



Essay Advice from College Admission Officers

At its core, an application essay is all about reflection; it's your opportunity to share something meaningful about yourself in your own voice, and your own words.

Shawn Felton, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Cornell University

"What are we looking for? We are creating a class. We look at numbers, grades and test scores. But there's more to it. We are trying to put a face with all of this information."

Katie Fretwell, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, Amherst College.

"Don't get caught in the 'what do they want to hear?' trap. The essay is about what you want to say."

Kim Bryant, Assistant Director of Admissions, University of Michigan

"This is your interview. Let me know who you really are. I like it to hear a student's voice."

Lorenzo Gamboa, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admission, Santa Clara University

"Just give us one place, one time, one moment."

Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University

"By the time the application comes to us, many of them have gone through so many hands that the essays are sanitized. I wish I saw more of a thoughtful voice of a 17 year-old."

Jan Deike, Assistant Director for Undergraduate Admissions, Vanderbilt University

"I think sometimes students feel that because they haven't found the cure for cancer they have nothing to share. Life is truly lived in the smaller moments."

Calvin Wise, Director of Recruitment, Johns Hopkins University

"Students think they need a monumental experience, but the essay can be about something small. What does it mean to you? That is what we want to know."

Amy Jarich, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of Undergraduate Admissions, UC-Berkeley

"Don't try to make this the essay that I remember at the end of year. Just make it the best story you can tell."

Jim Cotter, Director of Admissions, Michigan State University

"The essay is value-added. Most of the essays I read are boring. The ones that stand out really make a difference, especially at the more selective schools."

Go to WowWritingWorkshop.com for more resources and services for students, parents, counselors and consultants.