The UC Personal Statement

Prompts

Prompt #1 (Transfer): 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.

Suggestions for Prompt #1 (Transfer)
- Consider including course work experience. This may include working with faculty or doing research projects.

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?

Suggestions for Prompt #2
- Think about answering this prompt first, as it may help set the context you want to describe in Prompt #1.
- Choose a topic that has not been addressed in detail in another section of the application.
- Keep the information relevant to your personal experiences.

Suggestions for Writing the Personal Statement

Read the Instructions
Read the instructions for the application carefully. The most common mistake applicants make is to skim the written instructions or to rely on misinformation received from others.

Answer the question. Take time and think about each prompt before you start writing. Use details and examples to make your point. Use your words strategically; is there a reason behind your example? Write to add context and depth, not to fill space.

Give yourself time to edit. Start writing to answer each prompt, then go back and review the word count, content, and overall message. You may not have space to tell us everything so make your words count.

Be you. Remember to talk about yourself so that we can get to know your personality, talents, accomplishments and potential to succeed at a UC campus. Use plenty of “I” statements.

Stick to one topic per response. Making a list of accomplishments, activities, awards, or work will lessen the impact of your words. Expand on a topic by using examples and facts for maximum impact to an Admissions reader.

Brainstorm Topics. When you are composing your Personal Statement, consider including:
- Personal triumphs or challenges – If you decide to talk about a challenge or triumph, do not forget to explain what you learned from the experience.
- Leadership opportunities – We value leadership at many levels (e.g. family, school, or community).
- Experiences outside the classroom – Consider experiences that have made an impact on your life (e.g., travels, church/temple, work, youth groups, or your family).
- Disabilities – If you are living with a disability, feel free to talk about it in the context of your ability to succeed.
- Culture – If your culture has influenced who you are, talk about it. Let it add to the picture we form of you.

Common Statement Pitfalls

Stay focused. Avoid common mistakes such as:
- Being overly humorous, self-deprecating or glorifying
- Creative writing (poems, scene setting, or clichés).
- Quotations – We want to know your thoughts and words, not someone else’s.
- Generalities – Stick to facts and specifics you want us to know about yourself.
- Repetition – Do not talk about the same topic in each response. Give us new information we cannot find in other sections of the application.
- Listing accomplishments without detail.
- Philosophy – Do describe your world in facts and examples. Don’t ask questions without answers.
- Don’t be campus specific. You’re talking to all the UC campuses in your response.

Information compiled from the following source:
http://www.admissions.ucsb.edu/Pdf/PersonalStatement.pdf
Getting Started on Your UC Personal Statement - Transfer Applicants

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UC Transfer 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.

Make your chosen major the focus of your response to the first prompt.

Be Direct About Your Intended Major: You want to be clear, direct, and straightforward about what your intended major is. It is best to alert the reader what you intend to major in within the first two sentences of your personal statement. Remember that admission officers go through thousands of personal statements. They will spend less than 5 minutes reading your personal statement.

Show Motivation and Dedication to Chosen Major: This tip is really more of a general one. You want to make sure you show the reader that you really do want to major in what you have chosen. They want to see an applicant that is truly motivated and dedicated to their chosen major.

Describe How You Became Interested in You Major: This may be something you want to explore as you brainstorm and prepare to write your response to the first prompt. Reflect on how you arrived at choosing your major. Picking a major and sticking to it is often one of the most difficult choices college students must make. Something, someone, or some experience must have inspired you to stick with the major you have chosen and to finish all the major prerequisites. Where does your interest in your major originate from? Was there a professor or mentor that has nurtured your interest in your major? Was there a program, internship, or job that has inspired you to major.

Describe Connection Between Major and Professional Goals: You might want to discuss how your chosen major relates to your professional goals, if you know what they are. Taking this approach will clearly show why you are interested in pursuing your chosen major and allow room for you to discuss any “experience you’ve had in the field”.

UC Transfer 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?

There are so many things you can do with this question because it is so open-ended. Applicants who have red-flags (i.e. Ws, one particularly low grade, etc.) on their academic transcript may want to take this as an opportunity to address questions admissions officers may have about such red-flags and whether it is an indicator that they might not succeed at their university.

Applicants who do not have any red-flags may want to use this prompt as an opportunity to show admissions a side of themselves that your transcripts do not reflect. Write a response that will show admissions who you are outside of just academics.

Special Talent: You may want to write about a special talent that you may have. Are you are great singer? Are you a gifted athlete? Talk about any awards/recognition you have received for this talent.

Personal Quality: Writing about a distinctive personal quality is a great route for all applicants. If you do choose to take this approach, however, make sure that you cite examples that demonstrate the quality you’ve chosen. You want to show not just tell. Make sure you make a statement about how the personal quality you’ve chosen reflects who you are as a person. Then, connect that back to how you would make a great addition to their community.

Involvement in Extra-Curricular Activities: Reflect on the different extra-curricular activities you have participated in—clubs, student government, internships, jobs, etc. Pick something you are really passionate about make sure that your passionate is demonstrated through concrete examples. You will want to discuss leadership roles you have taken and how your involvement in such activities have contributed to both the community and who you are today.

Challenges: This is another general route that is applicable to all applicants. Reflect about the challenges you have faced. How did you overcome them? If you do chose to write about a challenge, make sure you focus on your response on how you overcame your challenges and how that makes you who you are today. Do not make the challenge the focus. What admission officers are looking for how you respond to challenges and how your experience with past challenges makes you who you are today.