

Example 1: UF Honors with full scholarship (IB student)

With my heart pounding against my chest, I felt my pulse skyrocket into uncharted territory. Keeping my cheek flush with the surface of the pool, I dodged breathing in water droplets from wave disturbances caused by my swift strokes. I ignored my struggle for oxygen and focused on pushing through the discomfort of accumulating lactic acid in my arms. From beneath the water, I heard the muffled echoes of my coach yelling "GO! GO! GO!" as I harnessed all of the mitochondrial energy in my muscles to push me toward the finish line. Inspiration washed over me as I took one last gasp of chlorinated air, touched the wall, tucked my legs, and catapulted myself into the final length.

It took years of effort to procure my coach's cheers. Unlike my teammates who had over a decade of swimming experience each, I only started to swim competitively as a freshman. While my teammates mastered swimming in meets prior to high school, I was riding the waves of my youth at the beach. Generally, my coach does not permit inexperienced swimmers on the team. However, she recognized my tenacity when I swam the 500-yard freestyle (twenty laps) five times until I achieved the time requirement at tryouts my freshman year. When my coach pulled me aside to tell me I made the team, she made it clear that I had to prove my worthiness before she would let me compete. As I committed my time to the team, I thought that swimming in the pool would be similar to swimming in the ocean. Little did I know that the lessons I would learn in competitive swimming would far surpass my leisurely childhood experiences in the water and help me grow into the person I am today.

Despite the demanding schedule of the International Baccalaureate program, I pledged my time to swimming five days a week for up to three hours a day. After spending six hours in a rigorous academic environment, I looked forward to the interlude of swimming every day after school before I started homework or went to work. As a novice swimmer, I had to demonstrate to my coach that I belonged on the team. I attended every practice and gave swimming my full attention even when I had evening shifts to work and academic deadlines to meet. During study

halls and while waiting for my younger brother at his bus stop, I used laser focus to study for tests and complete assignments. Every second I spent studying before I got home translated into more hours of sleep to recuperate for the next day's practice.

In any sport, no one wants to be a bench warmer, but until I could show consistent improvement, I accepted that position. After attending every single practice and overcoming shoulder injuries, I proved myself a contender and received approval from my coach to swim in the last meet of my freshman season. My team won, but I placed sixth and became further driven to push for a significant decrease in my times by continuing to swim off-season. After more than two years of swimming, I finally saw notable progress during my junior year. At varsity tryouts, I dropped three seconds in the 50-yard freestyle and five seconds in the 100-yard freestyle. By the end of junior year, I broke 30 seconds in the 50-yard freestyle and dropped 7 seconds in the 100-yard freestyle. From that point on, I could find my name at the top of the list rather than the bottom when I looked for my ranking at meets. I learned that one inch can be the difference between success and failure, especially when aiming for the wall during a flip-turn. Swimming taught me that with precision and perseverance I can prevail over any challenge in the pool, in the classroom, or in my life.

Example 2: All public Florida universities and the University of Miami with substantial scholarships (Homeschooled dual-enrolled student)

As I take my seat, the bench squeaks in protest, and the pedals groan with each of my movements. The worn instrument has deteriorated to a mere shadow of its former grandeur, yet when I strike the keys, its soul stirs—exhaling what remains of its life into the souls of those who have come to listen. My audience too has diminished to barely recognizable forms of their younger selves, tired and drawn from years of living in this world with all of its joys and trials. With each refrain, I see my audience transform: some sit up straighter and smile, while others lean their heads back, closing their eyes to absorb every note. Sometimes, overcome by emotion, the poignancy of the melody evokes tears. During that hour, I transport them from

the constraints of their aging bodies and fading minds. They are no longer old, nor I young; reveling in this brief respite from the challenges of living, we travel together on this musical journey. Our destination is known only to ourselves. As my fingers explore the keys, the piano breathes life into me, and the music breathes life into my companions. Although the pedals wince and the keys are yellowed, the soul of the piano, like those of my listeners, is still in tune and vibrantly alive. Getting up from the piano's bench, I make my way through the wheelchairs and walkers. Soft timeworn hands reach out and take hold of mine. Earnest eyes strain to look up at me, and I am asked: "What do you want to study in college?" and "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Curious to know about my life and the path I might choose, my weekly mentors bestow the gifts of their wisdom and invaluable advice to follow wherever my passions may lead. When I reflect on the journey that has shaped who I am today, I see how learning to play the piano has prepared me for future challenges. The endless hours honing my craft taught me the value of unwavering patience and hard work.

I have always had a love of learning and an enthusiasm for acquiring new skills, experiences, and knowledge. Just as music is a major interest of mine, engineering and the practice of medicine also intrigue me. One moment shines brightest in my mind. When I was five years old, I watched on television as a doctor manipulated tools while repairing a cerebral aneurysm with an endovascular coiling. Since then, my passion for pursuing a career in medicine and engineering instruments that will restore lives has steadily grown.

Perhaps I enjoy playing the piano so much because whenever I learn a new piece of difficult music it satisfies my craving for intellectual stimulation while also offering relief to my listeners. Whether my journey includes medicine, music, engineering, or a combination of the three, I know with certainty I am an eternal student who will always have a thirst for knowledge. I am inspired by a quote from Steve Jobs that keeps me focused on my goals every day, "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." As I sit performing for an elderly audience, I know I have acquired a deeper understanding and compassion for others. I am humbled by the knowledge that one day I may be given the

opportunity to be instrumental in bettering the lives of some of my fellow earthly voyagers, and that will be the “great work” that I will love to do.

Example 3: All Public Florida Universities, University of Miami, NYU, Ivy League Schools, and 7-year accelerated dental programs (Private school student)

"Watch your step," an elderly man gasped with a raspy voice.

I stopped in my tracks and looked down to see a patch of ice directly in my path. Instinctively, I swiveled my head to locate the origin of his voice. My eyes did not have to search long before they settled on the trembling man, his lips blue and teeth chattering in the February cold. Bravely, he peaked out from the makeshift tarp that shielded him from the violent wind raging outside. Glistening in the moonlight, his silver streaked hair slightly covered his terracotta colored cheek and almost hid his anguish from my inquisitive eyes. With effort, I could discern tears trickling down his cheek from rain drops that lashed the side of his face. He emerged from the tarp and stepped with bare feet onto the icy pavement. On the brink of frostbite and with joints bulging from arthritis, he clasped his hands together as he braced the cold.

"Thank you so much, I almost slipped!" I expressed my gratitude.

"Glad I could help. I hate to ask, but do you have any change to spare? I need socks. This winter has been unbearable." His parched lips moved deliberately as he pleaded with me.

Profound sadness overcame me as I listened to his urgent request. I could not imagine how he had thus far endured winter without socks. However, upon opening my wallet, I felt dismayed when I realized that I had spent my last change purchasing a cup of coffee.

"I'm sorry, but I don't." I muttered, frustrated by my inability to help him.

"It's okay, dear. God bless you." He murmured as he surrendered to a despondent gaze.

"You too." I ended our brief yet impactful encounter.

I felt helpless that I had no means to assist him; he needed so little to keep himself warm.

In 2014, I came across a homeless man suffering through an unforgiving winter in New York City. Prior to the transformative encounter, I did not realize the extent of the daily struggles of people coping with the effects of homelessness. The man's simple request lingered in my thoughts and compelled me to find ways to help the homeless community. Initially, I felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem and could not come up with a practical solution to impact the lives of countless homeless people. Committed to making a difference, I collaborated with my sister to start -----, an organization that provides socks filled with basic toiletries to the less fortunate. With -----, I have been able to not only donate socks and basic necessities, but also educate others about the needs of the homeless community. In fact, I have dedicated my time to increasing awareness in younger students about the global problem of poverty and instill in them my school's motto of putting people in the world who make a positive difference. As vice president of the Community Service Council at my school, I am able to collaborate with the Lower Division community service director to organize ----- sock-stuffing events, which give kindergarteners the opportunity to stuff socks that will be distributed to various locations. ----- has donated to -----, Metropolitan Ministries, and several churches near the Tampa Bay area, as well as internationally, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Peru.

At first, I felt overwhelmed by my desire to ameliorate the issue of homelessness, but now, I am empowered. Through ----- and motivating others to become involved, I know that I can make a positive change and have a direct impact on the world. The man's selfless act of kindness despite his circumstances inspired me to make a difference, and I will continue finding ways to better the lives of others. My experience with the homeless man altered my view of homelessness and also allowed me to achieve a new understanding of myself.

Example 4: Will be attending FGCU but was also accepted to Flagler and out of state schools
(Public high school student in Tampa Bay and Eagle Scout)

With my back facing the audience and sweat streaming down my face, I feel humidity and anticipation infusing the air. Friends, family, and strangers create an energizing hum of excitement as they pause to chatter before cheering on the band. Standing tall and silent, my bandmates in front of me keep their eyes forward as they wait to start. **Although I cannot see the crowd or my drum major, the sudden silence alerts me to perform.** Right on cue, the announcer's voice booms through the stadium's loudspeakers, and we swiftly get into position. The crowd erupts with roars of applause, and the show begins. I turn on autopilot, and my muscle memory takes control. Dancing over to my saxophone, I pick it up and play the first chord. **As I march, an invisible line splits me in half; my hands acting independently of my feet.** My fingers glide across the keys while my legs remain stiff. I glance at the drum major, **a human metronome,** making sure my timing is correct. **Under the bright stadium lights, I suspend my thoughts of the beat and conjure up memories of the blinding sunlight that shimmers across the sea.**

From the open ocean to the football field, the skills and values of Boy Scouts influence all my adventures. I started my scouting journey by joining Pack 26, and this decision changed my life forever. I began as a Cub Scout, followed by Webelos, and then crossed over in May 2013 to become a Boy Scout. Learning how to be a Boy Scout has molded me into the person I am today. Through meetings, community service, and camp outs, I have learned many life lessons. I have **camped out in wetlands, forests, islands, and prairies;** all of these experiences taught me how to **survive in the elements** and how to **lead my fellow Scouts.**

I learned new lessons from every camp out, but I especially **pushed the boundaries** of my ability at high adventure camps across the country. One in particular, Florida Sea Base in the Keys, pushed me to my limits, testing my ability to persevere. As my Boy Scout crew bounced up and down with the waves on a twenty-foot Dusky, I knew that I would need to get my crew ready to tackle a day of adventure. We would take part in trail restoration, team building

activities, and exploration. Across the blue water, the silhouette of Big Munson, an island owned by the Boy Scouts of America, appeared as a sanctuary from the choppy water. After docking the boat, we waded through the water toward Munson. For three hours, my crew and I worked together to clear the trails of overgrown plants and uneven terrain. We split into groups, working on different sections to accomplish our goal. I inspired my crew to continue through the scorching sun. At sunset, we finally completed the project and could rest. On the beach, we built a campfire and relaxed. As the day turned into night, the radiance of the moon lit up the white coral sand. Without the lights of the populated Keys, the Milky Way spilled over the sky. The stillness and beauty of that night was unlike anything I have ever experienced. I felt I could touch every star in the sky.

Snapping back to reality, I find myself at the end of the show. The memory of my adventure on Munson Island revitalizes my spirit, and I push myself further. With all the grace and splendor I could muster, I play my heart out to the audience. Marching to our final set, we arrive at an impact point and as one voice, the band plays. The lessons and values I learned in Boy Scouts compel me to give my best in all my endeavors, from the open ocean to the football field.