc.org/docs/PersonalStatementHTCC.pdf>
- Workbook for Writing the College Admission Essay: <http://www.sbccc.edu/transfercenter>
- Writing the College Admission Essay PowerPoint: <http://www.sbccc.edu/transfercenter>
- **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 Statements prior to you submitting your application. Email your completed Personal Statements to [transfercenter@sbccc.edu](mailto:transfercenter@sbccc.edu).

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