

Michigan State University (2013)

If admitted to Michigan State, you will join a diverse community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Please respond to the following hypothetical situation: In your first-semester English course you are assigned a group writing project to be completed within a week. In addition to yourself, your group is comprised of five other students, some of whom are from different countries and/or have different racial/ethnic backgrounds than you. Please explain how your past life experiences will help you effectively collaborate with your group members in order to achieve success on this project.

Katie Manning used TEQ Sheets, a Purpose & Problem Statement, and a Prospectus to create a highly effective essay that was part of her successful application to Michigan State University. These planning documents are available at http://www.culik.com/1180winter2015/Paper-3_files/katieMSUexample.pdf.

University of Michigan Transfer Essays (2014): three essays required

Essay #1: Please provide a statement that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve. You can type directly into the box, or you can paste text from another source.

My two years at Macomb Community College have awakened me to the connection between class, education, and curiosity. I came to Macomb with the misconception that a genuine education was the simple process of a teacher transmitting information to a student. This was my experience from high school and it seems to be a common misconception throughout the students at Macomb Community College. The idea that students passively absorb information ground to a stop when I took a communications course about fact-based claims. In this course, the students were given a topic and the task was to question and identify the assumptions of what we read. Following the breakdown of the topic we had to create our own claim on the topic and justify it through research and writing. Suddenly, we were doing what Professor Culik called "critique." This critical thought process was challenging, and it made me realize that unlearning passivity opened up the world. Right now, I am planning to enter the University of Michigan, but I'm planning to do so with the real goal of sharpening my critical thinking skills opposed to just absorbing information transmitted to me. I hope to transfer to the University of Michigan to truly understand the materials of my studies, so I can utilize them in a critical manor. If am given the chance to attend the University of Michigan, a personal objective is to surround myself with people who can help me think in more complex and critical ways. I can bring my critical ability into a university where such behavior is normal. Like many other students, I will recognize the

expectation of critical thought, but I will also know how different it is from what happens in so many other places. I can bring the memory of my working class experience to the University of Michigan in a way that will continuously remind of the importance of thinking critically. My objective is to put this critical consciousness to work while receiving the most out of my education. I belong at the University of Michigan, but I will be like a bi-lingual citizen who always hears language in a slightly different and better way.

*Everyone belongs to many different communities and/or groups defined by (among other things) shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage. Choose one of the communities to which you belong, and describe that community and your place within it.**

The choice between communities defining individuals or individuals defining communities is a faulty choice. The two cannot be separated because individuality always takes place within a context, such as a community. The relationship between individuals and communities is a dynamic one that is constantly evolving as a response to the uniqueness of each individual's contributions. I find myself part of many unique communities, as I'm sure many others do. I view my surroundings as one community composed of many communities, so I could say I belong to the "community" as a whole for many reasons. I find myself within the community at Macomb Community College, and there are many places within that community as a whole to explore. The community I am a part of takes into consideration all of the aspects; shared geography, religion, ethnicity, income, cuisine, interest, race, ideology, or intellectual heritage of the people and combines them into one. My place within my community I feel is rather hard to explain because one never really knows others' views on your contributions to the community. I personally find within my community I do not tend to communicate with same, like-minded people as myself, but I prefer to push myself past my comfort zone and surround myself with people with completely different mindsets. While at Macomb I started a study group composed of all sorts of people, such as refugees from Iraq, immigrants, military veterans, and many others with unique backgrounds. After studying with a group of such diverse people we all understood much more by listening to what each individual had to add and I found that I was much more prepared for class just by working with a group of different people who each brought a unique thought process to the group. My place within the community is comparable to just one stroke of a paint brush on a painting; my role is necessary in completing the picture of the community as a whole but just as a combination of strokes creates a beautiful painting,

the combination of everybody's unique role is what makes our community a masterpiece. I find that with great diversity comes a great community. Diversity can unlock the world of knowledge and power through the collaboration of many which is why I take pride in belonging to the diverse community at Macomb Community College.

*Essay #3: Describe the unique qualities that attract you to the specific undergraduate College or School (including preferred admission and dual degree programs) to which you are applying at the University of Michigan. How would that curriculum support your interests?**

What really attracted me to the University of Michigan's Mathematics program is the quality of the teaching and the quality of the curriculum. As I researched where I should transfer, I found that the University of Michigan was always highly recommended by the many professionals I spoke with, and the more I researched the more persuaded I was to apply to the University of Michigan. The unique quality that attracted and reassured me is the national ranking of the Department of Mathematics by itself. The Department of Mathematics can support my interest in actuarial science and financial mathematics by giving me access to the knowledge held by its faculty. I have always enjoyed mathematics for its pureness and concreteness, but as my critical thinking skills have continued to develop and mature I found that math is applied to many things in our daily lives. I wish to gain thorough knowledge of this information so I can apply it to improve and innovate many works through mathematics. I want to study mathematics at a university where the goal is to teach and provide an understanding of mathematics, not just learn mathematical skills.

Barnard College (2016): three essay questions required

Essay #1: What factors influenced your decision to apply to Barnard College and why do you think the College would be a good match for you? (250 word limit)

When I visited Barnard, I was sick of college tours and interviews and thinking about the future. I went into the interview ready to answer the same dozen questions I had already answered at three other colleges in the past week. I was ready to go back to my uncles' house in Hyde Park and sleep for the next five years instead of going to college.

But when I went into that interview, I felt like the interviewer — Hannah — had

reached into my brain and picked out the things that most perplex me. It became a conversation about critical thinking, language, mathematics — the topics that truly inspire me to learn, to consider further education. The interview became a conversation that made me realize that Barnard's Nine Ways of Knowing are not just course requirements but a way of thinking.

There are many things that draw me to Barnard College. Barnard is a liberal arts college. It is a women's college. It is part of Columbia. It is located in New York City. But if Barnard produced a student who could ask me those questions, then it is a place that I would feel at home.

Essay 2#: Pick one woman in history or fiction to converse with for an hour and explain your choice. What would you talk about? (250 word limit)

Orphan Black has been my favorite television show since it first aired. It has taken me a long time to understand why I love it, and why it is mainly other women who enjoy it alongside me. I see each character as facets of one greater character. Alison is the homemaker and mother; Helena is the violent, protective side we all have; Cosima is the scientist as well as being the most sexual; Rachel is the cold, corporate boss; and Sarah is the one trying to figure them all out.

Treating them as collectively one woman, I would strike up a conversation about the warring sides of the clones, how they/she deals with all these facets. Every woman has to deal with these sides and their consequences, but she is generally expected to be only one of these women. What effect does the splitting of these sides into wholly different people have? And does it even truly work — we see that Alison sometimes has the violent protectiveness of Helena; Sarah can be as much of a mother as Alison is; Cosima has the potential to be as cold as Rachel. I wonder if separating these people, these personas, is beneficial or harmful, and I would ask that. Hopefully I could discover the clones within myself, and let them out more often — the writer, the scientist, the daughter, the cold "bitch." I wonder what my own clones are.

Essay #3: Alumna and writer Anna Quindlen says that she "majored in unafraid" at Barnard. Tell us about a time when you majored in unafraid. (250 word limit)

This past summer, I got sick. Being sick or injured is not new for me; I have had three major surgeries in as many years, the last of which was a neurosurgery for a Chiari malformation that blocked cerebrospinal fluid. I faced each one without fear

because I knew it would make me better. But this new illness — Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome — cannot be cured by scalpels or pills. It is a chronic illness, one that won't go away for years, if it ever does.

For me, stress and fear come hand-in-hand, stemming from each other. I call myself a recovering Type-A personality because the high-strung, high-stress, stubborn way I was governed my life. But then the stress made me sicker, and the sickness frightened me, which stressed me even more — the cycle was never-ending. I had to choose between my health and my fear-inspired neurotic impulses. I had to learn how to major in unafraid, to change the way I manage everything, from stress to school to my sleep schedule. I won't say that it has been easy, or that I am never stressed or afraid, or that I don't struggle, or even that I am done reforming my actions. I will say that I have found that I can face both the present and the future with only a healthy dose of fear. I would say that I have learned how to pass the core classes for a major in unafraid.

Mount Holyoke (2016)

Tell us what comes to mind when you read the following phrase: never fear / change 400 words

When I see the Mount Holyoke's motion "never fear / change," I see that it can be read in two ways: "never fear change" and "never fear. change." That dual meaning has recently become central in my daily life after years of resistance to change. Any change in setting, in my habits, the people I chose to spend my time with used to throw me off kilter. Stress would make me physically sick, unable to eat, or debilitated by migraines. I used to hate change, but change is what forced me to reevaluate how I wanted to live my life.

I got sick. Being sick or injured is not something new for me — sometimes, I feel like a magnet for the bizarre medical maladies, or like a validated hypochondriac. I have had three major surgeries in as many years, the last of which was a neurosurgery for a Chiari malformation that was blocking cerebrospinal fluid. But this illness — Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia (POTS) — is not one that could be cured by scalpels or pills. It is a chronic illness, one that won't go away for years, if it ever does. Beyond that, the symptoms are exacerbated by stress. I had to learn to relax, to accept change, to keep my stress as low as possible.

Sometimes I call myself a recovering Type-A personality, because the high-strung, high-stress, stubborn way I was before (and still tend to be) I got sick governed my life. At first, it was not easy. But when I was pushing myself so hard that I could not function, I realized that I wasn't working in the right way. It was a choice between my health and my neurotic impulses. That is when change began to come more easily.

Fear of change is still my first instinct, but that fear is something I work to accept and build upon. I still find it strange to put my health first, but I know it is perfectly acceptable if I don't do everything *today* and *right now* as long as I do it.

While the pendulum of my health has put me at my lowest point, I know that I will not feel this way forever. As is nature, my health will change. I will change. And while that may sometimes inspire fear, change (as a noun) is something to embrace. I want to embrace change, as a noun and verb, at Mount Holyoke.