Writing Application Essays

for the Wisconsin College of Engineering

Presented by UW Writing Center & Engineering Admissions
Welcome!

• Introductions

• Context
  • Audience of readers = Engineering Admissions Committee
  • Purpose of the essay: to push students to seriously consider and articulate what specific track they want to follow and why
Essay Prompts & Evaluation Process

REQUIRED Essay = 250 word max.

Write a brief personal statement that describes why you selected this program. This might include:

• Steps you have taken to learn about this area of engineering, including career, research or focus areas that are of particular interest

• Relevant experiences (e.g. coursework, extracurricular, research, or work) that have shaped your academic and/or career goals
Essay Prompts & Evaluation Process

• **OPTIONAL** Essay = 100 word max.

• If you have faced unusual or extenuating circumstances, please describe how these challenges have impacted your academic record.

• Common examples of extenuating circumstances include, but are not limited to: Serious injury or illness, atypical academic stressors, family hardships, etc.
Breaking Down the Prompt

- What experiences have you had that have motivated you to pursue a degree in engineering?
- What have you done to educate yourself about the specific field of engineering you are interested in?
- What specific program(s) within the engineering school are you interested in?
- What are your goals in pursuing an engineering degree? Short-term? Long-term?
Let’s Review Some Samples!

Remember….

• There is not one CORRECT or RIGHT way to write or structure the essay

• Personalizing the essay to YOU makes it memorable for the reviewers
Which Do You Find More Persuasive?

1) In five to ten years, I want to work in a health-related engineering field.

2) When I’m done with college, I want to help people.
What’s compelling about this intro?

When I was a child, I went to a cave as a tourist. I thought I can rely on my cellphone to contact my parents. So, I just left them and tried to find something interesting in that cave. However, when I was tired and want to contact my mother, my cellphone was not working, as there was no signal in that cave. I was so scared and cried for my mother. That was the first time I knew that the signal of the cellphone can be blocked.
What’s compelling about this conclusion?

Simply put, I am fascinated by the workings of these complex machines and would love to actually be designing them, not just working on them. Conversing with my uncle recently, a mechanical engineer and UW alumnus, is when I began to consider mechanical engineering more seriously. This current semester has been my first semester of mechanical engineering courses and I can confidently say that this only deepens my desire to continue with mechanical engineering. Thermodynamics has become my favorite class and heightened my interest in power systems to where it is now.
So, What Makes an Essay Persuasive?

• Clearly and completely answering the question
• General vs. specific information
  • Specific, detailed examples of things you’ve done or learned rather than vague summaries
• Be definitive about your goals
  • A specific field of engineering rather than engineering in general
• Avoid clichés
  • Specific explanation of your interest rather than something any person might say
Time to Write!

Use the Brainstorming Worksheet you received at your Engineering Advising event.

• Pick one item that you brainstormed
• Spend 5 minutes developing that experience into a one-paragraph story
• Bonus points if your paragraph says at any point why you’ve selected a particular field of engineering.
Structural Options

• This is not an academic essay—you don’t need an introduction, conclusion, or thesis statement. But you do need a clear point!
• Two or maybe three short paragraphs is better than one block of text.
• Possible ways to begin include:
  • Opening with a specific story that shows your motivation.
  • Opening with a clear, specific, assertive statement of your goals.
What else do you want to convey beyond facts?

- Enthusiasm
- Initiative/eagerness to learn
- Careful revision, editing, proofing
- Others?...

What will you do to accomplish these?
Be sure you do NOT . . .

• Try to include everything engineering you’ve ever done. It should not be a list or resume.
• Fabricate information.
• Plagiarize or use anyone else’s work or words.
• Turn in an essay with grammatical or spelling errors.
• Procrastinate.
Be sure you DO . . .

- OWN your materials & make them personalized
- Understand the Engineering program (research)
- Go beyond marketability/$$
- Express your passion, intent, fit
- Assess your tone
- Proofread carefully
- Have others review your materials
Where do I start?

- Timeline – when to have a first draft?
- Draft early & revise often
- Recruit multiple reviewers
- Utilize the Writing Center!
- Create an “early bird” deadline for yourself
Wrap-Up & Questions
Complete the evaluation!

It's QUESTION TIME!!