**Common Application Essays: 2020-2021**

I know what you’re thinking**: “There is no way that I’m even thinking about my college applications right now. No. Way.”**

I totally get that…I promise, I do.

If you talk to your friends who have been through this process, they will tell you (much to your disbelief) that the earlier you can get a jump on this the better. Once classes resume (and we are assuming that they will), course work and extracurriculars will take over your life once again. Why not start thinking about your college essay now, when you aren’t as overwhelmed?

Below is the link to this year’s Common App essay topics. You are in luck, because this year’s topics will also be the topics for the 2020-2021 applications. They have added an additional topic that refers to the Covid crisis, and I have attached a link for that as well:

<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/COVID-19-question-common-app>. This is an optional response, but it is something you should be aware of. (Translation: When a college gives you a chance to distinguish yourself from thousands of applicants, take it☺). Please read the explanation for the purpose of the response as this will help you decide how (or even if) to approach it.

To summarize, the list of prompts is in the first link, and the second link provides insight into YOUR application:

<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/2019-2020-common-app-essay-prompts>

<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/common-app-2020-2021-essay-prompts>

As you begin thinking about your essay, think about the following:

1. If an admissions officer is reading 100 essays a day, how will MINE stand out? What can I write about that will make my essay memorable?
2. Do NOT write about things that are found in your application. This is a chance for you to demonstrate something different/creative/unique.
3. It is easy to write about how your struggles in AP Calculus AB made you a better person (snore), which is why 780 other students write about that. Likewise, no one wants to hear about the joy you felt winning a state championship; there are thousands who are writing about that too.

Here are some ways to turn this on its head:

* I had a student who won two state championships in basketball (which was already in her resume). Instead of writing about that, she wrote about how hard it was to be the tallest person in her class since 1st grade. She was able to address insecurities, rising above, and the rewards that came from her height.
* I had another student who participated in community service opportunities. Commendable, for sure, but it was easily identified in his resume. Instead of talking about working as a counselor in a camp for children with health limitations, he talked about his favorite camper and what he learned about life and himself through their relationship.
* Finally, I had a student who lost her dad when she was in elementary school. Rather than writing about the loss, she wrote one of the most poignant essays I have ever read. She wrote her essay from the point of view of her DAD…what he had observed about her by watching her from afar. She was able to talk about accomplishments and setbacks, and it was one of the best college essays I have ever read.

I am more than happy to give you advice or pointers (this would have been our end of the year project☹). If you want to send me anything over the summer, use my email abbottm@leonschools.net, because I’m not sure how much longer we will have access to Teams.

Thank you so much for all of your hard work this year. I loved every minute of my time with you, and I hope to see everyone in a few short months☺

Enjoy your summer!!! (And if you can, read a book that isn’t required for school. When you go for interviews with admissions and scholarship reps, they often ask you to talk about the last book you read *that wasn’t for school*. That would be extremely embarrassing if you couldn’t think of anything to talk about…)

Mrs. Abbott