优秀的大学申请作文是怎么来的?

—黄少华博士（Dr. Edgar Huang）的指导

一稿

这篇不着边际的作文没有走上正轨。黄博士直接否决掉。坐下来谈。

Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

When delving deeply into intricately personal matters, I like to think of life in a simple, yet practical manner. Having been through various phases in life, I have come to the generalization that life is a sinusoidal wave with slight deviations from the quintessential norm.

All human beings begin their journey at the origin of the wave and ultimately perish at the end of the wave. Although the length of the wave (life expectancy) may vary for different people, the essential components of the wave are same regardless of the person. For a given individual, there are crests (peaks) and troughs (low-points). To elaborate, everyone goes through ups and downs, successes and failures, trials and tribulations. Some spend more time around the peak, while others, around the trough. That being said, every human being has the opportunity to rise and change his/her life for the better. This is the approach that I have taken in my life.

My journey along the intricate sine wave began on a scorching evening in New Delhi during the intense summer of 1997. It was a festive day for my entire family, but especially for my grandparents, who witnessed the birth of a baby boy for the first time in their life. My mom was in tears and my father was upbeat. In times like these, little did I know that happiness is fleeting and that the darkest hours have yet to strike.

Not even one year into the sine wave, my father left, nowhere to be found. His decision to abandon us meant that my mom and I were alone to fend for ourselves. Consequently, my mom took on a job in the city. In the meantime, I lived with my grandparents.

Before coming to the United States, I spent a year with my mother in Belgium. Unfortunately, this period was very tough for my mom. Through numerous litigations, my father constantly

pestered her and took away precious time from her work. Despite these troubles, my mom remained resilient. She became, in my eyes, a “super-mom”.

Five years into the sine wave, my mom and I moved to the United States. We came directly to Indianapolis and settled in the heart of the city. This period was a rough transition for the both of us as we had little time to acquaint to our surroundings. My mom knew nothing about the American culture, knew little about transit, housing, and schooling, and had no experience with driving a car. Like usual, my mom overcame these challenges in the face of adversity. For me, it was a little bit different. I forced myself to learn English quickly so that I wasn’t intellectually behind other kids in my class. Making matters worse, I was constantly teased and made fun of by other kids since I was “Indian”, had a quirky accent, and didn’t fit in with others. Instead of putting my head down in shame, I stood tall and met the challenges. I studied hard at home and stood up for myself at school.

For many years, I constantly felt depressed and melancholy without a father-figure present in my life. After I came to the United States, my father denied any kind of contact with me or my mother. Furthermore, he refused to provide any sort of financial support to ease the burden on my mom. As a result, my mom had to work extra hours at work while being paid an already low salary for her efforts. This directly affected me as I was alone for extended amounts of time, having to look after myself and make food for myself. There were times when I was discouraged and felt like I was the unluckiest child in the world. Despite all this, I learned to cope with my circumstances and suppress my inner-frustration. Gradually, I became more mature and grew into the “man” of the house.

When I came to high school, I developed an inner-drive to change my life and improve my situation. I wanted to be successful, and I wanted to make my mother proud. I knew that studies were the path to take in order to achieve my goals. As a result, I constantly worked hard to be a top student in my class. I studied day and night for nights together. There were times when I couldn’t get enough sleep. But this didn’t falter me. I kept my head up and stayed the course. I worked hard because I knew that the good days would eventually come.

二稿

这篇淡而无味的作文仍旧没有走上正轨。黄博士直接否决掉。又坐下来谈。

I stood deliriously at the edge of my bed, stunned at the sequel of events that had just transpired. Ecstatic and euphoric, I cheerfully leaped from my dilapidated base as if to defy gravity. Blood rushed through the entirety of my veins, and my fingers suddenly began to tremble in excitement. I had just been named a Siemens Regional Finalist! I was so thrilled that I dealt to my surroundings an emphatic yell with enough power to penetrate the Great Wall of China. Instantly, I could feel the swift surge of butterflies fleeing from the pits of my stomach. A few seconds later, I glanced over my shoulder and saw my mom performing Hindu rituals and praying to the Lord. Immediately then, I was humbled and brought back to Earth. I suddenly realized how lucky I was to receive such an honor. For the next hour or so, I delved into the intricacies of my memory and explored the various events that had brought me to this point.

My inspiration to achieve the unachievable and to do the unthinkable has come from various sources. Whether it be because I am the only child of a single mother, or because I am part of a minority group, I have always possessed an inner-drive that has inspired me to try to achieve under the most rigid of circumstances. I remember those days long ago in elementary school when I was constantly picked last in basketball. Time and time again, I proved my peers wrong and displayed to them that I was no fluke. This inner-passion has fueled me throughout life.

Before the summer of 2013, I had been accepted into American Chemical Society's Project SEED. My goal was to do research in a neuroscience lab because I was on a mission to rid the world of the nefarious Alzheimer's. Only then, of course, would I become the youngest Nobel Laureate to star on Christopher Nolan's films.

When I got the news that I had not been selected to work in a Neuroscience lab, I was mightily frustrated and felt like injustice was served to the just. My dream was out of sight, and my goals were out of hand. After a day or two of vexation and disappointment, I finally decided to work in a physics lab. I had never really had a passion for physics, but I decided to give it try.

The first couple of weeks in my lab weren't the best or the most exciting. I felt as if my project was useless and wouldn't enable me to rise to stardom. Despite all these doubts, I persevered and grinded. Weeks passed, and I got more comfortable with my research. I started to achieve joy over the smallest of results (novel mathematical equations). I began to enjoy the research process and the strenuous details that came with it. I was so content that I decided I would continue researching during the year. As months passed, my passion in research increased to

the point where I would spend much of my weekend doing research. Research was now one of my favorite pastimes.

Through this entire experience, I have learned a lot about myself while also maturing. Through the many hours that I spent in the solitary confine of the lab chipping away at results, I learned the meaning of resiliency. I understood that if I am not given my first choice in life, I can make the best out of my last choice. I realized the subject doesn't matter as much as the individual who pursues it. Furthermore, I have become less narrow-minded and more objective in my decisions. Instead of being a bigot, I find inspiration over the most difficult and strenuous of tasks. Although I am still far-reaching and want to achieve, I understand that the process will lead me to my eventual destiny.

三稿

这篇作文开始上路了，但漏洞百出。最糟糕的是有观点，少有证据。另外，废话连篇。该黄博士出手了。

~~I sat lugubriously at the edge of my bed, stunned at the sequel of events that had just transpired. Tormented and down-trodden, I dealt to my surroundings an emphatic yell with enough power to penetrate the Great Wall of China. As I divulged my emotions, I could feel the rapid rush of blood flowing through the entirety of my veins, the traumatic tremor thumping through the terminals of my skeletal muscles, and the burst of rage gleaming through my countenance. I had failed miserably. My dream of becoming the youngest Nobel Laureate to star in a Christopher Nolan film was gone with the wind, and with it the idealistic vision to rid the world of the nefarious Alzheimer's.~~

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from an idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most renowned neurologist—an Alzheimer's assassin. Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I got the news that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was disheartened.

After a day or two of vexation and disappointment, I decided to work in a physics lab because I had read great reviews about the mentor. I had never really had a passion for physics, but I decided to give it try. Being the only child of a single mother, I had always possessed an urge to achieve big under the most rigid circumstances. Consequently, before beginning my research, I motivated myself by recollecting and reminiscing in my experience in elementary school when I proved to all my doubters that I was no fluke in basketball. In my first gym class, all of my peers had underestimated me to the point that I was selected last in a game of pick-up basketball. After this instance, never again did my peers make such a mistake.

The first couple of days in the lab weren't the best or the most exciting. I felt as if my project was useless and had no potential. Adding to my stress were the enormous pile of literature that I laboriously skimmed through every day and the nonchalant attitude of the PhD students. Despite my worries and doubts, I persevered and grinded. Through my dogged determination and resolute resilience, I finally started to get comfortable with my research after a couple of weeks at SEED. I was beginning to achieve joy over the smallest results (novel mathematical equations). Furthermore, I began to enjoy the actual research process and the strenuous details that came with it. After my summer at SEED, my passion for research grew to the point that I willingly spent much of my weekend doing research, and many of my evenings were devoted to the lab, all during the regular semester with tons of homework and other responsibilities.

The constant and unrelenting effort that I put into research finally culminated into a single life-altering moment. ~~Because of this moment, I can confidently say that I am a successful high~~

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [1]: Are you sure this is a legitimate expression? I have never seen it.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [2]: This metaphor does not work for me. The Great Wall of China never worked as a protection. It was fragile.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [3]: To be honest, when I reached this point, I had run out of patience? What do you really want to tell me? Cut to the chase immediately. That is, tell about your failure clearly in two to three sentences. Then move on. Your focus is not on failure. Rather, it is on how you **turned** your failure to success. So cut this paragraph because the second paragraph is sufficient to start your essay.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [4]: You decided to? Were you offered the opportunity, or did you have to approach a professor? If the latter, why did you approach him or her? That is, why did you wish to be in a physics project? just because the mentor has a good review? That does not sound like a strong motivation.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [5]: Oh. No. This reason might cast a shadow on your achievement. You don't have to tell your AOs everything. When you don't tell everything, you are not lying. Can you say that you decided to pursue your second strongest interest, physics?

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [6]: Show what you did in the first few days so that you can justify your claim about your feelings.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [7]: What did you worry and doubt?

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [8]: See? I warned you multiple times. Do not claim only. You have claimed so much. What did you determine to do? How did you get comfortable when th ... [1]

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [9]: Like what? Tell the names of the procedures.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [10]: Such as? Again, tell the names of the details.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [11]: Give a couple of examples of other responsibilities.

~~school researcher. This moment was an unanticipated and momentous phone call in which I got the news that I had been named a Siemens Competition Regional Finalist!~~

As a result of my research experience, I have truly learned the importance of resilience and open-mindedness. When I began SEED, I never thought that physics research would culminate in my being a Siemens Regional Finalist. ~~I now understand that one's first choice is not necessarily one's best choice.~~ If there is a will to persevere, one can make the best out of any situation, whether it be good or bad; Alexander Bell said in the 19th century, "When one door closes, another door opens."

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [12]: You tell tooooooooo much. show and tell. Describe that moment.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [13]: Say something more interesting.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [14]: What does this sentence mean?

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:19 PM
Comment [15]: This quote can become the lead of your ending paragraph, but not the conclusion.

四稿

证据开始呈现，但仍旧漏洞百出。黄博士循循善诱。

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from an idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most notorious neurologist—the one and only Alzheimer's assassin. Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I got the news that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was disheartened and demoralized.

After a day or two of vexation and disappointment, I rejuvenated myself and began to research faculty affiliated with the IUPUI Physics Department. Although neuroscience was my primary interest, I had always had an inner-passion for physics. As a result, I approached a professor whom I had heard marvels about through my online-faculty-examination. After meeting with him, I fell in love with his buoyant zeal and indomitable enthusiasm for the advancement of science.

Having known that physics was diminutive in scope in comparison to other disciplines like neuroscience, I knew that I had a long road ahead of me. Nevertheless, this did not deter me from putting my best step forward. Being the only child of a single mother, I had always possessed an urge to achieve big under the most rigid circumstances. Consequently, before beginning my research, I motivated myself by recollecting and reminiscing in my experience in elementary school when I proved to all my doubters that I was no fluke in basketball. In my first gym class, all of my peers had underestimated me to the point that I was selected last in a game of pick-up basketball. After this instance, never again did my peers make such a mistake.

The first couple of days in the lab weren't the best or the most exciting. I felt as if my project was useless and had no potential. Adding to my stress were the enormous pile of literature that I laboriously skimmed through every day and the nonchalant attitude of the PhD students. Despite my worries and doubts, I persevered and grinded. Through my dogged determination and resolute resilience, I finally started to get comfortable with my research after a couple of weeks at SEED. I was beginning to achieve joy over the smallest results (novel mathematical equations). Furthermore, I began to enjoy the actual research process and the strenuous details that came with it. After my summer at SEED, my passion for research grew to the point that I willingly spent much of my weekend doing research, and many of my evenings were devoted to the lab all during the regular semester with tons of homework and other responsibilities.

The constant and unrelenting effort that I put into research finally culminated into a single life-altering moment.

Comment [16]: Are you sure this is ... [4]
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Comment [17]: This metaphor doe ... [6]
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Comment [18]: To be honest, wher ... [8]
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As a result of my research experience, I have truly learned the importance of resilience and open-mindedness. When I began SEED, I never thought that physics research would culminate in my being a Siemens Regional Finalist.

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Comment [28]: Say something more interesting.

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Comment [29]: What does this sentence mean?

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Comment [30]: This quote can become the lead of your ending paragraph, but not the conclusion.

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五稿

黄博士指出，证据仍然不充分，结构需要做调整，结尾没底气，让接着改。

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from my idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most notorious neurologist—an Alzheimer's assassin. Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I heard that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was disheartened and demoralized.

After a day or two of vexation and disappointment, I rejuvenated myself and began to research faculty affiliated with the IUPUI Physics Department. Although neuroscience was my primary interest, I had always had an inner-passion for physics. As a result, I approached a professor about whom I had heard marvels through my online faculty examination. After meeting with him, I fell in love with his buoyant zeal and indomitable enthusiasm for the advancement of science.

Being the only child of a single mother, I had always possessed an urge to achieve big under the most rigid circumstances. For instance, in elementary school, In my first gym class, all of my peers underestimated me to the point that I was selected last in a game of pick-up basketball, but I proved to my doubters that I was no fluke in basketball. This time, I knew that physics was diminutive in scope in comparison to some other disciplines like neuroscience, but I was determined to best use my time in the assigned project.

The first couple of days in the lab weren't the most exciting as I was clueless as to how I should approach my "seemingly" futile and insipid project. Having never learned that there was a mysteriously mathematical side to ion channels in biological cells, I achieved an infamously widespread state of mind in the scientific world: researcher's block. Adding to such stress was the enormous pile of literature that I had to laboriously scan through every day in order to get relevant background information for my project. Not to mention that the nonchalant PhD students performing various experiments from "NMR" to "X-Ray Scattering" didn't have time to help my case much. Despite such trials and tribulations, I persevered and focused on the process. After a couple of weeks in the lab, I finally started to get comfortable with my research and environment. Not only had I made friends with the "apparently" nonchalant and erudite doctoral students, I also began to develop an ineffable enthusiasm for my scientific work. To quote my mentor, "[Rishabh's] idea of summer fun is to analyze long data files of on-off channel events."

After the SEED experience, my passion for research grew to the point that I willingly devoted many of my evenings to the lab, all during the regular semester with tons of homework and other responsibilities, such as clubs and afterschool activities. Whether or not my effort bore fruit, I was really happy each and every moment I conducted research. More importantly, I began to develop a hearty appreciation for the actual research process. As I witnessed in the lab, the effort

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Comment [31]: Does he have a name? Even a dog does.

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Comment [32]: How did you prove? Do not claim only. Show an example.

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Comment [33]: What do you mean? Do you mean there is not much to explore in physics?

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Comment [34]: I am still not quite happy about this change. You can make this part more appropriate.

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Comment [35]: How did you prove? Do not claim only. Show an example.

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Comment [36]: See? I warned you multiple times. Do not claim only. You have claimed so much. What did you determine to do? How did you get comfortable ... [35]

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Comment [37]: Give a couple of examples of other responsibilities.

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and passion that scientists put forth in their work was truly breathtaking and unquestionably unparalleled.

Recently, my research culminated into a single, dramatic, momentous, and life-altering moment, one that was indescribable in nature. Often, I reminisce in nostalgia the vigor with which I cried and the passion with which I screamed, "Mama, I'm a finalist! I'm a finalist!"

Alexander Bell was not lying when he said, "When one door closes, another door opens". As I have learned through research, if there is a will to persevere, one can make the best out of any situation, Although I couldn't kill the nefarious Alzheimer's, I can passionately say that I made my research experience a success.

Edgar Huang 12/15/2015 11:28 PM

Comment [38]: This is supposed to be the crescendo of your essay, but it sounds flat. Enrich this paragraph by describing what you were doing and how you felt when you heard the news. How did you mom respond? It is not easy for her to bring you up? Did you thank her?

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Comment [39]: No. This ending sounds conceited. The focus of this essay is really supposed to show your AOs that you know you are flexible, you can achieve something big under unfavorable conditions, you have learned how to do research, and you are perseverant, but most importantly, through the ending paragraph, you should point to what this experience means to your future studies and your career. So please revise your ending paragraph.

六稿

这篇作文开始有起色了。大部分时候是黄博士帮着润色。

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from my idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most notorious neurologist—an Alzheimer's assassin. Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I heard that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was disheartened and demoralized.

After a day or two of vexation and disappointment, I rejuvenated myself and began to research faculty affiliated with the IUPUI Physics Department. Although neuroscience was my primary interest, I had always had a passion for physics. As a result, I approached a professor about whom I had heard marvels through my online faculty examination. After meeting with Dr. Petrache, I fell in love with his buoyant zeal and indomitable enthusiasm for the advancement of science.

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Being the only child of a single mother, I had always possessed an urge to achieve big under the most rigid circumstances. For instance, during my first gym class in elementary school, all of my peers underestimated me to the point that I was selected last in a game of pick-up basketball. Through my shot-making ability and keen awareness on defense, I proved to my doubters that I was no fluke in basketball. Likewise, before I began SEED, I used my experience in basketball as fuel to propel me into making the most out of my physics research.

The first couple of days in the lab weren't the most exciting as I was clueless as to how I should approach my "seemingly" futile and insipid project. Having never learned that there was a mysteriously mathematical side to ion channels in biological cells, I achieved an infamously widespread state of mind in the scientific world: researcher's block. Adding to this dilemma was the enormous pile of literature that I had to laboriously scan through every day in order to get relevant background information for my project. Not to mention that the nonchalant PhD students performing various experiments from "NMR" to "X-Ray Scattering" didn't have time to help my case much. Despite such trials and tribulations, I persevered and focused on the process. After a couple of weeks in the lab, I became accustomed to having intimate conversations with my mentor where I would fill his head with numerous questions ranging from the "ah-hah!" to the "what?" That too, I left no pity on the postdocs with whom I discussed fundamental physics concepts ranging from Newton's Laws of motion to Einstein's theory of relativity. Gradually, not only did I make friends with the "apparently" nonchalant and erudite doctoral students, but I began to develop an ineffable enthusiasm for my scientific work.

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After the SEED experience, my passion for research grew to the point that I willingly devoted many evenings to the lab, all during the regular semester with tons of homework and other responsibilities, such as volunteering at Reach for Youth and helping my mom with chores. Whether or not my effort bore fruit, I was really happy each and every moment I conducted research. More importantly, I developed a hearty appreciation for the actual research process.

On an afternoon two weeks ago, I received a phone call and was shell-shocked instantaneously. Within seconds, I was running around the apartment screaming, "Mama! I'm a , I'm a finalist! I'm a Siemens finalist!" It was a dream come true, one that I still cannot believe!

Alexander Bell was not lying when he said, "When one door closes, another door opens". As I have learned through research, if there is a will to persevere, I can make the best out of any situation. Although I couldn't kill the nefarious Alzheimer's, I can passionately say that I will not be deterred by any unfavorable circumstance to achieve something big again.

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Edgar Huang 10/23/2014 12:32 PM
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Comment [40]: Did you put quotation marks in the wrong place?

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Comment [41]: This paragraph needs a clean-up. Also, how did you reflect on your research at IUPUI, which was deviant from your original wish? How did your mom respond? Did you thank anyone, especially your mom? No?

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七稿

在黄博士建议下学生又做了改动。黄博士再润色。

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from my idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most notorious neurologist—an Alzheimer's assassin! Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I heard that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was disheartened.

After two days of vexation, I rejuvenated myself and began to research faculty affiliated with the IUPUI Physics Department. Although neuroscience was my primary interest, I had always had a passion for physics. As a result, through my online faculty examination, I approached Dr. Petrache, a professor about whom I had heard marvels. I soon fell in love with his buoyant and indomitable enthusiasm for the advancement of science.

Being the only child of a single mother, I had always possessed an urge to achieve big under the most rigid circumstances. For instance, during my first gym class in elementary school, all of my peers underestimated me to the point that I was selected last in a game of pick-up basketball. Through my shot-making ability and keen awareness on defense, I proved to my doubters that I was no fluke in basketball. Likewise, before I began SEED, I used my experience in basketball as fuel to propel me into making the most out of my physics research.

The first couple of days in the lab weren't the most exciting as I was clueless as to how I should approach my seemingly futile and insipid project. Having never learned that there was a mysteriously mathematical side to ion channels in biological cells, I achieved an infamously widespread state of mind in the scientific world: researcher's block. Adding to this dilemma was the enormous pile of literature that I had to laboriously scan every day in order to get relevant background information for my project. Not to mention that the nonchalant PhD students performing various experiments from NMR to X-Ray Scattering didn't have time to help my case much. Despite such tribulation, I persevered and focused on the process. After some weeks in the lab, I became accustomed to having intimate conversations with my mentor. I filled his head with numerous thoughts ranging from "ah-hah!" to "what?" I left no pity on the postdocs either with whom I discussed fundamental physics concepts such as Newton's laws of motion and Einstein's theory of relativity. Gradually, not only did I make friends with the apparently nonchalant and erudite doctoral students, but I began to develop an ineffable zest for my scientific work.

After the SEED experience, my passion for research grew to the point that I willingly devoted many evenings to the lab, all during the regular semester with tons of homework and other

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responsibilities, such as volunteering at Reach for Youth and helping my mom with chores. Whether or not my effort bore fruit, I was really happy each and every moment I conducted physics??? research. More importantly, I developed a hearty appreciation for the actual research process.

On an afternoon two weeks ago, I received a phone call from Discovery Education and was shell-shocked instantaneously. Within seconds, I was running around the apartment screaming, "Mama! I'm a finalist! I'm a Siemens finalist!" Immediately thanking my mom, who shared my thrill, I felt that my eyes turned wet, for I believed the award was actually for her since she had sacrificed so much for me both as a mother and a father in my life. Finally, I relived that moment when I heard I had been rejected into the neuroscience lab and realized how naïve I was then.

Although I couldn't kill the nefarious Alzheimer's, I harvested academically more than I had expected. Gold will glitter no matter what light it is under. Through this research experience, I have learned to create opportunities for myself, to overcome unfavorable circumstances, and to persevere so that I truly shine.

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Comment [43]: Why were you still conducting research after the SEEC experience? Were you still working on the same physics project from SEEC? You need to state clearly.

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Comment [44]: Can you convert this to a fuzzy time, something like "in late September" or "early October"?

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八稿

这是最后的版本。黄博士在 2014 年帮助这个孩子进入了宾夕法尼亚大学。黄博士每年都用独到的招生官的眼光（因为作为教授他自己就为自己的大学做招生工作多年）和专业的英语写作技巧帮助学生进入哈佛，普林斯顿，耶鲁，麻省理工，斯坦福及众多其他美国名校。

My passion for neuroscience stemmed from my idiosyncratic drive to become the world's most notorious neurologist—an Alzheimer's assassin. Numerous victims, including my great aunt, have fallen prey to this disease. Therefore, when I heard that I was not matched to a neuroscience lab through the American Chemical Society's Project SEED, I was extremely disheartened.

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After the SEED experience, my passion for physics research grew to the point that I willingly devoted many evenings to the lab to continue my project, all at a time when I had tons of homework and other responsibilities, such as volunteering at Reach for Youth and helping my mom with chores. Without thinking much about the fruit of my efforts, I was really happy each and every moment I conducted research, for I heartily appreciated the actual research process.

On an afternoon in late October, I received a phone call from Discovery Education and was shell-shocked instantaneously. Within seconds, I was running around the apartment screaming, "Mama! I'm a finalist! I'm a Siemens finalist!" Immediately thanking and hugging my mom, who shared my thrill, I felt my eyes tear, for I believed this award belonged to her since she had sacrificed so much for me both as a mother and a father in my life.

Although I couldn't kill the nefarious Alzheimer's, I harvested academically more than I had expected. Looking back at my rejection by the neuroscience lab and my growth in the physics lab, I now understand that gold will glitter no matter what light it is under. I have learned to create opportunities for myself, to overcome unfavorable circumstances, and to persevere so that I truly shine like gold.

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Edgar Huang, Ph.D.
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Life is a matter of attitude.

MORE COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAYS FROM DR. HUANG'S STUDENTS

Common App Essay 1 (from Dr. Huang's student)

Research isn't magic, but the dedication and passion the scientists put in is…and is **real**, at that, and I plan to be a part of that "magic" for many years to come. Watch out, Oprah. Archimedes has nothing on me.

The author attended MIT in 2011.

"Lucy, you're going to be a big sister!" my mom declared, all smiles.

This is one of those magic tricks in which a magician pulls out the tablecloth but leave all dishes on the table. Slowly my brain rebooted only to be inundated with a tempest of thoughts.

"WHAT?" I bellowed with disbelief followed by indignation. *After 12 years of having me as the only child, they decide to "bless" me with a sibling?* I couldn't help but hide the tears that were welling over. I could already see my mom's smile fading.

"Okay, ready for my performance run-through?"

"Yeah!" my sister, Lily, exclaimed excitedly.

"My name is Lucy Guo, and I am performing Beethoven Sonata Opus 27, Number 2, 3rd Movement," I announced with a bow before sitting down at our piano.

While my hands glided up and down over the keys, Lily listened with the intensity beyond that of a 3-year-old. As I finished with a final bang, Lily clapped enthusiastically. "Bravo, Lushie, bravo!"

"Lucy, she's just like you when you were younger! You've always loved music," my mom interjected. She handed me an old photograph: a much younger me, beaming while playing the piano. It's striking how much Lily and I look alike.

"What is it?" I ask my mother, concerned.

"Lily's test results were abnormal; she'll suffer from it for the rest of her life," she replied grimly, tears dripping down her face. My heart wrenched in pain. My sister has congenital hypothyroidism – a condition that affects 1 in 4,000 infants. *She is just a little girl, pure and innocent. She doesn't deserve this.*

Seeing my mom's pain made me feel disheartened, but I had to remain optimistic. "Lily will pull through; she's already so bright!" I reassured, suppressing my despondence. Determined, I devised a way to allay the situation. Sometimes, Lily forgot to take her medication, so I bought her a 7-day pill organizer.

"It's a special gift made just for you!" I said. "You see these letters? Under them are magical candies that help you grow! But you can only take one a day or else the magic doesn't work," I advised tenderly, while teaching Lily each letter. Ever since, the first thing she did every morning was to take her "magical pills."

My love for piano inspired Lily to take an early interest in music. Every day, I set aside ten minutes for "Lily's piano time." She had a natural knack for music, picking up piano quickly.

"Lily, let's show Mommy and Daddy what you can play!"

Lily proudly stepped up to the piano, curtsied, placed her tiny hands on the keys and played her favorite song of the week, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." I listened with a proud admiration in my eyes. All my life, I have loved to learn, but with Lily's inspiration, I have truly learned to love. She is a blessing in my life.

To protect the privacy of the author, the author's name in the writing has been altered. The author joined Harvard in 2012.

Common App Essay 2 (from Dr. Huang's student)

For years, I've hated my name. With a name like So Young, it's hard not to be made fun of. It was a source of constant irritation and reminder of my background.

I never believed I had the best of both worlds. Born in Korea yet having spent the majority of my life in America, I often felt out of place. As I grew older, I began to notice the looks others gave my family whenever we spoke Korean or my mother tried to express herself in Konglish, a derisive term for the mixture of Korean and English. I grew afraid of the mocking imitations, barely concealed laughter, and people's frustration when dealing with us. My fear of being jeered at translated itself into my disdain for all things Asian, which I deemed as 'never appropriate in public.'

"No, I only pay this much."

"Mrs. Park, I'm afraid the total is—"

"No, I *know* this number's wrong, I *know*."

As I watched the dispute between the cashier and my mother, I grew anxious. What did Mom think she was doing? Was a few dollars worth public humiliation? Pulse drumming in my ears, I could only register in my tempestuous rage the fact that Mom, already something to be kept hidden, was acting out.

"Mom."

"What?" She brushed me off with a cursory glance at my hardened face and returned to her conversation.

"MOM!"

My mother stilled and looked at me slowly. An emotionless mask was upon her face, yet her eyes held an enigmatic glint.

Silence overtook us.

My mom swiped her card and left without a single glance back.

Once back in the car, a deluge of emotions came over me.

"Why'd you have to do that?"

"Do what?"

"That! You're always embarrassing me!"

I slumped into my seat, rubbing my face. Then, a low voice called my name.

"What?" I snapped.

"Are you… ashamed of me?"

My head shot up. As I stared at my mother's eyes through the rearview mirror, I recognized what I had seen in her eyes earlier: sorrow with a generous serving of emotional hurt and insecurity. It was impossible for me to hold that gaze. Shamefaced, I hung my head as I realized that what she had seen in me was another stranger. I was one of the many who, ignorant of her background, ridiculed her at face value.

It was an epiphanous moment.

Mom wasn't unaware of the looks she got when she spoke, either in Korean or in English. She ignored them, knowing we were the reason she could bear living in an unfamiliar place. And yet, instead of holding her hand, I had joined the other side.

I was ashamed, but this time, of myself. My mother's countenance, though hurt, held no reproach. I knew it was time for me to grow up; I wasn't So Young anymore.

The author joined Brown in 2012.

Common App Essay 3 (from Dr. Huang's student)

"Ms. Sufiaaaa, how are you?" shouted Arthur in broken English. I was thrilled the young Togo boy could finally say my name. Arthur's family fled Togo after a political crisis and lived in a refugee camp. His primary language was French. I met Arthur the summer before my junior year as I traveled to the Volta Region of Ghana to start a summer school program with Global Leadership Adventures.

At 7am on Wednesday morning, after teaching multiplication, I organized a board race with boys against girls among the unpainted brick walls, wooden desks, and plain chalkboard in the Ghanaian classroom. The first boy and girl lined up with chalk in their hands. After I shouted the problem, they sprinted to the board to write their answers immediately. The room was filled with energy and joy as the students cheered for their teammates. In the first row of desks, a little boy wearing faded blue pants and a green tank stood out. Arthur struggled to speak the English his peers spoke easily, but he still anxiously waved his hand to participate and showed excitement in his wide-open sparkling brown eyes. In his struggle, I saw myself and was suddenly drawn back into my past.

Setbacks and challenges, I encountered many in my life. Born in France to parents from Morocco and Syria, I had managed to be fluent in Arabic and French and adept at dancing and piano playing. However, by the age of ten, I was thrown out of my comfort zone: I moved to England. My French-English dictionary became my best friend. While waiting for buses, studying in the library, and watching televisions, I could always count on it. Just like Arthur, I was different from my peers, and just like him, nothing stopped me from learning English. Through my determination, tenacity, and faith in myself, I was able to not only become fluent in English but also fall in love with the British culture. Before I became comfortable in my new niche, all of my belongings were hurled into moving boxes heading to their new home: Indiana. This time, I embraced the challenge of transitioning to a new country and a new high school. I was energized, and set high expectations for myself: I danced 15 hours a week, engaged in community services, and took the most rigorous classes. As the little Togo boy pulled on my sleeve, his enormous smile brought me back to the classroom.

Arthur taught me hope. In junior year, learning, to me, took on a new meaning. My journey to Ghana deepened my unshakable passion for understanding the world. I want to study the underlying economical and political issues of nations. I developed an insatiable hunger for the academics that will help me capitalize on my unusual upbringing to bridge gaps between cultures, promote international dialogue, and create business opportunities for developing countries.

The author joined Duke in 2013.

Common App Essay 4 (from Dr. Huang's student)

"Ten years," I murmured. "Today marks ten years since I found out about my heart condition." My eyes closed, I took a deep breath, mentally preparing myself for my fifth echocardiogram. Shivering as the all-too familiar biting cold of the medical examination table beneath me seeped through the flimsy fabric of the hospital gown, I crossed my fingers and hoped for positive results.

One year earlier, lying on the same table, I received an echocardiogram that transformed a triennial checkup into a wake-up call: my bicuspid aortic valve had been expanding at an abnormally fast rate. Though bicuspid aortic valves pose little threat to health, enlarged valves can cause aortic ruptures, often leading to death. Frustration and fear bubbled within me from the news, especially as the only information I was given was that I would need to return for an appointment one year later.

I refused to believe that the only power I had was to sit back and wait for another year. Therefore, with a description of my condition's deterioration in hand, I applied the research skills I had developed through school to a search for information regarding what my worsening condition entailed and ways to impede its exacerbation. Though my original goal had been to answer a few questions, with each question answered, a myriad of new questions surfaced, feeding into the flames of my desire to uncover the heart of the matter. Books and papers scattered across my desk, piling into towers surpassing my height and literally burying my head within the books. I began to notice ties between the medical information I had gathered and statistics: papers using linear regressions to analyze risk factors of enlarged valves and clinical data indicating whether treatment benefits were statistically significant. Fascinated by the applications of what I had learned to my condition, I decided I wanted to make my own contribution to the research.

Within weeks, I found myself planted outside the doors of a university building, a simple extension of my arm capable of filling the gap between me and the door handle, between a quest for greater knowledge and the map that would lead the way to discovery. Ready to begin my research internship, I entered the building, the large, all caps, black lettering that read "Biostatistics" to my left reassuring me that I had found the correct place to expand my intellectual horizons in the statistical and medical fields. The opened doors to the Biostatistics Department welcomed me to my home for the next few summers: my cubicle.

The first step I took was to familiarize myself with statistics concepts to which I had not been introduced in school. Articles about concepts ranging from the Bonferroni correction to neuropathies crowded my search history, and I became increasingly intrigued by issues that had yet to be solved. Using my increasing knowledge of statistics, I compiled data for a project that would solve problems related to the drug development process. After coauthoring a paper, however, I still felt unsatisfied by my work. Realizing my discontent stemmed from the lack of awareness of the importance of statistics in my community, I initiated a new event at my school to bring together statisticians and students for a discussion of the role of statistics in solving problems.

My fingers tingling after I had finally uncrossed them, I opened my eyes. As the swishing sounds from the echocardiography machine came to a halt, my cardiologist proclaimed that my condition had become stable. I felt a swell of relief, relief that not only had I beaten the obstacles facing my heart, but I had also been able to provide that relief to others through my work of sharing my passion for statistics.

The author joined Yale in 2016