

Personal Statement Interview Questions

These are questions you can ask the student based on certain topics/themes that the student is writing. The point is to encourage the student to “dig deeper” and get to the richness of their thoughts/ideas.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

- Where did you grow up? Are you or your family first generation citizens of the U.S? What other languages are spoken at home?
- How many siblings do you have? Who grew up in your household? Were they all people related to you? Was there something non-traditional in your household (gay parents, significantly older/younger sibling, multi-generational)?
- Did you grow up with one parent or both parents? Did your parents have unusual jobs? Were/are they in the military? Were you responsible for providing some degree of financial support to the family? Did you have unusual responsibilities at home (i.e. worked on farm, provide significant care to younger siblings)?
- Did your family have any unique traditions? Did your family spend vacation time in an unusual or memorable place year after year?
- Did your family move a lot? Have you lived in more than five states? Have you lived abroad? Have you lived on a military base, farm, “one horse” town or other unique setting? How is your family different from the families of your peers?

EDUCATION

- Did you go to a non-traditional high school (i.e. magnet or performing arts)?
- Was English your second language in high school?
- Was your school day non-traditional because you spent extra time on non-school-related sports or performing arts? Are you in any special academic programs?
- Did your financial situation require you to work in high school?

HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- Have you held an office in a club/organization of which you have been a member for more than two years? How many hours per week did you devote to your responsibilities? What specific and unique contributions have you made to the club/organization and how did these contributions change that club/organization?
- Have you founded a club or organization? Why is this new club important to the student body? Have you volunteered for the same charitable organization for more than one year? If so, what were your significant and unique contributions and how did they change the charitable organization?
- Why did you choose to become involved with that specific charitable organization? How many hours per week do you devote to the organization?

SPORTS

- Did you play varsity sports?
- Did you spend a significant amount of time playing any non-traditional sports (intramural or otherwise) during high school? Did you win any championships or special honors? Were you the captain of a team that was successful? Were you an underdog or a secret weapon?
- Did you ever have an injury that precluded you from playing indefinitely? If so, how did this impact your life?
- Have you ever started your own team? Are you an endurance athlete (i.e. marathons, triathlons, adventure races)? Have you had other unique athletic accomplishments (i.e. mountain climbed, free-diving)?

HOBBIES

- Do you currently play an instrument? Do you play for audiences? What kind of music do you play? Is the instrument unusual (i.e. harp, tuba, harmonica)?
- Do you currently have unusual hobbies (i.e. build with Legos, model trains, collect antique books)? Have you started a club that relates to your hobby? Have you ever won a contest or competition related to your hobby?
- How much time do you spend pursuing your hobby? Do other people know about it? Does your hobby play against your type (i.e. football player who plays violin; bookworm who sky dives?)

TRAVEL

- What countries have you visited for more than one week? Did you travel there alone? Have you lived abroad?
- Were the conditions of your living arrangements significantly different from those in the U.S.? Did you speak the language of the country where you lived? Did you journal about your trip while you were there? [If you are traveling abroad this summer, consider journaling.] Did you take any non-traditional forms of transportation? Did your diet change significantly? Did you take part in any unique rituals or traditions while in the foreign country?
- Did you meet anyone in these countries with whom you continue to correspond? If so, why? Are you fluent in any other languages? Have you gone on a religious mission?

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Have you had any unusual jobs? Have you had any blue-collar jobs?
- Did your financial situation require you to work in high school or college? If so, how many hours? Did you work for a family business? Were you required to do so?
- Did you work with others who were significantly younger or older, disabled or non-English speaking?
- Were you ever promoted based upon a significant contribution that you made to the work environment or procedures? What was your contribution? Were you responsible for managing others? Have you ever started your own company? What happened to it? Did you learn any important or unusual skills in any of your jobs?

MISCELLANEOUS

- Has your writing ever been published in a widely circulated periodical?
- Have you ever been on television?
- Have you ever won a contest?
- Have you ever been on a game show?

“BIG PICTURE” QUESTIONS

- What is your biggest disappointment? What is your deepest regret? What is the hardest thing you have ever done?

What accomplishment are you most proud of? What is the most meaningful thing you have ever done?