Application: Common Application Main

Pseudonym: Kay Cue

Acceptances with these essay(s): Yale, Stanford, Dartmouth, Northwestern (dual degree: BS chemical engineering and BM clarinet performance)

Rejections with these essay(s): Harvard, Princeton

Short Answer
Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below or on an attached sheet (150 words or fewer).

Mr. Trupe, World History teacher and former Torrey Pines volleyball coach, was taken aback when he heard I was an athlete. "Kevin—you play volleyball? I could knock you down with my breath!" It's true—I 'm 5'10'' and a flimsy 130 pounds. I don't have the frame or talent of a Michael Jordan, Jerry Rice, or Barry Bonds (wait, scratch that last one), but I make up for it in spirit. I play with heart. Every kill, block, ace, "tool," "dome," "pancake," or "butter set" is met with a primal scream of triumph that belies my unconvincing stature. Even when I'm scheduled to come out of the rotation, the coach often says, "You play with so much fire…I can't bench you." A bit less energy and noise might be better, though: as a co-captain, it's rather helpful not to lose your voice for an entire tournament after one game.

Personal Essay

Please write an essay (250 words minimum) on a topic of your choice or on one of the options listed below, and attach it to your application before submission. **Please indicate your topic by checking the appropriate box.** This personal essay helps us become acquainted with you as a person and student, apart from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. It will also demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself.

1. Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

2. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.

3. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.

4. Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.

5. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what

you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.

6. Topic of your choice.

For as exclusive as it was, Copley's soloist room was rather simple, furnished with only a piano and a bench. It was narrow too: the architect must not have considered the consequences of claustrophobia before a solo performance. In any case, I took a seat on the bench and started to set up my clarinet. Positioning the reed on the mouthpiece, I noticed the callus on my right thumb, formed from having to support the instrument for so many years. I had never been concerned about it before, but alone in the soloist's room, I continued to stare at it. I found it to be an emblem of music's importance to me, and it reminded me of how far I had come to be moments away from performing at the center of San Diego's grandest stage.

To be honest, I had never heard of the clarinet before I decided to join the elementary school band. I had wanted to learn the flute, but when it came time to select an instrument, it was clearly not an option: no boy wanted to be in a section dominated by girls; the risk of contracting cooties was too great. I admit I was rather disappointed, but when I discovered the wondrous squeaking sounds the clarinet could produce, the obnoxious young boy in me would not let me turn back. In elementary and middle school, this innocent fun was what band was all about.

I then became a member of the local wind ensemble as an unassuming eighth grader who sat near the back of the section. The focused rehearsal and advanced repertoire—Gustav Holst's First Suite—was in complete contrast to the frivolous nature of band I was used to; yet, what I felt was not constraint, but liberation. The Suite was a release of emotion, a perfect blend of majestic and playful moments that uncovered in me a love for music I never knew existed. Playing it was a cathartic uplift of spirit, an overwhelming of mind and soul with passion in its purest form. From then on, clarinet was more a form of expression than anything else. As my position in the band moved closer and closer to the front, I also discovered a kind of talent that I began to cherish and hone with a private instructor.

I had been a student of the clarinet for almost half a decade before I had a private lesson; it was a punch in the arm. The instructor pointed out bad habits I had developed in the most elementary aspects of playing the instrument: air support, embouchure, articulation. I found it rather shameful that he even had to demonstrate how to breathe properly. By the end of the lesson, I was disheartened; the talent I thought I had discovered was not genuine. I reached a point where I was ready to let music go. Then, the beacon of passion shone as intensely as ever, and I realized that, despite the problems I was having, music remained the joyous means of conveying emotion to the world that it once was. I resumed focused practice and became a competitive musician. It would all culminate in the solo performance at Copley Symphony Hall I was about to undertake.

Mind returning to the soloist's room, I looked away from the callus I had been staring at for so long. Instead, I focused on the entire hand, and then on the other. As important as music was to me, it was not the only passion of mine that these hands could produce. They could unfold and recreate the laws of nature, as the AP Chemistry course I was taking revealed to me. Just as the local band had done, the course provided me with a realization, a spark of interest that soon became an intense flame. The wealth of information it covered revealed chemistry's intricacy,

and the involved experiments allowed me to reproduce the wondrous reactions that had baffled the world's greatest minds for so long. It was a difficult course, perhaps the most difficult one offered at my school, but the depth and practicality of the subject developed in me a passion that allowed me to look past the work and learn to love what I was doing. The class made some students nauseous, but I took it a step further, participating and performing well in competitions such as Science and Chemistry Olympiad.

Passion has come to define who I am. I hope to be able to express and spread it to other people, so that they may come to experience the same wonders that I have. I would do both later that evening, standing at the front of the stage, pouring my heart out in music for the audience to hear. Just as it had done to me, forming a callus on my hand for me to contemplate alone in that room, I hope my passion can leave a lasting mark on the world that people may look at and find meaning in for years to come.