

Sample Application Essays -- Johns Hopkins

"They can be the most important components of your application—the essays. It's a chance to add depth to something that is important to you and tell the admissions committee more about your background or goals. Test scores only tell part of your story, and we want to know more than just how *well* you work. We want to see *how* you actually think." (<https://apply.jhu.edu/application-process/essays-that-worked/>)

And on that Note

The sound was loud and discordant, like a hurricane, high notes and low notes mixing together in an audible mess. It was as if a thousand booming foghorns were in a shouting match with sirens. Unlike me, this was a little abrasive and loud. I liked it. It was completely unexpected and extremely fun to play.

Some instruments are built to make multiple notes, like a piano. A saxophone on the other hand doesn't play chords but single notes through one vibrating reed. However, I discovered that you can play multiple notes simultaneously on the saxophone. While practicing a concert D-flat scale, I messed up a fingering for a low B-flat, and my instrument produced a strange noise with two notes. My band teacher got very excited and exclaimed, "Hey, you just played a polyphonic note!" I like it when accidents lead to discovering new ideas.

I like this polyphonic sound because it reminds me of myself: many things at once. You assume one thing and get another. At school, I am a course scholar in English, but I am also able to amuse others when I come up with wince evoking puns. My math and science teachers expect me to go into engineering, but I'm more excited about making films. Discussing current events with my friends is fun, but I also like to share with them my secrets to cooking a good scotch egg. Even though my last name gives them a hint, the Asian students at our school don't believe that I'm half Japanese. Meanwhile the non-Asians are surprised that I'm also part Welsh. I feel comfortable being unique or thinking differently. As a Student Ambassador this enables me to help freshmen and others who are new to our school feel welcome and accepted. I help the new students know that it's okay to be themselves. There is added value in mixing things together. I realized this when my brother and I won an international Kavli Science Foundation contest where we explained the math behind the Pixar movie "Up". Using stop motion animation we explored the plausibility and science behind lifting a house with helium balloons. I like offering a new view and expanding the way people see things. In many of my videos I combine art with education. I want to continue making films that not only entertain, but also make you think.

A lot of people have a single passion that defines them or have a natural talent for something specific. Like my saxophone I am an instrument, but I can play many notes at once. I'm a scholar and a musician. Quiet but

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talkative. An athlete and a filmmaker. Careful but spontaneous. A fan of Johnny Cash and Kill The Noise. Hard working but playful. A martial artist and a baker. One of a kind but an identical twin.

Will polyphonic notes resonate in college? Yes. For instance, balancing a creative narrative with scientific facts will make a more believable story. I want to bring together different kinds of students (such as music, film, and English majors) to create more meaningful art. Understanding fellow students' perspective, talents, and ideas are what build a great community.

I'm looking forward to discovering my place in the world by combining various interests. Who I am doesn't always harmonize and may seem like nothing but noise to some. But what I play, no matter how discordant, can be beautiful. It's my own unique polyphonic note.

Looking Through a Wider Lens

What does it mean to be an advocate? I didn't find the answer in any sort of textbook. Not the anatomy textbook that lay across the foot of my bed, filled with Post-Its and half-drawn diagrams. Nor the chemistry textbook that sat on top of it, covered in streaks of blue highlighter. Not even Principles of Biology, overflowing with illegible notes and loose worksheets, had the answer. Yet, in a few years, I will be promising to do just that: be the ultimate advocate for my patients.

My search for the answer began quite unintentionally. When I was initially recommended to serve on the Youth Council my junior year of high school, my perspective on civic engagement was one of apathy and a complete lack of interest. I couldn't understand how my passion for the medical field had any correlation with serving as a representative for the students at my school and actively engaging within the political sphere. I knew I wanted to pursue a career as a physician, and I was perfectly content embracing the safety net of my introverted textbook world.

But that safety net was ripped wide open the day I walked through the sliding double doors of City Hall for my first Youth Council meeting. I assumed I would spend my hour flipping through flashcards and studying for next week's unit test, while a bunch of teenagers complained about the lack of donuts in the student store. Instead, I listened to the stories of 18 students, all of whom were using their voices to reshape the distribution of power within their communities and break the structures that chained so many in a perpetual cycle of desperation and despair. While I spent most of my time poring over a textbook trying to memorize formulas and theorems, they were spending their time using those formulas and theorems to make a difference in their communities. Needless to say,

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that meeting sparked an inspirational flame within me.

The next Youth Council meeting, I asked questions. I gave feedback. I noticed what the students at my school were really struggling with. For the first time, I went to drug prevention assemblies and helped my friends run mental health workshops. The more involved I became in my city's Youth Council, the more I understood how similar being an advocate for your community is to being an advocate for your patients. When I volunteered at the hospital every week, I started paying attention to more than whether or not my patients wanted ice chips in their water. I learned that Deborah was campaigning for equal opportunity housing in a deeply segregated neighborhood and George was a paramedic who injured his leg carrying an 8-year-old with an allergic reaction to the Emergency Room. I might not have been the doctor who diagnosed them but I was often the one person who saw them as human beings rather than patients.

Youth Council isn't something most students with a passion in practicing medicine chose to participate in, and it certainly wasn't something I thought would have such an immense impact on the way I view patient care. As a patient's ultimate advocate, a physician must look beyond hospital gowns and IV tubes and see the world through the eyes of another. Rather than treat diseases, a physician must choose to treat a person instead, ensuring compassionate care is provided to all. While I know that throughout my academic career I will take countless classes that will teach me everything from stoichiometry to cellular respiration, I refuse to take the knowledge I learn and simply place it on a flashcard to memorize. I will use it to help those whom I must be an advocate for: my patients.