



# University of Chicago

- Accepted College Essay -

## NO LONGER INVISIBLE

I wish I was invisible. I wish I was invisible. I wish I was invisible. One of my biggest fears has always been going to an unfamiliar place, but each time I have had the satisfaction of knowing that at the end of the day I can go home. I am a shy person, and it has always been difficult for me to adjust to a new environment. Transitioning from eighth grade to high school was especially difficult for me because my high school was, in fact, a boarding school, which meant that that feeling of satisfaction was no longer present at the end of the day but postponed to the end of the week. Living at LFA was a completely new world for me and nothing I had experienced could have prepared me for it.

With confused eyes and nothing less than a nauseous sensation in my stomach I entered my first day of high school. Growing up, I had always gone to school with people who looked like me, sounded like me, and dressed like me, but here I quickly learned that I was the minority. I was not alone in this. Two of my friends came to LFA with me and, with this in mind, my shyness and I did not think it necessary to make new friends. Besides being one of the only schools with its own ice rink and providing only the latest technology for its students, it suddenly hit me that my new home had countless possibilities, but, before those possibilities could be realized, I had to take initiative. I learned a very important lesson at LFA: you will only get out of life as much as you put into it. Stepping out of my comfort zone allowed me to discover an interest and skill for volleyball and hidden leadership as the captain of the JV team. I became a tutor and friend for young Hispanic students at the Nuestro Center, and they reminded me how important it is to give back to the community. After numerous all-nighters, I developed a system where I could get all of my homework done and still be able to get involved with sports and extracurriculars without having to sacrifice any sleep time.

Towards the end of my sophomore year a family member's sickness unfortunately forced me to leave my school and return home. I left LFA and joined my new family, Mirta Ramirez Computer Science Charter High School. Containing a student body that was 99 percent Hispanic, I was no longer the minority. I had unconsciously become accustomed to the LFA way of life because, in my mind, this tiny mustard yellow building with no more than four windows could not possibly compare to my old home. I was right. No, my new home was not as big nor as fancy, but I discovered that was not a setback. Although the resources were not directly visible nor as easily accessible, I learned that obstacles did not exist for students there. Most, if not all, of the students had the same hunger for knowledge as I had.

This summer my school announced that the building which we had been using had fire code violations and we could not return to our building in the fall. Throughout the summer my school did not have a building and did not find one until a few weeks after school started. By that time, I had already taken a decision to, once again, leave my home and join yet another family. What I realized on my first day at Josephinum Academy, was that my shyness had not tagged along and I was eager to go to school. The nauseous feeling had left my stomach and enthusiasm had entered. I had already gained and learned so much from the people I had met in my two previous schools that I could not wait to continue my journey and embark on yet another discovery.

The knowledge that I have gained from these three schools is something I will take with me far beyond college. My roommate, across-the-hall mates, and classmates have influenced my life as much as I hope to have impacted theirs. It is evident to me that they have helped me develop into the very much visible person I am today. I have learned to step outside of my comfort zone, and I have learned that diversity is so much more than the tint of our skin. My small mustard colored school taught me that opportunity and success only requires desire.

I would be an asset to your college because as I continue on my journey to success, I will take advantage of every opportunity that is available to me and make sure to contribute as much as I can too. Now I am visible. Now I am visible. Now I am visible, and I want to be seen.

## ABUELO

The title of this picture is “Abuelo” which means grandfather in Spanish. At first glance, it seems just a waste of a snapshot. Perhaps just another struggling photographer trying to pay the rent or who simply had one more shot left in a roll of film and took a random picture. It is an 8" by 11" color photograph of a man’s neck, more specifically the back of his neck. It is quite wrinkled and brown and white hair has invaded the scalp. At first I questioned why the photographer did not simply take a picture of his grandfather’s face. A face would allow viewers to see what the grandfather looks like and tell some kind of story, certainly more than what the back of his neck could possibly tell.

What I came to realize is that this is no random shot. What this picture wants is for me to imagine and to create a story. It does not necessarily wish to be framed but the picture does not want to be overlooked or neglected. It wants to be given a chance to prove itself as equally worthy as any other photograph. I do not need the face of the Abuelo to imagine the story of his life or personality. The back of his neck is just as important as his face.

After spending some time with this Abuelo I learned that the back of his neck is not just brown, it is tanned. not just a natural tan, that some people are born with, but a particular shade of tan that can only be attained after continuous exposure to the sun. Perhaps this man does a lot of work outside. The distinguished wrinkles are more than just lines. In between them there seems to be some kind of dust. I recognize this dust because it is the kind of dust my father gets when he is working with joint compound.

After examining a little more closely I noticed the multiple scars on his scalp which prevent his hair from growing. The tiny hole in his earlobe reminds me that he was young once and had, like many young teenage boys, pierced his ear. Around his neck I can see a glimpse of a brown necklace. This necklace is very familiar to me because I own one. It is a very thin string with a small rectangular cloth at both ends. Many Catholics believe that it is something sacred.

In this case this picture is not measured by the thousands of words it is worth, but it is measured by what I took from it. It should not be criticized by what it does not have but should be valued for what it does have. I have found something in common with this photograph. All along what this picture wanted from me was to find something familiar. That familiarity sets this particular picture apart from all other photographs I have encountered and what has kept it vividly visible after having come across it years ago. This is exactly what this photograph longed for: to be found familiar and remembered.

## STRENGTH FROM FAMILY STRUGGLES

Every family has their story, all with aspects that brings them together or drive them apart. I come from a Mexican family, where family is the only thing we know. We share each other's pain and misery and we rejoice for our miracles. We learn and grow through each other. Even through the darkest days we survive as one. I witnessed those dark days, but I also saw the bright and through it all I evolved into who I am today.

I encountered one of my biggest obstructions when I was a child. I was born into a family that had immigrated to America from Mexico. Although my parents had been in the country for quite some time, they never adapted to the American lifestyle. All I knew was Spanish and my first year of school would soon come. I would sit at the end of my driveway and listen to the variety of sounds that slowly crept into my ear, triggered a reaction and sent confusion running through my mind. Day after day, I would sit there trying to decode this puzzle word by word and the day came when I'd be shipped off to school where I was expected to know English. Kindergarten was one of the hardest years in my life. I struggled tremendously. I was the last one to know my address, I was the last one to know my phone number, and I was the one who almost failed his first year of school. If it wasn't for my father not allowing the school to hold me back, I could have become a completely different person. I struggled throughout my years in elementary school. I went to resource and received help with my schoolwork until fourth grade. I was given a big push forward and since then I have come to realize that I may not be the only one in need. Others will need help and I will be there with a helping hand.

Through the years, my family has undergone a variety of obstacles. I saw my brother completely stumble and fall when he impregnated his girlfriend at the age of sixteen. At the blink of an eye he became a father to be and a husband. Everything came to a halt and he needed to support another person. He worked during the night and finished high school during the day. He struggled even while living at home. As if one example in my house wasn't enough, my sister was expecting a child during her senior year. I remember the day when she told my parents, I was in the room next door crying in pain because she fell into the same trap my brother did. That was the end for her. She graduated from high school and began to work. now she has two daughters and is trying to make a living. It is hard to see the people you love make mistakes. It is so hard, that it brings tears to my eyes, to know that you wish you could say everything will be ok. They are stuck in a rut and I am putting my best foot forward to give myself the future they don't have.

When my mother was a child she had suffered a great amount. She had become deaf in her teenage years. She lost complete ability to hear in her right ear and partially in the left and to add to all the confusion she was bound by a language. She was living in America with 4 of 5 senses and a tongue that many could not speak. Many would see this as a huge dent in her life, but she managed to start a family. I could not be any prouder of her and thankful for what she has given me. Her "disability" placed a tremendous amount of pressure on my shoulders. She was not able to go to the deli or to place phone calls when she needed to. All of a sudden, all of this had become my responsibility. My father was too busy breaking his back in order to support our family. My mother's personal translator, doesn't sound too shabby? Standing in the middle of the store, making hand jesters, mouthing out words, or even yelling, does attract attention. In those moments I would feel a surge of heat rush from head to toe, goose bumps in every possible crevice of my body, and to top it all off I'd be seven shades darker than a ripe tomato. Shame and embarrassment, how could I feel this way? All this had become routine and the pain and embarrassment finally started to subside, a whole new feeling started to emerge, pride. My mother made me strong. She allowed me to become the man I am today. And after all the pain there are still countless nights that I lie in bed, crying due to the burden that was placed on her and the tremendous lesson I learned. Every sound, every beat, every photon, every little everything has been absorbed into me one way or another, yet these experiences, although insignificant to others, mean to world to me. All these events run through my veins and pump through my heart. I am the passion that is rarely seen. I am the walking story of struggle.

## BEYOND DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

*"All I know about leadership I learned from . . ." What items could a person use to describe leadership qualities?*

*Inspired by the student council advisors at my high school.*

Student Council was a big part of my life in high school. I have participated in it since my first year of high school. When I first joined, I was quiet, naïve, and unwilling to participate in many activities. I was scared to meet new people and afraid to apply myself. This all began to change. Half way through my first year in student council, one of the advisors came up to me and asked why I did not participate that much. I did not have an answer for her and did not know how to respond. After this, I began to think of an answer. I became frustrated and decided to change. I started to show up at events and had a great time. I realized I loved this and wanted to start leading these activities. In my sophomore, junior, and now my senior year of high school, I asserted myself and took on a strong leadership role in student council. I did not figure out the answer to why I was so reserved until this year with the help of this question.

When I looked up leadership in the dictionary, it said that it was the capacity to lead and the act or instance of leading. These are two very broad definitions of leadership. Many people have different notions of what this word actually means. When I was challenged to use different items to describe what leadership actually is, I thought this was going to be a hard and obnoxious task. What could I learn from comparing leadership to a stuffed animal or a rubber chicken? But when I sat down to come up with a couple of answers, I realized that leadership could be compared to almost anything a person wants.

All I know about leadership I learned from a calculator. A calculator can add everything together to come up with the best answer. It can delete what is unnecessary and only include what is important. It can solve any type of problem. These are all important equalities a leader has to have. A leader has to be able to add all of the ideas together to make the best possible plan. Leaders have to know how to decipher the good and the bad out of an idea. They have to be versatile and know how to deal with different types of issues.

All I know about leadership I learned from a ball. A ball is able to bounce back up after it is dropped. It is round and has no creases. A ball can be thrown back and forth to different people. All of these qualities are also leadership qualities. A leader has to be ready for every situation that is thrown at him or her. He or she has to be able to bounce back from any setbacks and never dwell on the past. Leaders have to exhibit many qualities and never be closed-minded about a situation. A leader must be able to delegate when he or she cannot get the work done. They have to trust everyone they lead to be able to "catch the ball" and keep a project rolling.

This activity made me realize that being a leader is so much more than just having authority and having the ability to take control of a situation. A leader has to be trusting of all the people he or she leads and, leaders must be able to combine ideas into one encompassing idea. They cannot sit in the background and watch events happen; they have to jump in and be involved. They should not delegate all their responsibilities away.

Leadership is more than what the dictionary says it is.

I learned through all of this that I have many of these qualities. I have the ability to solve problems, lead through adversity, and be versatile. From answering this question, I realized that I could lead effectively, even if my leadership style is different from other individuals. When I joined student council in my first year of high school, I did not have these qualities because I was never put into a situation where I had to lead. I was too reserved to try. When I tried, I learned that I could succeed in this. I did not realize until I answered this question about leadership. I was never able to see that being a leader is not just about taking control of a group and telling everyone what to do. When I was a freshman, I thought leadership was this. I did not know that I did not have to be forceful and

strict. I stereotyped a leader then. This is where I went wrong. A leader is about being yourself and never letting anyone change you. I thought I had to change to be a good leader. Only when I expanded my comfort zone did I realize this was not true. It only took three years and a silly question/game to figure this out.



# Envision High

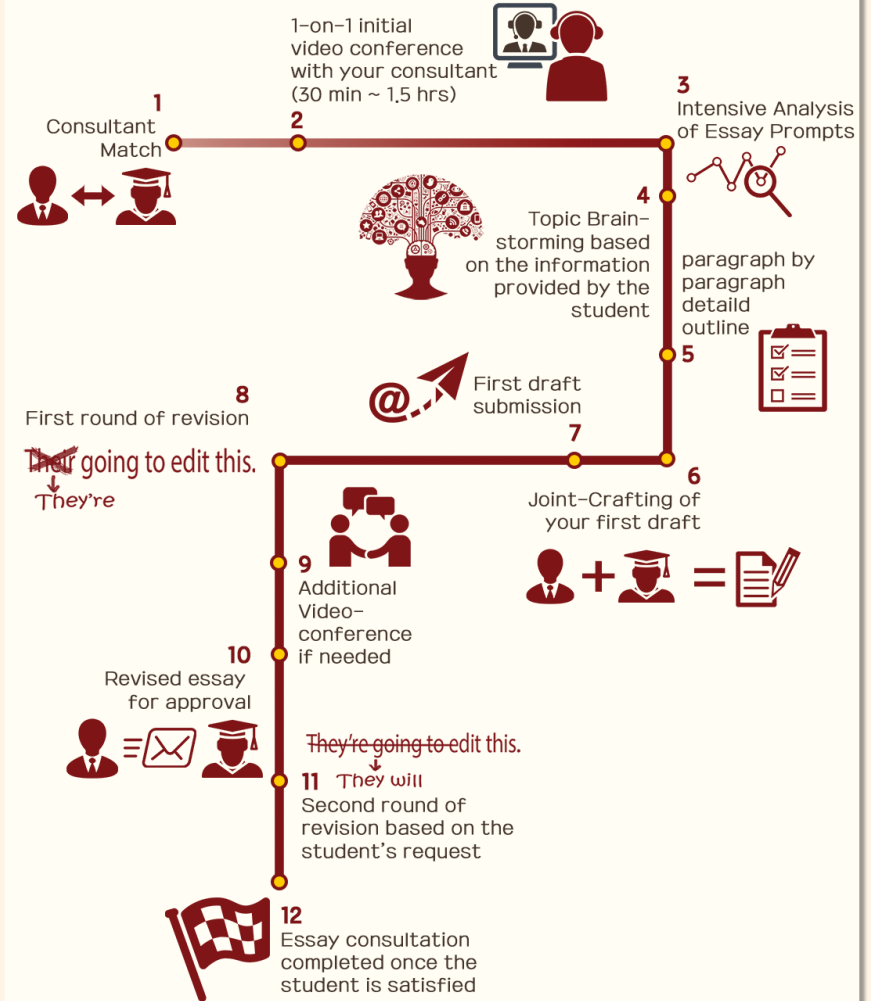
## Intensive Essay Care Program



Don't know where to even start?

Envision High walk you throughout the entire writing process, from initial brainstorming to putting the finishing touches on your essay.

### Program Procedure



|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>10 School Package</b><br><br><b>x10</b><br><b>\$ 4,000</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Application Essay</li> <li>• 10- School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one)</li> <li>• College list composition</li> <li>• Help with college research</li> </ul> | <b>5 School Package</b><br><br><b>x5</b><br><b>\$ 2,300</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Application Essay</li> <li>• 5 - School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one)</li> <li>• College list composition</li> <li>• Help with college research</li> </ul>        | <b>Supplemental Package</b><br><br><b>x1</b><br><b>\$ 500</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 - School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one)</li> <li>• UC Essays excluded</li> <li>• Common App Essay excluded</li> <li>• Help with college research</li> </ul>     |
| <b>Common App Package</b><br><br><b>x1</b><br><b>\$ 600</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Application Essay</li> <li>• Extracurricular list help</li> <li>• Help with application fill-up</li> <li>• Supplemental Essays excluded</li> <li>• UC Essays excluded</li> </ul>  | <b>UC Application Package</b><br><br><b>x∞</b><br><b>\$ 700</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My UC Application Essays (All UC will be counted as one)</li> <li>• Extracurricular list help</li> <li>• Help with application fill-up</li> <li>• Supplemental Essays excluded</li> </ul> | <b>Apply Texas Package</b><br><br><b>x3</b><br><b>\$ 700</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Apply Texas Essays included (Topic A • B • C • D • E)</li> <li>• Extracurricular list help</li> <li>• Help with application fill-up</li> <li>• Help with college research</li> </ul> |