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## How to Tackle the UC Application

By Elizabeth LaScala

The University of California application cycle opens Nov. 1 and closes Nov. 30. Having just returned from the annual University of California Counselors' Conference (I attended the one hosted by UCLA this year), I brought back the latest tips for high school seniors who plan to complete the UC application.

- Use the personal statement to add clarity, depth and meaning to your application. There are two prompts (essay questions) that in combination are called the Personal Statement. The maximum word limit is 1,000 words. These can be divided in whatever way you wish between the two prompts, as long as neither essay is less than 250 words. Treat the Personal Statement like a personal interview and directly and clearly answer the questions using detailed examples to illustrate your points. Save the creativity for other applications. Be honest, sincere and real. In other words, be yourself.

- Review your application critically before submission. Pretend to be an admissions reader. What questions may come up in the reader's mind as he or she reviews your application? Have you attended different high schools? Have you been employed many hours a week? Did your grades fluctuate? If you started working many hours and your grades dipped during junior year, a reader might reasonably wonder: "Why did the student work so many hours at the expense of grades?" If you worked to supplement family income because a parent lost a job, explain that.

- Use your transcript to list courses and grades - don't guess or rely on memory.

- Many abbreviations and acronyms have multiple meanings. It is best to spell things out except for the most commonly accepted abbreviations (e.g. dept. for department).

- Use the Additional Comments section. You have 550 words. If you need it, use it wisely to explain one or more special circumstances. It is not wise to make negative statements about a teacher who assigned a poor grade. It is wise to use this section to convey the reason you took a community college class. Note the difference between complaining about the faults of others versus explaining why you took initiative to take a course that your high school stopped offering or because there was a conflict with another important course or activity.

- Review the 250 restricted UC scholarships that are available and apply to as many as you qualify for; there is a limit of 16.

- Report all SAT and ACT test scores. The UC will pick the highest score in a single sitting. Pick one campus to send official scores and the UC will circulate them to the other campuses you apply to.

- Don't be modest. Recount all your activities, honors and awards but be sure not to exaggerate your accomplishments. Your application is subject to verification. A random sample is taken each cycle and the applicant is asked for proof of participation in an activity or receipt of an honor or award.

It is important to tell the UC everything you want them to know. The UC does not ask for counselor or teacher recommendations. Each campus relies on the application to learn everything about you.

Need more help? Call: 1 (800) 207-1710 or write the help desk: [ucinfo@applyucsupport.net](mailto:ucinfo@applyucsupport.net).

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