

## TIPS FOR UC PERSONAL INSIGHT QUESTIONS

---

### General Information

- The purpose of the insight questions is to allow the UC's to get to know you better. Think of it as your interview with the admission office; they would like to get a sense of who each applicant is, hear his/her "voice".
- Not all campuses will read your answers to the insight questions for admissions purposes (Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, and Merced read every one; Davis reads nearly none; the remaining campuses are somewhere in between). It is impossible to know whether your insight questions will be read or not; the best approach is to write with the assumption that they will be. Insight questions may be read for the purposes of scholarships and often are read by departments at campuses that admit directly to the major.
- You must answer four questions. There is one required question that must be answered by every transfer applicant. You must also answer 3 out of 7 additional questions. Each response is limited to 350 words, so you need to be thorough, but concise in your writing.
- The mandatory question asks how you have prepared for your intended major. If you are applying to different majors at multiple campuses, make the connection between them. For example, if you are applying to History, Political Science and International Relations at three campuses, it could be you want to study law or work for the US government. There is something that prompts you to select the majors, so talk about that "something" and not about each campus.
- You should write your answers to the insight questions in a word-processing program and copy/paste it into the online application. The system allows 40 minutes to enter information into each page; data is lost when the system "times out" and closes the session. Only the "save/logout" function works to save what you've entered in the application spaces, but you must log back in to continue.

### Writing a Good Response

- Remember that people are reading your answers; let it be somewhat conversational in lieu of a formal academic essay
  - While in a conversational tone, it should be a good example of your ability to write at a university level; lots of grammar/spelling errors will be noticed. Don't obsess about it. Do think and care about it.
  - Be reflective; what is the meaning for you of the information you are giving? The UC wants thinkers-people who are interested in ideas and concepts, including themselves.
- Use your own voice (as in, write your own responses!)
  - Stay away from books about writing college essays (usually geared to Independent schools).
  - Resist the temptation to read others' essays, including internet postings and essays written by friends who got accepted to UC. You may, even unconsciously, try to pattern yours after them; it won't be you.
  - Beware of adopting a new style or attempt to be "creative" with format or font. Don't write a poem, play, or comedy.
- Like all good writing, showing is better than telling:
  - Provide examples and scenarios; create a picture of you in the mind of the reader.
  - Don't tell your life story. Instead share a couple of stories from your life that reveal your abilities, interests, and experiences (especially related to your major).
  - Help the reader "see" who you are and what motivates you to apply in your major.