



*A Dedicated and Personalized Consulting Service for Business School and other Graduate School Applicants*

# A COLLECTION OF 30 SUCCESSFUL MBA ESSAYS

*Gateway to your dream schools*

Written by MER Students Accepted into  
the Top 30 Business Schools

Poonam Tandon  
Founder, President- myEssayReview

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	3
About MyEssayReview (MER) .....	3
Why Choose MER? .....	4
MER Success Stories: .....	11
Free Resources .....	13
MER Students Share their Application Journey and MBA Experience .....	13
Importance of ‘Sample’ Essays in this collection .....	13
Sample #1- Goals Essay–Booth.....	15
Sample #2- Goals Essay- ISB .....	17
Sample #3- Harvard’s Open- ended Essay .....	18
Sample #4– Accomplishment Essay- Ross .....	20
Sample #5- Accomplishment/ Failure Essay -INSEAD .....	21
Sample #6- Leadership Essay- Booth .....	23
Sample #7- Leadership Essay- Kellogg .....	25
Sample #8- Team work/ Challenge Essay– Kellogg.....	27
Sample #9- Challenge Essay- Booth.....	29
Sample #10- Setback Essay- Kellogg .....	30
Sample #11- Setback Essay- Kelley .....	31
Sample #12- Background Essay- Wharton .....	33
Sample #13- Background Essay- Haas .....	36
Sample #14- Contribution Essay- Yale.....	38
Sample #15- Contribution Essay- Wharton .....	40
Sample #16- Introduction Essay- McCombs .....	42
Sample #17- Ethical Dilemma Essay– Kelley .....	43
Sample #18- Best Mistake Essay– Kellogg .....	45
Sample #19- Defining Principles Essay- Haas.....	47
Sample #20- Culture Essay– Emory .....	48
Sample #21- Culture Essay– INSEAD .....	49
Sample # 22- Strengths/ Characteristics Essay– UNC.....	50
Sample #23- Strengths/ Weakness Essay– INSEAD .....	52

Sample # 24- Random Things about you- Fuqua.....	54
Sample #25: Shocking Trend Essay- Oxford.....	58
Sample #26- Introduction Essay Booth .....	60
Sample #27– Optional Essay– (Additional Information).....	61
Sample #28- Optional Essay- (Low GPA).....	62
Sample #29– Re-applicant Essay- ISB .....	63
Sample #30- Re-applicant Essay – INSEAD .....	64

## INTRODUCTION

### About MyEssayReview (MER)

Founded in 2011, myEssayReview (MER) is a **dedicated, personalized, and affordable** B-school consulting service that believes in the principle that all applicants possess **unique perspectives** and **life experiences** that set them apart. Because of this personalization, 90% of MER students have been accepted into the majority (not one, but the majority!!) of their chosen schools. MER students, with scores between 610- 680, have secured admission to Kellogg, Booth, ISB, CMU, Manchester, Haas, Duke, Columbia, Ross, LBS, Schulich, IIM, and UCLA . Some have secured admission into CEIBS, HKUST, GW, IESE, USC, Ross, Fuqua, and other great programs with scholarships.

Similarly, MER students with high GMAT scores (typically 700+) have **secured admissions** from top programs such as Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Tuck, Kellogg, and Booth and have also received **fellowships** from Darden, Anderson, Tuck, Ivy Richards, Kellogg, Yale, UCLA, Emory, Cornell, Duke, IE, UCLA, LBS, INSEAD, Warwick CMU, Ross, GW, ISB, Emory Kelley, McCombs, and Wisconsin, etc.

[Learn more](#)

## Why Choose MER?

### The Best

Poonam Tandon, a Ph.D. in English with 30 years of teaching experience in India and the United States, founded MER (myEssayReview) in 2011. Since its inception, she has worked as a full-time consultant, collaborating with more than 460 applicants worldwide on their admission essays for various MBA programs (full-time, part-time, and executive), Ph.D. programs, and other Master's programs. She is a master storyteller with extensive experience in helping students craft compelling narratives for Business schools and other specialized graduate programs across the US, Canada, Europe, and Asia. Poonam is also a member of AIGAC (Association of Graduate Admission Consultants) since 2013 and has participated in conferences held by the prestigious US and European business schools, such as LBS, INSEAD, HEC, Cambridge Judge, HBS, MIT, Babson, Ross, Kellogg, and Booth. Throughout her illustrious four-decade-long professional career, she has reviewed over 11,000+ essays composed by applicants worldwide.

### [Learn More](#)

### Proven

Over the past 14 years, Poonam has achieved **remarkable success** with her students, boasting an impressive 90% acceptance rate **in the top 20 schools**. Her guidance has led her students to secure admissions with scholarships ranging from 30% to 70% at esteemed institutions like Darden, Kelley, Ross, Kellogg, UCLA, Yale, Haas, CMU, Tuck, Emory, Cornell, Ivy Richards, Rice, Georgia Tech, Maryland, Wisconsin, ISB, McCombs, CEIBS, and GWU, among others. Poonam's story-telling acumen and her dedication to her work have catapulted her students to tremendous success and earned her the distinction of being **among the 5 most-reviewed consultants** on the GMAT Club from 2012 to 2023.

### [Learn More](#)

### Simple

Poonam firmly believes that every customer **deserves the best**. Hence, she doesn't follow a cookie-cutter approach or slots you in any template or profile. Instead, she provides in-depth and highly personalized support and guidance tailored to your

unique needs. Her passion drives her to go above and beyond, ensuring that your application embodies the exceptional quality she is renowned for. Unlike other companies, Poonam refrains from compartmentalizing her services into Silver, Gold, or Platinum segments. Whether you choose a **1-school or 5-school package**, you will receive an unwavering level of support that consistently upholds her high standards.

## [Learn More](#)

### **More Personal**

Poonam is committed to gaining a comprehensive understanding of each student to ensure **their best narratives** are selected for their essays. She demonstrates her extraordinary ability and patience to ensure that her students settle for nothing less than the best. **Every student works directly on a one-on-one basis with Poonam, the founder and CEO of myEssayReview, and not with any part-time or junior consultants.** She works with no more than 5 applicants at a given time. Thus, she thoroughly assesses your resume even before the initial conversation and asks pointed questions to uncover the ‘hidden gems’ for appropriate positioning in their essays.

## [Sign up for one -hour Profile Evaluation Session Priced at \\$99](#)

### **High Value**

At \$999 for one school and \$1799 for three schools, MER offers an unparalleled value proposition that stands out from any perspective. MER prices are nearly 60% lower than its direct competitors. The distinction becomes more prominent when you realize that MER surpasses the quality of the expensive Gold packages offered by some firms. Achieving this has been made possible by minimizing technology and personnel overheads. **Moreover, unlike other companies, Poonam refrains from charging her students additional rush service fees.**

## [Learn More about packages](#)

### **A Proven Track Record**

MER has released the stats of students we have assisted with different programs from 2011 to 2023. Click [here](#) for the list.

### **A Snapshot of MER’s Successes**

The above list of MER’s success stories can help you with the following:

1. Understand a strong application's role in securing admission (and scholarships, too)
2. Assist you in narrowing down your list of achievable schools based on your GMAT score.

While the above list is not comprehensive, it gives you an idea of what is feasible.

**Admit to Top 20 schools, some with scholarships:**

Poonam has guided more than 460 students to successful admissions into their dream schools, spanning various regions worldwide. These include prestigious institutions in the **USA** (*Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Kellogg, Booth, Darden, Wharton, Haas, Duke, Ross, Columbia, UCLA, USC, McCombs, Kelley, Tuck, Yale, Rice, GW, CMU, Foster, Georgia Tech, Emory, Mays, Purdue, UNC, McDonough, and Wisconsin*), **in Europe** (*LBS, HEC, INSEAD, IESE, IMD, Oxford, Cambridge, IE, Imperial, RSM, Warwick, Cranfield, UCL, LSE, and Manchester*), **in Canada** (*Rotman, Schulich, Telfer, McGill, Concordia DeGroote, Ivey, and Ted Rogers*), and **in Asia** (*ISB, IIM, HKU, NUS, HKUST, and CEIBS*).

Highlighted here are some of her recent accomplishments over the past few years, specifically with students achieving remarkable GMAT scores of 700 and above:

- Mansi (770)- HBS, Stanford, Kellogg, INSEAD, and Wharton
- Arjun, Rishi, John (not real name) (710, 710, and 740)- Oxford SAID
- Ben O Bright (720)- CMU, Duke, and Cornell
- Aarti, Alisha (740, 710)- Tuck
- Bhawna (710)- Tuck, ISB
- Andre (700)- IMD
- Priya- (730)- INSEAD, LBS
- Eduardo- (710)- MIT
- Parveen- (690)- ISB, IE
- Alisha- (710)-Ross, Tuck
- Preetham- UCLA FEMBA
- Reetvik- (720)- ISB and McDonough
- Kunal- Booth, Haas, Foster, UCLA
- Preetahm – UCLA FEMBA
- Rajib- LSE
- Paul – CBS EMBA

Poonam has an excellent success rate with students who received scholarships.

To name just a few:

- Abhishek (760)- Booth, MIT, UCLA, and Darden; joined Darden with 50% scholarship
- Carlos (720)- Ivy Richards, Emory, and Cornell with more than US \$70K in scholarships; joined Cornell
- Utkarsh (760)- Tepper, UNC, Duke (50%), Kellogg (50% Tuition), and Yale (\$40K) with scholarships
- Andrew (770)- Cambridge, LBS, and Oxford with scholarship; joined Cambridge
- Vladimir (700)- MIF program of LBS
- Eduardo (740)- (Kellogg: 70K Donald Jacobs scholarship), Yale SOM (\$20K), UCLA Anderson, (\$70K) and Berkeley Haas; joined Kellogg
- Ryan (710)- Emory with a merit-based scholarship (\$45K for 1-year program, and \$60K for 2-year program); joined 1-year program
- Aditi (700)- Foster with 10K in-state tuition fee and Forte fellowship for Women in Business
- Pablo (710) Ross with full scholarship
- Palida (700)- CMU with a 10K scholarship
- Ruchika (750)- McCombs with 30 K scholarship
- Rohit (770)- Kellogg
- Shekhar (780)- Booth with 40K scholarship
- Karan (760) Kelley– full ride
- Katherine (335 GRE) -Anderson (120 K scholarships) and Kellogg
- Alaam (750)- NYU, Rice Foster, McCombs, UCLA with scholarships
- Om- (730) – Kelley – 35K scholarship
- Tyler- USC and UCLA ( Part time) with scholrships



## **Admits with low GMAT Score**

Since 2011, Poonam has assisted numerous students in gaining acceptance into the top 30 MBA programs despite **their low GMAT scores, between 580-680**. Some of them are:

- Amrita (680)- Kelley, CMU, and Emory, with scholarships; went to Tepper
- Fatima (590)- Cornell and Wisconsin with scholarship; went to Wisconsin
- Muhammad (620)- Babson, Purdue, and William & Mary with scholarship; went to Purdue
- Axel (620)- EMBA program of Haas and Wharton with scholarship (\$20K)
- Nibedita (610)- Rice and McCombs
- Syed (620)- GW and McMaster with 20K scholarship
- Anisha (680)- Oxford
- Shiv (690)- HKUST & CEIBS with 40% scholarship
- Michelle (600)- Rice
- Andre (680)- IMD
- Balaji (610)- Booth evening program
- Suet (620), Sara (640), and Jin (660)- LBS
- Mahesh (690) HKUST, and NUS with scholarship
- Nisha (321 GRE) Ross and McCombs (w/ scholarships)
  - Stephanie (610) UCLA Anderson, UC San Diego, UC Irvine, McGill, and Concordia
- Some other success stories with low GMAT scores are for- ISB (620), Kellogg (PT) (660), Booth (PT) (680), Duke (620), UCLA (620), McCombs (610), Emory (620), Schulich (640, 610), GW (620); Tefler (650), NUS (680), McCombs (670) and RSM with scholarship ( 580).

## **Success with Re-applicants:**

Poonam has been successful with many **re-applicants** as well. To name a few:

- Srinivas (Booth)
- Tribhuvan (ISB)
- Tanay- Maryland (56K tuition and assistantship), Carlson (24 K scholarship), and Boston Questrom)

- Nithish- Rice (75% scholarship), Tepper, ISB, Kelley (17K per year), McCombs
- Dinesh -Schulich
- Harshal- Haas and Tepper with 15k scholarship
- Askand- McCombs with scholarship

### **Success with Applicants with Employment/ Education Gap:**

Poonam doesn't hesitate to accept candidates with serious red flags in their profile, such as long academic and employment gaps. She has successfully worked with candidates with **low GMAT and a long education/ employment gap**.

- Syed (620) had an academic gap of 1.5 years. He was accepted into three MBA programs- McMaster, George Washington University, and University of Sydney and received a 20K scholarship from GW University.
- Debarpan (650) made it to Tefler and Ted Rogers despite two years' employment gap.
- Alfred (700) got admitted into Oxford and NYU with an employment gap of 9 months.
- Praveen (690) made it to ISB and IE with an education gap, academic gap, and low GMAT.
- Alisha (710) got acceptance from Tuck and Ross with an employment gap of 6 months.
- Faisal (680) made it to Ross, Haas, and Cambridge with an academic gap of 5 years.
- Bhargavi (320 GRE) made it to Boston Questrom (w/ scholarship) with 1 year 9 months job gap.

Poonam delved deep into their narratives to understand the reasons/ circumstances behind this gap. She positioned their stories in a compelling and persuasive manner, helping them secure admission into their dream schools.

Additionally, Poonam has been successful with **Specialized Masters programs, part-time and executive MBA programs**. Here are some of her recent successes are :

- Saurav- (Anderson and Kellogg- PT MBA)
- Dennis- (UCLA and Haas-PT MBA)
- Eric- (USC Marshal-PT MBA)
- Pardeep, Vergil, and Frank Jin (Chicago Booth)
- Preetham (UCLA and USC Marshall PT MBA)
- Sunil (UCLA EMBA)

- Shailesh ( INSEAD GEMBA with dual scholarships)
- Ramesh, (INSEAD GEMBA)
- Kunal- (Foster, Booth, UCLA, and Haas part-time MBA )
- Shray, Ajit, Nikit, Devashish, Harshal, and Saurav (Haas EWMBA)
- Shweta and Nikhil (Wharton EMBA)
- Thai – (McCombs EMBA )
  - Rafal -IMD and INSEAD ( EMBA)
  - Harsha -INSEAD ( EMBA w/scholarships)
  - Blaise -INSEAD ( EMBA w/scholarships)
  - Paul – CBS( EMBA)
  - Ayaleneshe – (Warwick-DLMBA)
  - Jayvanee –(Manchester Global MBA)
  - Ananda-(LBS Sloan Masters in leadership and Strategy)
  - Rajib- LSE -masters inExecutive Global MSC in management
  - Anupriya- Columbia ( Non-profit Management program, Pennsylvania (Non-profit Masters leadership program)

## MER Success Stories

Read below to learn why her students love working with her.

### **1. Accepted to the top 5 MBA programs including HBS and GSB! Thanks Poonam:) Mansi**

I talked to 5-6 consultants and was really disheartened when they didn't believe in my passion and dream of getting into HBS. They asked me to apply to more "safe" schools. When I had an introductory talk with Poonam, she sounded really encouraging and yet practical. And I knew that I found my companion for this journey. I was keen on applying to HBS in Round 1, but Poonam suggested me to keep HBS for round 2 to give enough time to my dream school. Now when I look back, I feel that this was the most valuable advice she gave me. [Read Debrief](#)

### **2. Admitted at Kellogg, Haas, Yale, and UCLA Anderson, with generous scholarships-Eduardo**

I was interviewed at all the six schools I applied, admitted to four of them (Kellogg, Berkeley-Haas, Yale SOM and UCLA Anderson) and waitlisted at Stanford GSB. Plus, three of them offered me substantial scholarships! Kellogg-70K scholarship (Donald Jacobs scholarship), Yale SOM- 20k scholarship, UCLA Anderson -70k scholarship. Now I'm heading to Kellogg with a scholarship! I had never imagined I would be so successful. Without doubt, Poonam has contributed substantially. **Read Debrief**

Click [here](#) for **his recommendation on LinkedIn**.

### **3. Got accepted into all the 3 schools I applied to Duke, CMU, and Cornell. Thanks, Poonam– Ben O'Bright**

I wanted someone with extensive knowledge and experience with the MBA process to be able to help guide and trim down my essays. After reading the reviews, I decided to go with Poonam of MER. I really enjoyed going through this process with Poonam. I liked how she made suggestions regarding content that she felt might be beneficial but never pushed me to make the changes. At the end of the day, the essays and content remained mine. [Read Debrief](#)

#### **4. Accepted into Chicago Booth full-time MBA program with \$40K scholarship. Thanks, Poonam- Shekahar**

Poonam is excellent at seeing the bigger picture and distilling the key takeaways from an applicant's story. This allows her to see the value of each paragraph/line and make effective improvements in the structure to present a coherent narrative. Poonam's razor-sharp focus on cutting any clutter to show only the most impactful elements of the essay allows the writer to think and write freely and present the best drafts without worrying about the word limit. I really appreciate Poonam's going beyond her call of duty by working on a weekend to help me meet an impending deadline. [Read Debrief](#)

Click [here](#) for **his recommendation on LinkedIn**.

#### **5. Received admission offer from McCombs with scholarship. Thanks, Poonam- Askand ( Reapplicant)**

This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> year I was applying to B-schools, and Poonam understood the importance of this year's application for my career. I had an excellent experience working with Poonam in all aspects. More importantly, the softer aspects, such as motivation and encouragement provided at a crucial juncture of the application process, helped me a lot. I have received an admission offer from McCombs with a scholarship; I interviewed with Duke Fuqua and have been waitlisted by Stern and Haas. I am immensely grateful for the help Poonam provided during the application process. [Read Debrief](#)

Click [here](#) for **his recommendation on LinkedIn**.

#### **6. Accepted into Kellogg, UCLA Anderson (120K), Interviewed by CBS & Haas, W/L by Chicago Booth**

While searching for an MBA consultant, I came across Poonam's article on essay writing, which led me to MER. After our introductory call, I knew she was the right choice. She helped me refine my resume using the STAR method, clarify my school choices, and structure my essays through brainstorming and self-reflection. Her 25-questionnaire exercise was invaluable. She helped me show my best aspect to the admission committee and suggested many stories I had ignored earlier. Also, I faced a peculiar situation regarding my

recommenders, as both my recommenders quit PwC in late November 2022. Poonam helped me draft an optional essay explaining my situation. With her interview prep, I improved significantly. I'm thrilled to join Anderson with a \$120K scholarship—this wouldn't have been possible without Poonam's guidance! [Read Debrief](#)

Click [here](#) for **her recommendation on LinkedIn**.

## Free Resources

To benefit from the free resources MER offers, visit Poonam's [blog](#). Some of her **recent articles** are listed below:

1. [Road map to MBA Success: Essential Steps before Round 1 Deadlines](#)
2. [10 Mistakes to Avoid When Creating an MBA Resume](#)
3. [Overarching Essay Tips](#)
4. [12 Strategies to Get off the Waitlist](#)
5. [Importance of Self- Reflection in MBA Applications](#)
6. [Avoid these 13 common Mistakes in MBA Essays](#)
7. [How to Present Your Best Self in MBA Interviews](#)

## MER Students Share their Application Journey and MBA Experience

The MBA Application process is both challenging and time-consuming. Would you like to learn how real students successfully navigated this daunting admission journey and their experiences in business schools? If yes, explore video interviews featuring some of our successful MER students. The following blogs include their YouTube videos as well along with transcripts of their conversations with Poonam.

[Success Stories of MER Students in their Own words](#)

### Importance of 'Sample' Essays in this collection

When working with MBA applicants, Poonam frequently received a common request: "Could you provide us with a sample for this essay? While each applicant has a distinct writing style to showcase their unique traits, accomplishments, and backgrounds, having a

model essay can offer valuable guidance to help brainstorm ideas for their essays, making the writing process smoother In response, Poonam curated 30 essays on ten different topics written by some of her successful students for the top 20 business schools.

Please note these essays are composed by MER students who applied to various MBA programs from 2012 to 2018. To protect their identities, we have removed their names, as well as the names of the colleges they attended, and the companies they worked for.

Enjoy 😊

## Sample #1- Goals Essay–Booth

**How will an MBA from Chicago Booth- from the Evening MBA Program or Weekend MBA Program specifically- at this point in your life help you achieve both your short- and long- term goals? (500 words maximum)**

As a teenager, I was fascinated by personal computers that could screen movies, engage me for hours in visually striking games and answer all my questions. I picked computer science as my major for my bachelor's degree and was drawn to the practical applications that access to real-time data can provide. My curiosity led me to pursue my Master's in Computer Science at the University of XXXX, where I started my career as a Research Programmer. Noticing my communication, leadership, and organizational skills, the IT director soon tasked me with leading a multi-campus team to implement a student portal.

The transition from a non-profit to a startup software company allowed me to help architect the digital buying system, which played a vital role in transforming the company into a market leader. My deep knowledge of the products earned me Product Manager's role, which aligns more with the core business and provides more growth opportunities. My experience as a technologist has been invaluable in performing my current role as a product manager, helping me provide commercially viable and technically scalable solutions.

My short-term goal is to rise to a senior product role in the advertising technology industry. To achieve that, I need the marketing, operations, and management skills that an MBA offers. Also, working with future leaders at Booth will help me identify my unique leadership style. The skills and network I will acquire through an MBA and my industry experience will help me achieve my long-term goal of becoming an entrepreneur in digital marketing technology.

My goal to provide data-driven and quantifiable solutions draws me to the “analyze everything” approach the Booth MBA program professed. I tackle problems by questioning assumptions and challenging the status quo, and I hope to refine these skills at Booth. I look forward to being part of the various student-led groups that match my career objectives, such as the *Entrepreneurship and Venture Capital club*, *Booth Marketing Club*, and the *Corporate Strategy and Management Group*.

The Financial Accounting course I took under Professor Regina Wittenberg already taught me the various accounting principles and their application in real organizations. I am keen to solve real-world problems with the help of fellow students from multiple disciplines. Also, I



look forward to discussing the current issues facing the digital marketing world with the students and professors.

Booth part-time program will provide me the opportunity to assimilate the teachings and research findings of Booth faculty and apply them at work the next day. The practical application will help me gain more knowledge from academic learning. The part-time curriculum also allows me to continue my professional career without interruption and to pursue challenging assignments that can fast-track my career growth. If I continue to perform well, I will most likely be promoted to product director within the next two years.

## Sample #2- Goals Essay- ISB

**Enrolling in a Business School is an important career decision. Critically look at your career to date, the choices you have made, the key influences behind those choices, your goals for the future and how do you think ISB's PGP can help you in achieving your goals? (300 words)**

Fascinated by the idea of empowering business results through people, I embarked on an enriching journey of Human Capital Consulting at XXXX. After 20 months of advising Indian and International organizations, I joined YYYY, a pioneer of HR consulting in India, to deepen my solution expertise.

While I successfully solved my clients' diverse 'human capital' challenges, I was unequipped to solve their larger 'business challenges encompassing Operations, M&A, Marketing, and Strategy. I am, therefore, fueled by a desire to build a strong 'business' layer on my consulting foundation and advise clients across a broad spectrum of management challenges.

My short-term goal is to join a top-tier management consulting firm and help organizations make prudent business decisions. I can achieve my career aspiration only through theoretical and practical management education. I will leverage my experience across industries and skills acquired at the ISB to design practical solutions to the client's business challenges.

Substantial management consulting experience will help me realize my long-term career vision that is inspired by Dr. Santrupt Mishra, Global Director of HR and CEO (Aditya Birla Group). In the long term, I envision leading a large organization, reshaping its business, and driving competitiveness through innovation, high performance, and talent development.

ISB's PGP program perfectly matches my career aspirations. ISB's case-based learning method, faculty from top global business schools, core curriculum, and electives such as ELP will equip me to analyze real- life business situations and design effective solutions. ISB's research-focused curriculum, with contemporary cases, will set me up for success in an ever-changing business environment. Consulting clubs' resources, such as case competitions, mock interviews, and internship preparation workshops, will be invaluable. With my business acumen and personal brand enhanced through a rigorous year of learning and networking at ISB, I will successfully take the next step down my career path.

### Sample #3- Harvard's Open-ended Essay

**As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA program? ( no one limit)**

I grew up in a conservative and patriarchal society in a small town in North India. Like most parents in Indian society, my father didn't want to spend money on my education; he instead planned to save for my brother's education and my dowry. My mother had faced the same prejudice and was forced to get married at the young age of 19. Fearing similar consequences, I decided to speak up. I was punished for being a rebel, but I refused to give up. Seeing my passion for studying, one of my teachers sponsored the fees for the engineering entrance exam and guided me. With determination and hard work, I passed India's most demanding engineering exam. This teenage experience instilled in me the core values of courage, hard work, and determination and boosted my confidence to stand up for myself.

After graduating from XXXX, I joined the world's leading oil-field service provider, YYYY. Though I was excited about designing oil wells on offshore rigs, I was yet to live the real challenges of this industry. I found myself surrounded by gigantic pumps, noisy cranes, and heavy iron oil rigs in the company of 100 pairs of male oilfield workers who pried on my every move. I worked in remote locations and harsh environments, from anywhere in the middle of an ocean to the middle of a desert, where even basic hygiene and sanitary facilities were extremely hard to find. But I stayed determined and consistently delivered successful projects for my clients. These extreme challenges early in my career made me resilient and patient.

When I moved to Indonesia, I was assigned to lead a workshop team of about 20. I was the only female expat on the team, and most of my team members were older than me. They didn't even accept me as a team member, let alone accept me as a leader. I started by learning their language and lunching with them in the Indonesian cafeteria rather than the continental one. As I embraced their culture by joining them during the fasting month of 'Ramadan,' I found them reciprocating with the same respect and acceptance. I then started doing daily workshop tasks differently, showcasing better efficiency. Rather than instructing new methods, I led by example, motivating them to adopt them. I gradually improved team efficiency, enabling us to accomplish more challenging projects in less time. I learned to develop strong interpersonal relations and be a collaborative leader.

My experience as a service provider motivated me to grow in the industry and join 'ZZZZ'. Before the downturn hit us, I was leading contracting for 57 units, but in a span of six months, I had to reduce it to 19. The biggest challenge came when I was asked to cancel contracts for almost 40 people. This gave me many sleepless nights. Having failed to de-hire personnel, I was summoned by our CFO. I requested him to provide me with one month and promised him to deliver the same production at 20% lesser cost, thereby forgoing the need to lay-off. For the next month, I worked tirelessly, took the initiative to save every penny, and closely monitored expenditures. My efforts my team was motivated and supported me in my endeavors. However, I was still 10% short of my promised targets by the month's end. Disheartened, I entered the CFO's room with the actual numbers, and to my surprise, he still canceled the layoffs. Impressed with my efforts, he recommended me for an early promotion to 'Lead Engineer.'

Though we successfully survived the downturn in the short term, I realized that it is imperative to hedge against diminishing oil demand in the long term. This realization deepened on my recent diving trip to Sumba Island, where I saw dead corals and almost no marine life due to an oil spill that happened 500 km away eight years ago. The oil spill had affected the livelihood of thousands of seaweed farmers and fishermen. This experience strengthened my belief to harness energy in a clean, safe and sustainable manner.

In the long term, I envision leading a global renewable energy company and driving the transformation from fossil to clean renewable energy. During my recent interaction with our Chief Strategy Officer, I was further encouraged, especially by learning about his plans to diversify ZZZZ into renewable energy. He emphasized HBS being the perfect catalyst for achieving my vision and transforming me into an impactful leader. My personal and professional experiences have built a strong foundation. Building on this foundation and my technical knowledge of the energy industry, I want to develop my business acumen, gain a strategic outlook, and be a transformational and impactful leader. Studying at HBS with the brightest students from around the world and using the case method in conjunction with the FIELD method will make me practice critical decision-making every single day and learn to adapt to different leadership styles in diverse situations.

With my passion for learning, collaborative attitude, and unique professional experiences, I will add a different perspective to the case discussions at HBS. I look forward to two years of excitement, rigor, and passion!

## Sample #4– Accomplishment Essay- Ross

**What are you most proud of personally and why? How does it shape who you are today? (400 words)**

In 2005, when I bid adieu to college, I was pressed by the burden of indebtedness– not a huge loan amount, but the immense value of the education I had acquired. ‘How can I pay back? And if at all, when?’ Puzzled by this thought, I didn’t realize that the answer to ‘when’ would lie miles away on the other side of the world– America

After I stepped into New York City, my acquaintances steadily grew in number, most importantly, under the umbrella of Jadavpur University East Coast Alumni (JUECA). And the ‘how’ stood in disguise. Encouraged by generations of highly accomplished alumni members, I organized Bengali cultural festivals, coordinated alumni events, and welcomed new members. These occasions provided strong platforms for exchanging ideas, understanding each other’s needs, and helping one another by leveraging the strength of the alumni network. As individual bonds grew stronger, I wondered, “How can I make these bonds permanent?”

Engaging people for a long time was the biggest hurdle in my way. Hence, occasionally, I volunteered to interview eminent alums and published a written excerpt of their life-stories on the community’s website. This invoked people’s interests, enabling them to stay actively connected to the forum and extend their help when necessary. Moreover, it bridged the distance for many passive members who couldn’t attend the alumni events in person. With increasing participation, the energy within the group grew. A flurry of ideas and initiatives followed, the most significant being the collective contribution to University’s alumni association in Kolkata to fund scholarships for the institute’s needy incoming under-graduate talents. Thus, my relentless efforts eventually translated into this novel act, lighting up the dreams of education for many and diminishing the shadow of moral obligation that had followed me till then. Living in that moment, I felt the proudest ever!

The satisfaction of giving back has amplified my sense of belongingness to society. This experience has sown within me the virtue of fraternity feeling that went beyond the boundaries of textbooks into the realm of ‘equal opportunity for all’. Being a small part of the bigger community couldn’t suppress my desire for a greater cause. I wish to carry forward the same energy, enthusiasm, and sincerity to the Center for Social Impact and join hands with my MBA peers in shaping a better society that will personify us.

## Sample #5- Accomplishment/ Failure Essay -INSEAD

**Describe the achievement of which you are most proud and explain why. In addition, describe a situation where you failed. How did these experiences impact your relationships with others? Comment on what you learned.** (Approximately 400 words)

Due to the oil downturn of 2014 and a merger in 2016, XXXX started focusing on innovative and sustainable low-cost methods. I learned that one of our major consuming chemicals- Hydrochloric acid (HCl), is a waste byproduct in the fertilizer industry and can be bought at throwaway prices. First, I took the initiative and presented this business case to the management. Next, to convince them to pursue a new strategy, I proposed a pilot project to minimize risk, which they immediately approved. And finally, I designed my core team in the field to test the pilot project, but the biggest challenge was to motivate them to work beyond regular work hours. So, I involved them in the decision-making process and requested HR pay them over time.

For the next few weeks, I supervised the entire on-ground operation. I demonstrated the pilot project's success, revamping XXXX's HCl procurement strategy and saving more than 1 MMUSD annually. This experience taught me essential lessons in taking the initiative and convincing management by carefully evaluating risks. I also understood the importance of motivating team members and leveraging their skills to achieve common goals.

My confidence to take the initiative was built over time while delivering projects to clients globally. In January 2014, I was leading a team of 3 operators for one of my starting projects in Indonesia on an offshore rig. Everyone, including the client and my team, spoke 'Bahasa', the Indonesian language, whereas I had just started learning Bahasa. This led to miscommunication. Post-project execution, when I discussed with my English-speaking manager, he explained that I had misinterpreted one of the conventional terms in Bahasa and had installed it at the wrong depth. I felt miserable as this could potentially reduce the well life from 20 to 10 years. I requested my manager to communicate this to our client else we would lose his trust. My manager appreciated my honesty and informed the client. Initially, the client was upset, but we offered him remedial treatment free of cost.

This failure taught me to be extra cautious during project executions, especially in a new location. Also, it strengthened my belief in transparency for a trustworthy relationship which earned me respect from my team and the client. Through these experiences, my management gained confidence in me for delivering challenging projects, and my peers respected me for my honesty.

## Sample #6- Leadership Essay- Booth

**What leadership characteristics do you feel make for the best leaders, and how do you strive to obtain them? And, on the flip side, what are you doing to avoid any potential leadership pitfalls that you observe in yourself or others? (750 words maximum)**

In my opinion, a good leader should be able to communicate and collaborate and, in the process, inspire people to work towards the goal. Working closely with others, listening to their issues, and collaborating with them to work towards a solution creates a bond. Later, when faced with problems, they will reach out to their leaders for solutions to deal with the situation.

A few months ago, I was working as a Product lead on a critical and time-sensitive project to upgrade one of our key external integrations. The project had an enormous operational impact on our clients and had a tight deadline, requiring the team to put in several extra hours. I worked out a plan with the technical team and stayed back late nights with the technical team though I did not have a role to play. My action boosted the team's morale, who volunteered to work harder to meet the deadline. However, a few days before the deadline, we encountered a serious issue that jeopardized the project. The solution I proposed was deemed risky as it involved significant coordination and required explicit approval from all of our clients. In 24 hours, I coordinated a mass effort with 10 different account teams to get permissions from 100+ clients.

Finally, the project was delivered on time, saving the company hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. When my group's VP praised me for my effort, I told him that the real credit should go to the technical team who worked round the clock to make this project a success. Later that day, the technical lead informed me that my VP appreciated the team's effort. The technical lead thanked me for my gesture and mentioned that the team was not given due credit in past projects.

Another quality of a great leader, I believe, is the ability to identify the right talent in his team, groom their skills and build efficient teams. Earlier this year, our company went through a merger. We welcomed five new team members to our team, and as the lead of the digital product, I was tasked with integrating the team. The team members had varying experiences and technical backgrounds and were spread across three different time zones. I first identified the strengths of each of the new members and assessed how their qualities and abilities could complement the team. Through discussions, I found out their interests and skill set. I then created several two-person groups and assigned them to work on specific areas so each



member would complement the other's skill set, pick up new skills in the process and lead to cross-training. The members changed teams and the areas they worked on every few weeks. Within a few months, this process created a well-knit and skillfully diverse team, efficiently handling various tasks. The integrated team was able to take 30% more workload and improve their average response time for support by 50%. Its huge success motivated two other teams to implement a similar approach.

I think the most significant pitfall I have observed in a leader is deceit. Giving false promises and skewing the facts may work in the short term but will eventually lead to losing peoples' trust. A leader should be able to communicate factually and set realistic goals to inspire others. If I had not communicated truthfully to the technical team that they will have to work long days and nights and set real expectations on the end results, the project would have failed.

Another paramount negative quality of a leader I have noticed is being selfish and putting one's self-interest before that of the team/organization. I keenly notice every specific team member's contributions and ensure everyone gets their due recognition. If I had taken the credit for the project's success, the word would have gotten out, which might have affected my chances of expecting the same level of cooperation for the next project. I strongly believe that having leadership in thought and vision is not enough to make one a leader. The small personal gestures enhance the perception of a true leader and can motivate others to work towards the ultimate goal. I am excited to further hone my leadership qualities through the courses and workshops offered through the Lead Exploration and Development program offered by Booth.

## Sample #7- Leadership Essay- Kellogg

**What have been your most significant leadership experiences? What challenges did you face, and what impact did you have? This is your opportunity to explain how you Think Bravely. (500 words)**

In my personal and professional life, I have faced several situations in which I had to influence groups to generate results that contributed significantly to my organization. 2011 I was hired to coordinate the risk management process at XXXX. In March and September, we had to run an extensive risk inventory that involved gathering, treating, and reporting a massive amount of risk information to shareholders. Six months later, the headquarters in Germany decided to implement a unified corporate risk reporting tool to be in use by September 2011. This meant not only transferring databases but also changing the mindset of a large and diverse group of professionals.

To meet this challenge, I first drafted a plan to meet the expected deadlines with some buffer, and then scheduled initial alignment meetings with IT and HR. From these meetings, we generated a solid eight-week plan, which we presented to the board of officers for approval. After approval, I divided tasks amongst the three of us- our manager, our junior analyst, and me. My biggest challenge was keeping the people engaged by telling them that we had a challenge ahead and needed their help. Therefore, I scheduled dozens of meetings, and finally, we could migrate more than three years of risk documentation to the new corporate system and train almost 95% of the system users. The result was- TKCSA system migration was recognized as the group reference. The global risk management director visited us to collect our best practices and make them available at a group level.

Almost a year later, while working at YYYY on a project to help a large state-owned Brazilian bank to optimize its credit risk management processes and models, I faced a situation in which I was able to leverage the project management skills developed at TKCSA. When I joined this project, there was a massive delay in the schedule. We were operating in a team of just two consultants with a minimal budget, and I was the only consultant full-time allocated to the client. Noticing the client's increasing frustration, I approached my supervisors, suggesting we take on more responsibilities, but they were concerned about increasing the work hours without the corresponding reward. So, I decided that besides just advising, I would also develop simplified "pilot-schemes" spreadsheets using real client databases. The developed "pilot-schemes" spreadsheets had a potential to become assets in future projects. Finally, they ended up accepting the change, but I knew that if this plan failed, I would be blamed.

After working several unpaid overtime hours, we got the project back on track with a better client relationship. Also, we recently received the Inov@r Accenture Brazil award for the FY12/13 most innovative project in the risk management practice.

The experiences, though demanding, were unmatched because of the challenge of initiating change by me and influencing others. Additionally, they prepared me to adapt my leadership style to different contexts.

## Sample #8- Team work/ Challenge Essay– Kellogg

**Describe an instance where you encountered resistance in a professional team setting. How did you address the situation? (300 to 500 words)**

“Don’t try to re-invent the wheel,” said my colleague, Deepak, after I showed our team, consisting of 6 IT professionals and myself, my solution for a framework for XXXX enterprise applications. The solution was a re-engineered process to build a framework for the foundation services for the JCI enterprise applications that are the heart of our client’s \$30 Billion multi-industry business. I had developed a similar solution for several other major clients before, so I was confident that my solution was efficient and versatile enough to handle the upcoming product upgrades. I, therefore, expected no resistance from the team. Deepak was wary about the changes to the framework as many client applications utilize it, whereas I knew that the existing framework would not support future product upgrades and was bound to fail.

The next day, I approached my client manager and told him how confident I was about my solution and explained the benefits of adopting it. But he said he and the team were not confident about my solution. He also told me that since I was dealing with a system that was an essential part of YYYYY infrastructure, it required more than just a presentation to convince the team.

Disappointed but confident, I decided to prove my results by gathering the supporting data and demonstrating the team with sample prototypes. Over the next month, I worked on building application prototypes, developed a presentation to demonstrate the benefits of using my framework, and collected a few case-studies to support my theory.

A month after the last meeting, I approached my client manager and proposed my plan. I also showed him a few case studies and explained how the new solution could help the client cut down 20% of maintenance costs spent on supporting the applications. Then I addressed some of his concerns related to security and code migration. Impressed with my analysis, the client manager agreed to the presentation.

A couple of days later, I presented the solution to the team with a complete analysis of the benefits of the solution. I also demonstrated the prototype that I developed using my solution. After multiple rounds of presentations and discussions, the team was convinced that my solution offered greater benefits and agreed to adopt it. We later presented this solution to the IT directors from other JCI divisions and showed them the benefits the solution offered to

their enterprise IT applications. Six months later, this framework was established as a standard for enterprise IT applications across all JCI divisions.

Personally, overcoming this challenge is significant to me in terms of my confidence. Challenging the client team at a client location and winning my proposal made me more confident in speaking my mind about the project issues at work. Since then, I have never hesitated to express my opinion, and it has helped me provide many valuable contributions to the projects.

## Sample #9- Challenge Essay- Booth

**What is the most significant personal or professional challenge you have faced, and what key learning have you taken away from this experience?**

At the beginning of last year, my company went through a merger. One of the significant challenges for the technical teams was to come to a consensus on the software release process. The teams could not agree on the key processes after a few weeks of discussions. The primary issue was that the data services team I was a part of wanted specific controls, while the other teams opposed this additional control.

To help reach a compromise, I initiated talks with several members of the other two teams to understand the reasons behind the opposition. Eventually, I discovered that the resistance from other teams was due to a lack of trust and proper communication. I discussed the issue with my director and proposed that we needed to show the other two teams that we could add value and were willing to give up certain controls in the process that was not critical. To build trust, I volunteered to work with them. The effort also allowed me to emphasize what the teams would gain from this change which acted as the catalyst to renew conversations between the teams.

A few weeks later, the three teams agreed on a process that did not involve a massive overhaul of the existing process. This experience taught me how to build trust in forming an effective team, how to mediate a contentious issue and reach a middle ground acceptable to all parties.

## Sample #10- Setback Essay- Kellogg

**What's the greatest obstacle you've overcome (personally or professionally)? How has overcoming this obstacle prepared you to achieve success now and in the future? (350 word limit)**

In 2004, during my junior year, when I was at my parents' house for the mid-year vacation, I received terrible news during a medical check-up: I was diagnosed with cancer. I felt devastated; my world had fallen apart. I was frightened of the possibility of never being able to have children.

During two weeks of vacation left, I underwent a delicate surgery and faced the dilemma, "Should I request a leave of absence or not?" Requesting a leave of absence would be like admitting that cancer could beat me. Although I understood the seriousness of my medical condition and the need for continued treatment, I was unwilling to pause my life as I had worked hard towards my academic goal for three years. I asked the doctors if I could continue my studies for the semester and start radiotherapy treatment during the year-end vacation. They told me some risks were attached, but that could be mitigated with monthly follow-ups until I began radiotherapy.

I decided to continue with my studies. It was an extremely demanding academic semester, where I had to reconcile my studies, the research assistant internship, and the constant fear of bad medical news. The GPA for that semester was the lowest, yet the most 'celebrated.' After exams, I returned to my parents' house and underwent a month of radiotherapy. Finally, I was declared clinically cured after five years of semiannual medical follow-ups.

This setback taught me to go against the stream and take calculated risks. In my last project, I suggested going beyond the initial scope. I knew if my plan failed, I would be blamed, but I still decided to take the risk and could get the project back on track.

I strongly believe that one of the most critical business skills is to believe in your intuition and take the leap. The higher you climb the corporate ladder, the faster you have to make key business decisions. Trusting my intuition and taking calculated risks has made me a better-prepared professional for present and future success.

## Sample #11- Setback Essay- Kelley

**Describe a personal or professional challenge or set-back that you were able to overcome. What allowed you to persevere? (maximum 500 words)**

It was the dawn of September 1, 2006, and the world came crumbling down for me when my mother succumbed to terminal cancer. I was twenty-three then. The person who meant the world to me, my best friend and guide, was no longer beside me. I was shattered. In the pain of bereavement, I almost forgot that my dad, equally distressed by his loving wife's demise, was deteriorating physically.

To add to my grief, I faced another dilemma. Exactly four days after the tragedy, before the completion of funeral rituals, I was scheduled to leave my bereaved dad behind, and travel 1,300 miles to join my first employment training in Coimbatore. There was a war within me. "Should I go and join my training or mourn the irreversible, stay back unemployed, and join the year later?" I decided to stay back and canceled my train ticket.

It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> sleepless night when the phone rang at midnight. My grandfather had called. He told me, "Failure is success if we learn from it, and the purpose of life is to learn and grow." These words made a profound impact on me. Immediately, I ran to my dad's room, hugged, and kissed him. Since then, I have taken full responsibility for looking after him. I suddenly felt transformed into a mature and strong woman. The following morning, I purchased an air ticket for Coimbatore. It was the start of a new phase in life—the beginning of my professional career. With the determination to achieve the best, I began my training curriculum. For the next two months, I worked on a rigorous 14 hour/day schedule, six days a week. My colleagues and faculty appreciated my strength and self-containment shortly after my personal loss. However, at times, I used to lament for my mother, but my grandfather's words motivated me and gave me the strength to continue.

A few weeks later, I invited my father to Coimbatore and took him on a tour to Ooty, a popular tourist destination. We both started to connect better, and from then on, we started our journey of being each other's support system. With my determination and motivation, I completed my training successfully, scoring the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest grade in my batch and finally getting a fulltime placement at Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. I had made my parents proud!



Through this setback, I emerged as a leader and learned to take responsibility. I realized that facing adversity is a character and leadership-building experience that all humans go through. I gained new knowledge and skills and used them as steppingstones to professional success. My grandfather's words have been my guiding stars; resilience and pragmatism have been my companions on my path to success. After this tragedy, I realized my social responsibility and pledged to open an NGO in India for the cause to fight Breast Cancer and dedicate it to my beloved Mother.

## Sample #12- Background Essay- Wharton

**We'd like to get to know you beyond your professional life. You may tell us about the people or experiences that have shaped you, what inspires and motivates you, and anything interesting that we wouldn't otherwise learn from your application. (1000 word limit)**

Having grown up in a joint business family of 30 members– Grandparents, parents, ten uncles and aunts, and 15 siblings, qualities of working for agreement among conflicting views, organization, belongingness, teamwork, and sharing are engrained in me. I still recall when, as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, I had to convince my grandfather, eldest uncle, and my father separately and altogether to allow me to go on a 15-day educational school trip to New Delhi and Shimla. Since my growing up years, my eldest cousin has been a role model for me– he was a top ranker in high school and in Chartered Accountancy Exams. Also, he has always been thoughtful of the needs of all individuals in a joint family. Today, he is thriving in the business he set up solely on his own. Another person who influenced me significantly is my mother. She used to save almost every penny of her pin money for my future advanced studies. Thus, she taught me great lessons about saving for the future while living a simple life.

At the tender age of six, I learned a lesson that shaped my success in later life. I flunked in kindergarten and had to repeat KG for another year at a convent school in my hometown, XXXX. I was frustrated to see all of my classmates advancing to the next grade and myself amidst a new group of students. I still remember the first few days in my second year at kindergarten when I used to peep into next-grade class to get a glimpse of my old friends. This event engrained the value of hard work in me; since then, I have been in the top ten percentile of students in my class and later excelled in my professional career.

While working in more than ten cities across India and the USA in the last fifteen years, I have interacted with co-workers and customers across continents- Canada, Mexico, Italy, UK, France, Germany, Singapore, Japan, and Australia. These experiences have taught me to work with people from different cultural groups effectively, appreciate their culture, and build trusted friendships while working towards common goals. My cultural adaptability has enabled me to resolve conflicting situations more effectively.

One of my passions is traveling to various places. In the last 20 years, I have travelled to over 100+ cities, towns, and villages in the USA, India, Singapore, and China– from pilgrim spots to beach towns, mountainous terrains, and fast-paced cities. I enjoyed varied cultures and

experienced different ways of life in these places. I look forward to alternate travel experiences during my executive MBA at Wharton.

I am a genuine family person. I love to spend quality time with my wife and two sons, aged 9 and 4. I enjoy playing with my sons in the park, helping them with their homework, and sharing stories of my growing-up years with them. I try to teach them distilled ethics and values that are key to my culture. My wife has always been there for me in times of joy and sorrow. I love to share with her my daily life experiences. The sudden death of my father in late 2004 suddenly matured me. On Nov 10, I, along with my wife and older son, reached my hometown, and the whole family was jubilant to be jointly celebrating the festival of Diwali for the first time after my marriage. However, destiny had other plans for us. That evening my dad had a severe cardiovascular attack; we rushed him to the local hospital and then to the heart center in Kolkata, where he breathed his last on Nov 13. Those four days of my life were extremely challenging as we desperately tried to save him. This experience of those final moments with my dad taught me to live each day to the fullest and serve others.

My continuous urge to serve others has led me to various opportunities at work and community. In December 2011, while talking to some of my colleagues, I learned that most of them were spending vast amounts with the most expensive health plan option– ‘Premium Health Plan’. They generally believed that the costliest health plan option would provide the best health risk coverage. To break this perception, I quickly compiled related information and conducted five sessions covering 150+ colleagues in the bay area– presenting health insurance expense scenarios and related risk coverage. A year later, I was amazed to see that many of these colleagues reported significant savings with better health coverage provided by the economic Plan– a consolidated savings of \$250+ K for them.

My passion for serving others motivated me to join a charitable institution called Tej Gyan Global Foundation, headquartered in Pune, India. Many of my beliefs were shattered when I came across Tej Gyan Global Foundation– my strongest belief “Nothing is free in life” was crushed and transformed into a much stronger belief that “Best things in life are all free”. After associating with this organization, I realized that helping others is the best way to help yourself. I attend weekly sessions to deepen my understanding of core purpose of life, happiness, and world peace. Also, I have organized and conducted 15+ seminars in the last four years to spread the message of happiness. Currently, I am preparing and refining training content focused on the development of school children to build confidence and self-esteem. I plan to conduct these trainings in local elementary and middle schools in 2013.

As I have grown, I have cultivated humility and openness as key values. I believe my values of determination, cultural understanding, and serving others, combined with my professional

attributes of leadership, global experience, and team working skills, will reinforce the values of the Wharton community. At Wharton, I am not just looking for an executive MBA, but a lifetime bonding with fellow students, professors, and alumni.

## Sample #13- Background Essay- Haas

**Please tell us about yourself and your background. Include information about your family, where you grew up, your interests, and any other people or experiences that have influenced you. The goal of this essay is to get a sense of who you are, rather than what you have achieved professionally. (1000 words maximum)**

I was born and raised in a middle-class family in southern India. I was the first child, the first grandchild, the first nephew, and the joy of my entire extended family. My family was close-knit and educated; my father was the first in our family to graduate from college and provided me with every opportunity for intellectual growth. Since my parents were first-generation migrants to the city, they also greatly emphasized family customs and tradition. For most of my school life, I played two conflicting roles, a city kid who attended an English medium school and a country kid who loved to help his grandfather on the farm.

I visited my grandparents at the countryside every year during summer vacation. Though I was excited to meet my grandparents, I would get bored soon because I was not allowed to watch TV. Eventually, I got along with the lifestyle and felt a sense of community. I spent quality time with my grandfather and was inspired by his simplicity, kindness, honesty, and diligence. He owned two football fields size land where he farmed and raised cattle. I would get up early to ride with my grandfather to the farm in his bullock cart and spend the morning helping him water, weed the crops and graze the cattle. My grandfather believed in self-sufficiency and did everything by himself even though he could afford to hire help. He was also actively involved in the community and helped provide basic amenities to the villagers. Growing up watching my grandfather, I learned to be socially responsible and follow simple living till day.

My mother has been another significant influence on my life. As a homemaker, my mother taught me to be patient, responsible, and determined. As I grew older, I realized the tensions in the family. My father, a lawyer, was not doing well in his profession and was becoming addicted to alcohol. The fights between my mother and father became everyday occurrences and ended with my mother getting beaten. She could have separated from my father for a peaceful life at my grandparents' house in the village, but she placed me before her wellness and stayed back in the town to provide me with a better education. Her only goal in life was to see my brother, and I excel in academics and be successful. She involved me in the family's finances and other vital decisions from a young age. I hoped to relieve her from the pain and responsibilities when I would stand up on my feet. Unfortunately, that day never came, and I lost her after graduating grade 10. It was August 13, 1998. My brother and I had

returned from school to find our mother unconscious. My father was out of town, and I ran from pillar to post to get her medical attention, but nothing helped. She breathed her last breath without regaining consciousness. I was told she had a brain stroke due to hypertension. My grandparents held my father responsible for my mother's ill fate and decided it would be better for my brother and me to stay away from my father's bad influence. They sent us to a boarding school 300 miles away. It was hard for me and my brother to cope with these sudden turns of events. However, remembering what my mother had dreamed for her sons, my determination to succeed in life became stronger.

In the boarding school, my responsibilities increased many folds, as I had to take the role of parent for my younger brother. I got summoned for my brother's poor grades and spent time teaching and helping him with his homework. While other students' parents visited them regularly in the boarding school, my brother and I hardly had any visitors. We sometimes felt helpless and lonely. I focused on reading, athletics, and school's community programs to keep myself busy and not let emotions take over me. I immersed myself in reading for hours; I remember reading all of Sydney Sheldon's novels in a month. The same year, I represented my high school in the state-level athletics meet for discuss throw and 400 M relay. In 2004, I graduated with an Engineering degree and started my career as a software engineer at age 22. I taught my brother the principles my mother had taught me, supported him morally and financially, and made sure that he graduated from college, too. The life-lessons I had learned from my mother helped me not to lose hope at turbulent times both in my personal and professional life and brought a sense of responsibility in me to care for people around me.

After college, I decided to forgive my father and reunited with him. By then, he also regretted his behavior and was apologetic for what he had done to my mother and our family. He succumbed to sudden cardiac arrest in 2006, which was a shock as we had just started bonding again. But I was glad I could forgive him and spend time with him in his last years.

In 2007, I came to the United States for work and have been in California since then. I met my wife through a mutual friend and found her selfless and supportive. We both shared the same beliefs and principles. After dating for a year, we married in 2010. My wife understands the difficult times I have gone through and thinks highly of me. We now have an 18-month-old daughter, and I am a happy family man, but not a day goes by when I do not miss my mother.

I believe my values of tolerance, determination, and resilience, combined with my sense of responsibility will reinforce the values of the Haas community. I also look forward to joining Haas students' clubs and representing Haas in my professional and social life.

## Sample #14- Contribution Essay- Yale

**The Yale School of Management educates individuals who will have deep and lasting impact on the organizations they lead. Describe how you have positively influenced an organization- as an employee, a member, or an outside constituent. (Up to 500 words)**

While attending USP, a public university free of charge, I felt a moral obligation to return to the country the taxpayers' investment made in me. Hence, in February 2006, I joined Cursinho FEA, a student-led NGO for educating low-income teenagers. At Cursinho, I learned that many students interested in quality and free education cheated the NGO's admission process, claiming their income was lower than their actual income. Though I understood the challenge of assessing family income in Brazil's informal economy, I thought there should be a more precise way to estimate income than the existing method.

Consequently, I envisioned and led the creation of a process to accurately evaluate a candidate's income. I collected economic and social data of more than 500 families, interviewed many of them, and was shocked by their tight budget and the tough choices they made, from parents sacrificing their health to provide education to their children, to teenagers working night shifts and studying during the day. Throughout this journey, I became emotionally involved with the struggles of low-income families. As a result, helping the poor was no longer a moral obligation but rather a way to ease the suffering of underprivileged families and provide them with growth opportunities.

Unexpectedly, a few days before the interviews, we had to decide against adopting the new selection process, as interviews in the new format were more time-consuming. I, however, was afraid that another poorly selected class would trigger the loss of our best teachers and donors, so I convinced the interviewers to work long hours. We finally succeeded in implementing the new admission process, resulting in fewer cases of successful cheating and a 45% reduction of the average income of admitted students. Following this, I became the president of Cursinho. With reinvigorated engagement from stakeholders, our team raised funds that enabled us to increase annually enrolled students from 140 to 350. Additionally, the rate of students admitted to top universities tripled.

After working as Cursinho's president for two years (2007-08), I have been contributing to Cursinho by interviewing candidates and stimulating others to join this NGO. Since 2007, the new selection process has accurately assessed the income of more than 10,000 candidates. Furthermore, Cursinho has sustained its strong track record of admitting students to the top universities.

Though I am one of the various stakeholders that advanced Cursinho's mission, I consider my contribution unique because I initiated changing an organization from years of conformity with mediocre metrics (e.g., average income, number of students, and student success rates) to a consistently high-performance organization in those metrics. Moreover, I felt rewarded to see students I interviewed and admitted years ago becoming scientists and doctors.

I want to create an impact at Yale by stimulating creativity and new approaches while organizing Design + Innovation Club workshops, Marketing Club conferences, and Latino Leadership events. After Yale, I will contribute to the mentorship program by mentoring students and helping them advance their careers.



## Sample #15- Contribution Essay- Wharton

**Teamwork is at the core of the Wharton MBA experience, with each student contributing unique elements to our collaborative culture. How will you contribute to the Wharton community? (400 words)**

One of my most satisfying professional experiences was strengthening my XXXX Team. Being the only female and expat in the team, I initially faced resistance, but as I embraced the culture and understood what mattered most to them, I was soon welcomed in the team. I identified their strengths and divided responsibilities, motivating them to take ownership of their work, in contrast to their earlier practice of everyone doing everything together. This improved team efficiency, enhanced their skills, and enabled us to deliver more challenging projects in less time. This experience taught me the value of teamwork and earned their love and respect.

At Wharton, I plan to share my diverse experience in the oil and gas industry. The concept of offshore rigs is still alien to many. By sharing my knowledge of performing a physically demanding job, managing 24x7 operations, and leading male-dominated teams in foreign lands and harsh offshore environments, I will add value to the Wharton classroom. With YYYY, I also learned to manage large-scale operations, plan resources with 3 months-5 years outlook, and deal with Joint Venture. During the oil downturn of 2014, YYYY witnessed drastic cost reductions and many organizational changes. In the classroom of 'Managing Organizational Change', I will share our approach to face these changes by focusing on new, innovative, and sustainable methods, and technologies.

Beyond the classroom, I plan to lead the Wharton Energy club as the 'Conference Chair'. I would invite distinct leaders of the industry, including YYYY's ex-CEO and BCG partner, both of whom are Wharton alumni. As an ardent scuba diver, I look forward to introducing the Wharton community to Scuba Diving through the Wharton Surf and Beach Club by organizing diving and snorkeling trips. Furthermore, I am excited to join the Wharton Dance studio to pursue my love for classical dance and share my knowledge of 'Kathak' in fusion with Bollywood dance.

Back in ZZZZ, I organized North India's largest cultural festival 'Rendezvous' and choreographed our team's 'Group Dance' performance. Continuing this effort at YYYY, I organized this year's team off-site for 100+ employees. I persuaded my colleagues for a dance sequence, which was the department's first-ever 'in house' performance. I would love

to organize many such events at Wharton, fostering team spirit, and would contribute to the close-knit Wharton community through my unique experiences and engaging skills.

## Sample #16- Introduction Essay- McCombs

**We will learn a lot about your professional background through your resume and letter of recommendation. We want to get to know you further. Please introduce yourself. (250 words)**

Defying our conservative family norms, my mom, a practicing lawyer, and my dad, an engineer from IIT Delhi, have always encouraged me to attain higher education and be financially and otherwise independent. Their support motivated me to qualify for the Chartered Accountancy exams, one of India's most challenging professional courses, in the first attempt.

My desire to step out of my comfort zone has led me to accept challenging and exciting roles in my life. Despite having prior experience only in Accounting, I joined a startup early in my career and engaged in front-end selling and marketing activities. Personally, I encouraged underprivileged women to talk freely about menstruation, a forbidden subject of conversation in India, and spread awareness about correct menstrual practices.

My natural ability to strike up a conversation with people, even strangers, has helped me make friends in the unlikeliest places, such as while commuting to work on the train. Traveling in crowded trains in Mumbai has made me a stronger person with excellent time management skills. Also, my interactions with diverse people across the three cities in India I've lived in— Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai, and my travels to Europe, Singapore, and Dubai have made me appreciate their unique cultural and behavioral aspects.

As an avid reader and writer, I enjoy contributing to my college newspaper and office newsletter. Also, I like writing speeches for family functions and helping colleagues draft e-mails.

I look forward to a rewarding experience at McCombs!

## Sample #17- Ethical Dilemma Essay– Kelley

**Describe an ethical dilemma that you faced in your professional career. How it was resolved and what did you learn from the experience? ( 500 words)**

‘Do a bunch by lunch and be a winner by dinner,’ my Infosys mentor said and emphasized the significance of strong work ethics. Applying this lesson that I learned in the first year of my professional life, I have developed and strengthened good work ethics over the period of the last five years.

While working with XXXX, I completed healthcare certificates and understood the security constraints on sharing patients' private information. In Apr. 2012, XXXX acquired new business for one of the MCOs (Managed Care Organizations) participating in the Medicaid program of Texas, and the State mandated to do the certification testing on the actual patients' data before receiving Medicaid claims from the real-time environment of XXXX. Due to time constraints, YYYY had a strong opinion of producing a claim file from the test server to meet the state timelines. I led my team to build the business functionality and was responsible for delivering this Medicaid file from Caremark.

The discussion between XXXX and YYYY about generating a file from the test server shocked me as any employee could download the patients' confidential information from the test server and share this with third parties, which is technically a PHI (Protected Health Information) violation of the federal government. I was in two minds, “Should I go ahead with the normal process without making a big deal of PHI? Or “Should I do what is ethically right?” Under pressure to deliver the file on time, I aligned my team and generated the first two test files from the test server, but I did not feel right about it. I then weighed the organization's integrity against the client's demand and eventually stopped certification testing in the middle of the project.

Due to this decision, I got many escalations from the client and was on the verge of losing my contract with XXXX. In the meantime, I brainstormed with XXXX technical experts for 2-3 days and devised another approach for generating the test file without violating PHI. My team worked closely with these experts to set up a different real-time-like environment so that only the specific contracted people could access this environment and generate those files. Once it was finalized, I persuaded XXXX management to follow this process in the future. This process eventually laid the foundation for using this new environment to do such testing with the state.

This experience reinforced my belief to listen to my inner voice and do what is ethically right. I am proud of myself for my courage to displease my client by not meeting the deadline and doing what was morally right. Also, I have become more confident now in handling

similar situations, so in the future, I will make the decision fast enough to meet the client's demand.

## Sample #18- Best Mistake Essay– Kellogg

### **The best mistake I ever made was...(500 word limit)**

Born into a family of professors and engineers, I was expected to be academically proficient. With above-average high school and college entrance exam scores, I faced high expectations to get into a good college for undergraduate studies. The undergraduate admission process in my state is centralized through the single window system. All Class XII students are ranked based on the composite index of the state entrance exam and university final exam scores. Based on this ranking, the students were allowed to pick the school and major of their choice.

In class XII, I was ranked in the 90 percentile and had a decent shot at getting into the engineering program in a good school with a scholarship. I had been tracking the availability of seats at all the engineering colleges and was thrilled to know that some seats were available at the best school in my city. I knew which school I wanted to pick, so I imagined the whole process to be quick. Unfortunately, I was in for a rude shock when the counselor told me that the last seat for engineering with a scholarship had just been taken in my dream school. I almost felt robbed and drew a blank as to what my Plan B should be.

Now I was faced with two options- either pick a seat in the school of my choice without a scholarship or settle for a new college with an unknown reputation but with a scholarship. I had never imagined myself in this situation as I was very particular about attending school with a scholarship. I thought the effort I put in to get good scores would be meaningless if I did not get a scholarship. Much to the disbelief of my parents, I finally made my decision and picked the new college with a full scholarship and Computer Science major. As I signed the papers and walked out, I felt I had just committed the worst mistake of my life. I had picked a school I knew nothing about just because it offered me a scholarship.

Contrary to my expectations, my undergraduate days at the college I had unexpectedly picked were some of the best of my life. Through the years, I was the secretary of the Computer Science Association, the president of the school's ACM Students Chapter, and the coordinator for the Placement Services Council. The various roles and opportunities the school provided me with in terms of organizational, leadership, and communication skills have molded me into a well-rounded individual. It was the perfect foundation for me to start my career in the lucrative information technology industry. I benefited from the practical and interactive teachings on and off the classroom, and in the process, had made great friends for

life. I consider my decision to choose my undergraduate school the best mistake of my life because it has played a vital role in shaping my career.

## Sample #19- Defining Principles Essay- Haas

**At Berkeley-Haas, the following four Defining Principles describe our unique culture and are exemplified in our student body. Please select one of the Defining Principles and give a brief explanation of how you have exemplified this in your life. (250-word maximum)**

*Please refer to the Haas website for more detailed descriptions of these [Defining Principles](#):*

- A. *Question the Status Quo*
- B. *Confidence Without Attitude*
- C. *Students Always*
- D. *Beyond Yourself*

Hailing from Haiti, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, exposed me firsthand to the plight of the less fortunate. Thus, from an early age, I learned to be aware of the needs of my community, to look beyond myself, and to ensure that those around me get the help they need.

I grew up in an economically diverse neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At the end of my first year of high school, I recognized that the schools I attended had stronger curricula and pedagogies than those of my neighborhood friends. Consequently, I began tutoring underprivileged middle school kids from the community and continued it until I graduated high school.

To improve the students' proficiency in French, reading, science, and Math, I organized four-week-long academic summer camps for three years. These summer camps were supplemented with "office hours" on Saturdays during the school year. Although I was not the best tutor, fifteen kids took advantage of the personal attention I provided to strengthen their academic foundation, resulting in improved grades.

Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, I used my vacation time to contribute to Haiti's reconstruction and stabilization efforts. For over a month, I helped clear out the rubble, build temporary shelters, and raise awareness to bolster fundraising efforts. I also donated blood and volunteered as a grief counselor to strangers who had lost dear ones.

At Haas, I will partner with my classmates to serve my community and become a *Beyond Yourself Fellow*.



## Sample #20- Culture Essay– Emory

### Your most memorable cross-cultural experience...(250 word limit)

I was hired by XXX to coordinate the local risk management process. This was my first work experience in a multinational firm, and the most demanding part of my job was managing cultural differences.

In April 2012, when my reporting contact in Germany, Mr. YYY, visited our local operation, I had the opportunity to deepen my contact with the German culture. While we were working on action plans, I started writing meeting minutes to be sent by email after the meeting. Mr. YYY, however, seemed to take offense and asked: “Why are you writing all this? Isn’t my word enough?”

This started a discussion about the work ethics differences in Brazil and Germany. He told me that Germans have a strong sense of responsibility and keep their word whenever they commit to something. In the meetings, they just jot down their notes about ‘things to do’, so they do not require formal ‘minutes’ of meetings.

His reaction shocked me because e-mailing minutes of meetings with supervisors copied has been natural to me. We Brazilians usually avoid direct conflict, and sometimes, even if we don’t agree with something, we say, “I’ll do that”, meaning we will actually never do that. Unless there is a written commitment and a supervisor in the loop, verbal agreements do not mean much.

This incident is memorable because it taught me to value my word more and think twice before committing to something.

## Sample #21- Culture Essay– INSEAD

**Tell us about an experience where you were significantly impacted by cultural diversity, in a positive or negative way. (300 word limit)**

Four years ago, when I started working as an associate analyst at XXXX Bank, a Scandinavian company, I was delighted to be part of a multinational team. I can still recall the day when after a year of serving there, I was called by the Managing director, who had just returned from a management meeting in Copenhagen. He reported that the company was going to change its analytical product line, so to be in line with the changes, he offered me to attend a 1-month training program in Copenhagen. I accepted it, and within one week, I was in Denmark.

I had been on short business trips earlier, so I thought I was well-prepared for a long business tour in a foreign country. However, I realized that an extended business trip in a foreign country is an entirely different experience. The major difference was internationality; I met colleagues from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Spain, India, China, and Philippines in Copenhagen. It was the first time I understood that there were actually no walls between people from different parts of the world as we were united by the business we performed.

However, informal communications revealed concealed cultural diversities. For example, when I appeared 20 minutes late at the first Friday party, my Scandinavian colleagues jokingly reproached me for my unpunctuality. Later, I found out a tremendous gap in the perception of time in different cultures. My European colleagues unanimously considered punctuality an indisputable virtue, while Asian colleagues said they were not so rigorous about punctuality.

True, globalization is eroding the differences among different cultures. However, my Copenhagen experience taught me to take extra care of subtle cultural features, such as the perception of time, which has helped me immensely in my communications in a culturally diverse environment.

## Sample # 22- Strengths/ Characteristics Essay– UNC

**What are the 2 or 3 strengths or characteristics that have driven your career success thus far? What are the other strengths that you would like to leverage in the future? (500-word limit)**

There is a symbiotic relationship between my work and my personal traits. As much as my strengths have helped me excel at work, my work experiences have been conducive to my self-discovery.

Handling a family business is a challenging job. My family's business is heavily dependent on coal. After decades of successful operations, it is gradually getting tough to carry on coal mining and its ancillary business due to plummeting natural resources, market trends, and new environmental regulations. Seeing my father constantly worrying about business sustainability, I always wanted to do something to help him. Two years back, I came up with the idea of diversifying our business into the hospitality industry, and recently, I partnered with my father to set up a guest house in which I have 25% stake. I am confident that the business will flourish in our hometown- the next business destination in the state. My father thinks highly of my vision and always appreciates this decision.

My vision to become a global leader has infused in me the passion to take up challenging work in cross-cultural environments. Despite grieving from the untimely demise of my mother, I decided to join XXXX at Chennai in a promising but laborious project. Even though I had the option to join XXXX in my hometown, I went to Chennai because I wanted to get familiar with the new work culture. Soon I got an opportunity to work in the USA to handle complex projects. My passion for accepting challenges in diverse cultures has been instrumental in my career and has helped me define my goals.

Furthermore, I am excellent at developing a trustworthy and efficient working culture with customers and influencing them with efficient communication. To tap my talents, my XXXX Business Relationship Manager entrusted me with the responsibility to set up a new process at Client sites. I proved myself by bringing the business of \$1M for XXXX and helped in client retention and extension. I am the favorite choice of the business owner who chooses me to represent the company in meetings, negotiate and deal with the clients. I successfully handled a deal with a client, resulting in a 15% profit.

There are some traits that I would like to leverage more in the future. I have an intrinsic skill for networking and have connections from the film industry to corporates and local government bodies. I have been given the responsibility of organizing events at XXXX and

the Project Management Institute West Bengal Chapter. However, I feel that these skills have not been satisfactorily put to the test. I want to leverage my networking skills and organizing capabilities to make corporate connections, connect with industry leaders and NGOs in the interest of UNC Kenan Flagler, and bring in prominent personalities for guest lectures. Kenan Flagler will give me the opportunity to enrich these skills, build a more extensive network and a launch pad to succeed in my business and future NGO ventures.

## Sample #23- Strengths/ Weakness Essay– INSEAD

**Give a candid description of yourself (who are you as a person), stressing the personal characteristics you feel to be your strengths and weaknesses and the main factors which have influenced your personal development, giving examples when necessary. (600 words maximum)**

Born the second child, I have had a natural curiosity. It was a big headache for my parents to constantly have to shop for toys since none could survive a day in my hands when I was a toddler. A bit grown up, the ability of speech shifted the stress from their wallet to their nervous system because I couldn't complete a single sentence without affixing a question mark in the end. Later, I used my inquisitiveness to win the high school debate competitions. The curiosity deeply influenced many of my later academic and professional choices, of which pursuing an MBA at INSEAD is the immediate one.

A geek at heart, I am also attracted to adventures of all kinds, not necessarily dangerous situations. However, I did enjoy the face-to-face experience with two grizzly bears when I accidentally stepped into Blueberry Mountain, A.K.A. bears' foraging ground. In a broader sense, adventures also mean taking risks. In 2004, my decision to start a company shocked my family and friends. Despite their countless attempts to talk me out of it, I invested in the business because I was confident in the model. The payoff of this adventure was that I got my master's study funded by selling off my shares. In 2007, my 'epiphany' of 'going abroad' concerned even more people as I was considered 'well established in Beijing.' But the urge to uplift my career triumphed, and I successfully transitioned to a new career in a new country.

The willingness to take on risks has made me fearless and opened up more opportunities for me. My aggressive and adventurous personality is an evolution steered up by being second to a powerful older sister, which has fueled up healthy rivalries on many occasions, such as high school debate club, fundraising for Project Hope, etc.

I attribute a greater part of my achievements to perseverance. When I joined XXXX, it was going through some drastic changes; the company culture shifted quickly, and the morals were hurt. As a result, many colleagues resigned, but I chose to stay, even when a co-worker left with all his responsibilities shifted to me, and the substitute was unavailable for almost a year. The company recovered quickly, and I learned that one progresses and learns fast in adversity.

Despite my effort not to bring personal emotions into professional decisions, sympathy sometimes gets in the way. In 2012, a high-profile project I volunteered to lead overran the schedule significantly because a critical member failed to deliver a blocking item. I talked to

her and discovered she was going through some personal issues. Out of sympathy for her, I extended the deadline for another two weeks for her. Two weeks later, she quit without notice, without handing over any documentation on the incomplete tasks. The client blamed me, and the entire team had to work extended hours to redo her part and remedy the situation. This incident taught me that even though sympathy should not be avoided, I need to ensure no single-point failure.

Besides limited personal qualities detailed here, I feel that the ‘randomness’ and ‘possibility’ complete me as a person: you could find me singing at the top of my lung for hours at Sakura Karaoke, snowboarding in April, camping in Denali in September, or laughing and chatting with my over 200 relatives in Beijing, or organizing friends to cook at the shelter, etc. I am confident I will add significant value to the INSEAD community with my unique qualities.

## Sample # 24- Random Things about you- Fuqua

### First Required Essay: 25 Random Things About Yourself

**Instructions: Present your response in list form, numbered 1 to 25. Some points may be only a few words, while others may be longer. Your complete list should not exceed 2 pages.**

**The "Team Fuqua" spirit and community is one of the things that sets The Duke MBA experience apart, and it is a concept that extends beyond the student body to include faculty, staff, and administration. When a new person joins the Admissions team, we ask that person to share with everyone in the office a list of "25 Random Things About Yourself." As an Admissions team, we already know the new hire's professional and academic background, so learning these "25 Random Things" helps us get to know someone's personality, background, special talents, and more.**

**In this spirit, the Admissions Committee also wants to get to know you—beyond the professional and academic achievements listed in your resume and transcript. You can share with us important life experiences, your likes/dislikes, hobbies, achievements, fun facts, or anything that helps us understand what makes you who you are. Share with us your list of "25 Random Things" about YOU.**

1. My life is divided into three chapters. I was born in Razdan, a small town in Armenia. After my birth, my family had to move to a small village in Georgia. I lived there for six years and moved to Vladivostok, a medium size Russian city on the border of North Korea, China, and Japan. At 14, I moved to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and I currently live there.
2. When I was a little kid, my favorite toy was a cap of a jar. I imagined that it was the steering wheel of my Jeep, and I 'drove' the car making the noises of the engine.

3. My friends and I used to spend so much time in the computer labs of our University that the administration gave us the keys and allowed us to stay there for 24 hours as an exception to the rules.
4. Eight years ago, I found a puppy on the street and brought him home. Since then, he has been with me. We both benefit from our collaboration; I feed him, and he acts as my alarm clock by waking me up at 6 am daily. He is also my personal coach and makes me walk for 2 hours daily.
5. When I first attended Russian school, the only words I knew in Russian were 'Yes', 'No', and 'Hello'.
6. I do my homework with the TV on. I cannot concentrate when there is no conversation nearby. When I do not have access to TV, I ask my friends/ family members to talk to each other so that I can work productively.
7. I used to be a heavy smoker since I was 14 years old. I quit smoking in November last year, and I consider this one of my most significant life achievements.
8. The first thing I do in the morning is check soccer and computer games news; this helps me stay up to speed on my passion.
9. People are surprised to know that despite being Armenian, my native language is Russian. However, I use English as my primary mode of communication.
10. I have been playing World of Warcraft for more than ten years. When I was 13, I was a raid leader in the game and constantly led a group of 25 people to fight the bosses. I was 5-15 years younger than my group members, but they thought I was about 25 years old.
11. I am a huge soccer fan. I enjoy playing soccer and computer games and watching matches regularly. My favorite club is Real Madrid.
12. My parents work in Russia, so I live with my grandmother in Armenia. In the evenings, we sit together, and she often tells me stories about her and her parents'



lives. I find these stories so entertaining that I always try to persuade her to write an autobiography.

13. My grandmother has advertised my English language skills so intensively among her friends that all the old ladies from our neighborhood come to our house to ask me to translate instructions from their medicines; some of them even bring their grandchildren for my help with their homework.
14. As a child, I was obsessed with pirates. I could tell every name of all the 17-19 century ships and the famous pirates.
15. For the last six years, I have been reading at least one book a month, mostly classic literature. I believe books are the perfect combination of entertainment and wisdom. My favorite book is Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace.
16. I watch cartoons more than movies. To me, cartoons are not only more positive, but they also provide life wisdom expressed simply and concisely.
17. In the summer of 2012, I saw Zach Galifianakis during the shooting of 'Hangover.' Thinking he was a costumed character, I commented: "Nice makeup. I almost believed that you were the real one." Though he looked surprised, he didn't say anything. This was one of the most awkward situations in my life.
18. People often mistake my name for David. I find it funny because my name is nowhere close to David.
19. Most of the English languages I currently know I had learned within the 3 months in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to win the competition organized by our class. I earned first place, but I feel that knowledge, not winning, was the most crucial part of that experience.
20. When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I once used a complicated and literary word in my essay to make an impression on the teacher, but I didn't know the exact meaning of that word. Later, it turned out that the word had distorted the sentence's message and

showed me in a bad light. I was very embarrassed, and since then have never used a word without knowing its exact meaning.

21. In school, I once went camping with the class, and the smell of the food attracted the bear. It left the forest, ate some of our food, and silently retired. It was generous of the bear to leave some for us.
22. Last summer, I didn't pass the interview for a summer job for lacking intermediate Russian language skills. The funny part of it wasn't the fact that Russian is my native language but the fact that the interviewer didn't even test my proficiency in Russian. She assumed that I didn't know the language.
23. Recently, I have developed a new hobby. Whenever I am bored, I start solving GMAT questions. Though I have already taken GMAT and don't plan to retake it, I find this activity stimulating like Sudoku or Crossword is to other people.
24. I always come to my classes 10-20 minutes earlier to ensure that I am not late because I fear the moment the professor stops the lecture to follow me with his eyes.
25. I sometimes attend the Book Lovers of Armenia meetings, wherein the members discuss prominent works of literature. These discussions help me to assess the timeless classics from new dimensions, thus enriching my understanding of them.

## Sample #25: Shocking Trend Essay- Oxford

**Consider a statistic or trend that shocks you. Why it is important to you and how could it be changed for the better? (500 words maximum)**

One in every nine people in the world is undernourished, and one in every four children suffers from stunted growth because of food shortage.

Growing up in India, my first introduction to hunger and malnutrition was watching children of my age living on the streets. With thin limbs and big bellies, they looked as un-child-like as possible. I felt sad without understanding the reasons and circumstances of this disparity then. As I grew older, I heard from our domestic help how difficult it was for her to provide for her children. My father, a veterinary doctor in rural India, also described how some farmers committed suicide due to crop failures and famines. All these experiences made me understand early on how deep and widespread the problem was.

When I moved to the United States, I found that nearly 41 million people go hungry in this developed country as well. This issue, particularly the thought of hungry children, makes me extremely sad and helpless. I started contributing in my small way to several initiatives striving to alleviate this problem. I regularly donate to *Art of Living's Gift of Smile Foundation* to provide nutritious meals to malnourished children. As one of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) champions in my organization, I work with my team to fundraise, donate and regularly organize campaigns to volunteer with Gather, NH, and New Hampshire Food Bank to help them collect and distribute food to more than 1000 families and 450 needy children in the region.

According to the UN, one-third of all food in the world is wasted, an amount valued at nearly \$3 trillion. In the USA alone, 31%-40% of total food is thrown away. This statistic is shocking to me because of the number of people that go hungry worldwide. I have seen people wasting hundreds of pounds of food in social get-togethers and restaurants. Personally, I make sure to buy as many groceries as I need and reduce waste to a minimum to nothing.

As a society, I believe we need to manage the global wastage of food. Partnerships between NGOs and restaurants could further help in better management of food. More social campaigns are needed to raise awareness to minimize food wastage and improve the distribution of surplus food. Corporates should also come on board to pledge employee hours to this cause. I think MealMatch and Hunger Site ideas are quite useful, but we need to step up and do more.

Through my research and discussions with alumni, I understand that one of the primary goals of Said is creating global leaders who can improve people's lives through business. This closely aligns with my future goals. At Oxford, I will have the opportunity to collaborate with a global student body and learn unique aspects of different cultures. Networking with them will help me do my part in tackling this global issue in a more organized way.

## Sample #26- Introduction Essay Booth

**Imagine yourself at LAUNCH (your three-day orientation), meeting your classmates for the first time. Introduce yourself. (250 words maximum)**

Hi everyone! I am XXXX, an operations planning professional in the Railroad Industry. My experience with my family's manufacturing business and operations processes in various industries prepared me well for a career in Railroads, and I have loved every bit of working in this industry. My long-term goal is to create and execute analytics-backed operations strategies and increase technology adoption in railroad operations.

My wife and I have lived in four different countries and fourteen different cities. We now proudly call Chicago home— we met here as neighbors nine years back. Going for a run by the lake and exploring restaurants around the city is our definition of spending quality time together. Sports have been a big part of my life; I have developed some core qualities by captaining the school cricket team and playing mid-west league here in Illinois. Currently, I am focusing on golf and running. Equally rewarding for me is to stay involved with community activities. While mentoring Chicago Public School students and organizing various cultural events are my ways to contribute, painting and meditating are my ways to unwind.

Gleacher center is located on my way to work, and I used to dream about being a student here every time I passed by. I am thrilled to be here with all of you today and want to thank my family, mentors, and friends who helped me get here. Here's to new friendships! Go Booth!

## Sample #27– Optional Essay– (Additional Information)

**Please use this page for any additional information that was not captured within your application. If you feel you've already provided us with sufficient information about yourself, you need not add anything here. (300 words).**

I want to address the Admission Committee to consider the factors mentioned below while evaluating my application.

Academics, ambition, and culture– have defined my journey in life. Being an academically inclined and ambitious woman, I did my Post-Graduation from the XXXX and got associated with the technological giants YYYY, ZZZZ, and AAAA. I look forward to a Full-time MBA, which would open the door to thriving career opportunities.

My birthplace is Kolkata, and its Bengali culture is enriched with literary works and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore songs. Inspired by his work, I, a singer myself, endowed upon one of my most significant achievements– a bachelor's degree in Indian classical music and received accolades with several live performances as a lead vocalist.

I always look ahead with a positive attitude during difficult life situations. In 2015, when BBBB closed its office, my employment ended, and my career progression was hindered with financial instabilities and visa sponsorship. However, I gracefully accepted this setback, and with my distinct and diversified skills and experiences that projected my flexibility to learn new technologies, I soon achieved a breakthrough and secured a job at CCCC.

On the personal front, for several months, I have developed a painful cyst on my right wrist, which has adversely affected my ability to work continuously for longer hours. The medical condition hasn't deterred me from continuing my momentum and reaching my goals. I have been optimistic and determined to enhance my skillsets with professional courses and live projects.

Lastly, my MBA application is delayed because I received my settlement Visa– Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK in June this year. I decided against changing to another visa category for studying MBA as that would have been counterproductive to getting the much-desired settlement visa in the UK.

## Sample #28- Optional Essay- (Low GPA)

**If you have additional information or feel there are extenuating circumstances which you would like to share with the MBA Admissions Committee (i.e. unexplained gaps in work experience, choice of recommenders, academic performance issues or areas of weakness in application). (250 words)**

When referencing my transcript, the review committee may notice a significant GPA deviation beginning in my third year of college. After maintaining a cumulative 3.66 GPA for my first two years, I had a voluntary withdrawal in Fall 2010, accompanied by disappointing grade performances in Linear Algebra, Investment Analysis, International Trade, and Intermediate Economics.

At the beginning of my third year at XX College, my father was placed on long-term disability leave. My mind was clearly on my father's health, so I spent more time caring for him at home. My parents are divorced, and the only financial support I received during college, besides scholarships, was from my father. The disability benefits were not enough to help pay for college. So, to continue my education, I had to find a job.

I got a job at my apartment complex under the agreement that if I contributed 25 hours a week, the complex would waive my monthly rent. However, the time commitment proved challenging to balance with my coursework and caring for my father. Consequently, my grades suffered in the Fall and Spring semesters.

Determined not to let this hardship get the best of me, I retook the necessary classes and balanced my priorities. I could replace the unsatisfactory grades and improve my overall GPA by graduation. Most importantly, I was able to help my father regain his health in the process.

This experience taught me a more mature respect for balancing priorities while overcoming obstacles.

## Sample #29– Re-applicant Essay- ISB

**How has your profile changed from the last time that you applied to the ISB? (300 words maximum)**

My application for PGP for 2013– 2014 received rejection. According to the telephonic feedback I received from the ISB on my application, my professional experience was less than required, and my career goals were not well-defined.

In the past two years, I have made conscious efforts to strengthen my profile in the above-mentioned areas. In January 2013, I was offered an opportunity to work in the banking industry. I grabbed the opportunity since I was interested in building financial pricing models. I learned about a new industry and got exposure to working directly with multiple business verticals like finance, analytics, risk, audit, testing, operations, and sales. With limited time to deliver the project, I learned to limit the scope of the project.

Furthermore, the past two years have also allowed me to transition into the role of a team lead from a resource in the team. My interpersonal skills helped me to keep the resource and the client on the same page despite the cultural differences. When additional resources were required, I volunteered to engage with the client and XXXX to get the appropriate resource on the project in time.

Thus, during these two years, I have learnt about a new industry, coordinated across geographies, and gained exposure to other business functions such as recruiting resources. I have significantly impacted my organization, earning additional business of about 250,000 GBP for XXXX. I have made efforts to develop my skills as a consultant, and post-MBA, I will seek the role of financial consultant instead of strategy consultant because I have recognized my natural affinity toward financial concepts. Therefore, I request the Admission Committee to consider my application for admission to the PGP program given my improved profile.



### Sample #30- Re-applicant Essay – INSEAD (400 words)

Last year, I received an admission offer from the INSEAD MBA program, but unfortunately, I had to withdraw my application because of personal circumstances. This year I decided to reapply for the INSEAD MBA program as I continue to look forward to becoming part of the INSEAD MBA program.

I have never been as motivated to enter the INSEAD MBA program as I am today. Over the past year, I have been constantly improving my professional and personal skills, and today, I feel even more ready to attend the highly designated business education offered by the INSEAD business school.

On the professional side, I am proud to say that as a Chief Economist in XXXX Bank, I have progressed further to become one of Russia's most frequently cited economists. In May 2015, I was ranked third by *Medialogia*, the recognized statistic and ranking agency, consisting of the most noted experts in Russia who analyzed the frequency of citations of over 400 financial experts in the leading business mass media from May 2014 to May 2015. This rating is based on the number and the quality of comments published in the mass media. I did an excellent job earning the third rank and outperforming the foremost experts. Notably, this high accomplishment is largely attributed to the efforts made by the whole XXXX Bank research team I am proud to be the head of.

On the personal side, I have been developing my entrepreneurial skills. As a continuation of my favorite hobby, which is playing in a musical group, I have become one of the cofounders of a musical school for kids and adults. The music school named *Slista* was founded in April 2015, and I took an active part in all stages of establishing the school, which is an emerging but successful initiative.

I have progressed significantly during the last year, and today, I feel an even stronger thirst for robust business education. I look forward to joining the INSEAD community, and I hope that my long road to the program will lead to a long-expected result.