

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

COUNSELOR

CONFERENCE

Better than a bot: PIQs through the eyes of UC admissions

Roadmap

- Review
- What you may know already
- What you may not know
- What we are not looking for
- Case studies
- Final things to consider



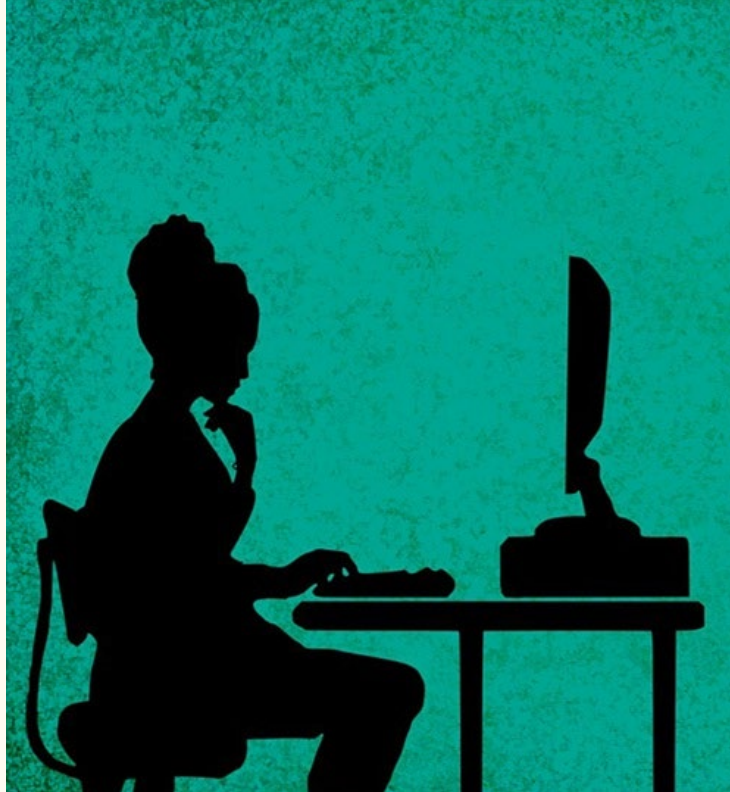


Let's review!

Let's review: The basics

8 question options,
students choose 4.

350 word
maximum.



Choose questions
that will give the
most information
about the student.

Reminder:
No question is
better than another.

Let's review: The questions

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influences others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.
2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.
3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed it and demonstrated that talent over time?
4. Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant education opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Let's review: The questions continued

5. Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement.
6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.
7. What have you done to make your school or community a better place?
8. Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?

Let's review: Additional comments

Personal insight Additional comments



* required

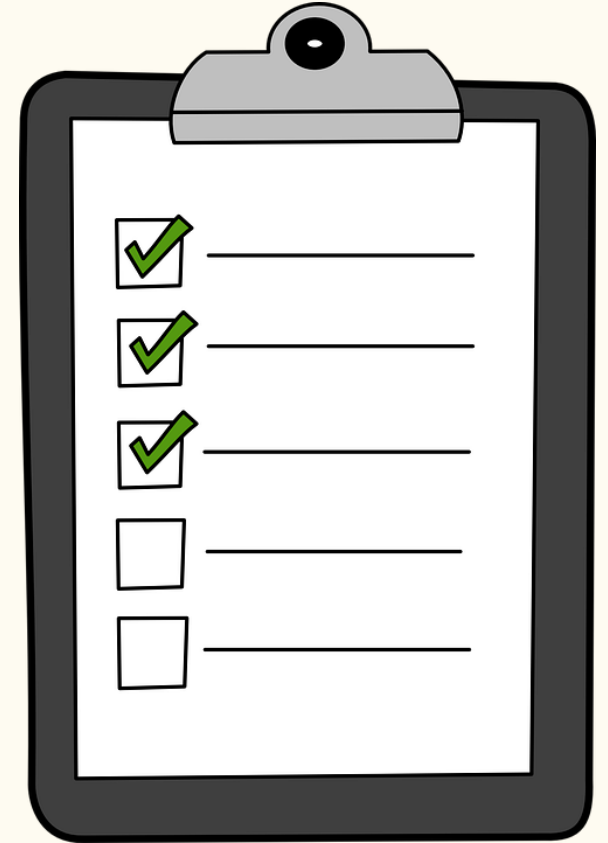
If there's anything else you want us to know about you, now's your chance. But remember, you should use this space only if you want to describe anything that you have not had the opportunity to include elsewhere in the application. This shouldn't be an essay, but rather a place to explain unusual personal or family circumstances, or anything that may be unclear in other parts of the application.

What you may know already

What you may know already

Comprehensive review

- **13 factors** that allow the Office of Admissions to evaluate students' **achievements in light of opportunities available** to them.
- Responses should provide readers with information that **add value to their comprehensive review**.
- While all UC campuses use the same factors to evaluate applications, they often **apply these factors differently**.





What you may not know

What you may not know

Value-added responses

- Focus is on the impact on the student and/or the impact they have on others
- Centers self in the response
- Provides specific examples

Missed opportunity responses

- Does not provide much context about the student's experience
- Focuses more on structure than content
- Centers others' narratives rather than their own



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What we are not looking for

What we are not looking for

- ❖ A non-academic essay
- ❖ Hardship for the sake of hardship
- ❖ Themes
- ❖ Repetition





Case studies

The 3 steps of responses

1

Step 1

Present an
idea



2

Step 2

Answer the
question



3

Step 3

Share the Impact,
“so what”

Case studies:



Case study #1

Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

I've danced along the poverty line my whole life. The soothing melodies from a mother to her child as they drifted to sleep were mere dreams; realities you'd only see in the movies. Life was based on survival; sink or swim, one might say. Struggling to stay afloat in this ocean of a world, I quickly recognized that a comfortable life is a luxury that stands far out of my grasp. Being forced out of touch with my infantile dreams and forced to come to grips with my reality brought along one of my greatest attributes: my fortitude. Living as the product of an immigrant mother and lower class father, my aspirations oftentimes felt out of my reach. My tolerance for the harsh world grew involuntarily; I was born into destitution, facing life's hardest battles was inevitable. The countless sleepless nights my parents spent in order to keep a roof over our head demonstrated their mettle to my younger self, a mettle I had to endow myself with too.

Case study #1 continued

Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

...Just like the pale skin and singular dimple I inherited from my mother, I endeavored to grasp her strength. Both in and out of the classroom, I've possessed a deeper spirit than a great number of my peers due to the hardships I've faced. While it's difficult to stray away from the fixed mindset that tells me I cannot afford a better future, I pave the way for the life I've always dreamed of through my education. My exceptional tenacity encouraged me to take advanced placement courses that offer an advantage at a higher educational level. The extravagance of maintaining the successful life my parents could not afford excites me. Persevering through the austerity towards the sophisticated, serene lifestyle showcases my drive. Although I learned to survive off of the crumbs of society, the faith I hold for myself and my education push me closer to the elixir of the rapturous life I plan to lead.

325 words

Case study #1



Missed Opportunity

- Briefly mentions perseverance through hardship, but does not provide steps taken to persevere.
- The student uses a lot of space for creative writing.
 - Focuses more on writing style and structure over content and concrete examples.
- Breezes over the “so what”.
 - Student briefly mentions that they enrolled in advanced placement courses, but does not highlight how they took advantage of those courses.

Case study #2

What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

It is a strange and enduring task, to watch something rot. When faced with rot in its most literal form, it can be a bit overwhelming. The smell will crawl up your nose and down your throat, sitting there long after you've scrubbed yourself clean. Touch any part of something decomposing and your fingers will come away dark, sticky, and wet. After working with dead animals, I've learned that more important than a strong stomach, is patience. To reap what you want from decay, you must be willing to work at its pace, and I've always abided by "good things come to those who wait." I wait in a park where my parents shuffle to explain to my brother and I that they're getting divorced. My brother is too young to understand, but I do. I wait outside of the divorce counseling where they sift through their rot and try to make sense of it, and I wait as they try to start over with new people and that too, decays. This observation teaches me the initial patience.

Case study #2 continued

What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

...I linger at the kitchen table, watching my father cook and wondering when the Alzheimer's will come. I imagine the decay beginning now, now, now. The decay is so slow that sometimes I accelerate it and imagine him already dead. Then I force myself to rewind and grapple with the inevitable entropy as it happens. Despite my frustration, this slow rot gives me practice to accept the things I can't change. I pace around my grandparent's lemon tree, stubbornly clinging to life in the neglected garden. Its refusal to decompose interests me, enough to spend a year on its revival. I learn there is rot, but also rebirth. I learn that it's not enough to just endure the decay in my life, I must embrace the rebirth that comes after, even if I'm afraid of the change. But as I enjoy my lemon harvest, I don't think it's so scary after all. My good things have taken longer to come than most, but I wait for them dutifully, faithfully, and ever patiently.

350 words

Case study #2



Missed opportunity

- Very descriptive, focuses on metaphors.
- Difficult to pull details and tie the examples provided to how they developed their talent overtime.
- There are a lot of obstacles provided and some explanation of the impact for the student – ***could be much more clear without the fluff and if student provided more clarity.***

Case study #3

Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

In 2020, I founded an underwater robotics team in my garage. We invited friends from school and the math circle we ran. Some members had no experience with robotics and others had lots of experience so I taught them by helping everyone build a land robot. In our second year, I reached out to more people in the community and grew our team from 10 to 22 members across 10 schools. We had seniors to middle schoolers on the team. I promoted returning members to lead the hardware, testing, and documentation teams. I led the software team where I taught Python, setting up Raspberry Pi computers, and streaming cameras. My mom knew someone whose nephew recently immigrated from Mexico and wanted to learn about robotics. I invited him to join the team and I walked him through setting up the robot. Now he teaches others how to set it up. When I give individual attention, people develop useful skills and pass those skills onto others.

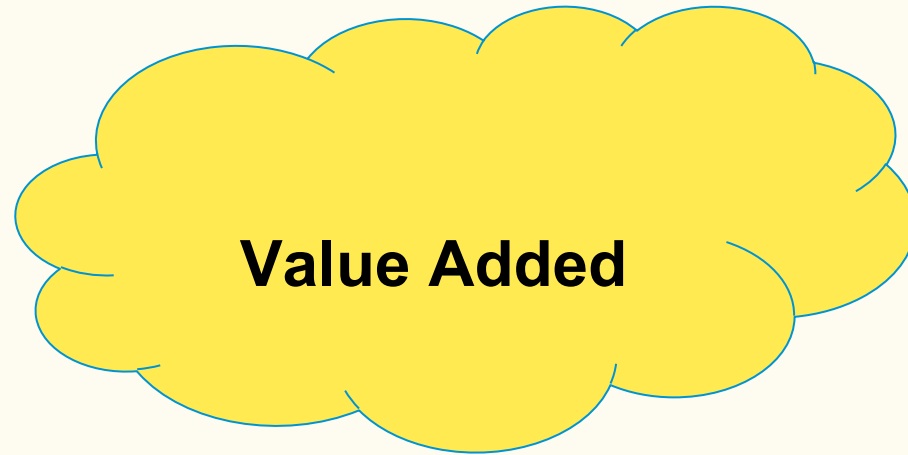
Case study #3 continued

Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

...On the competition day, we didn't tighten our electronics chamber and water shorted our entire electronics system! But we didn't mourn, we got straight to problem solving. The hardware leader unplugged and unscrewed the parts. I tested the computers and told members to grab working parts from last year's robot. My CoCEO calmed the team. In the middle of the repairs, we gave an award winning 15-minute engineering presentation to judges. We miraculously got the robot working in time for our second pool run and we placed third! I learned that to be an effective leader, I need to understand every team member's strengths and weaknesses. The hardware leader annoyed me because he started building without planning and made avoidable mistakes. But I appreciated his instant problem solving when we needed to rapidly rebuild our robot. Now that I know what he is good at, I can give him appropriate roles for his talents. I am using what I've learned to lead our team effectively by giving everyone the chance to use their best skills.

340 words

Case study #3



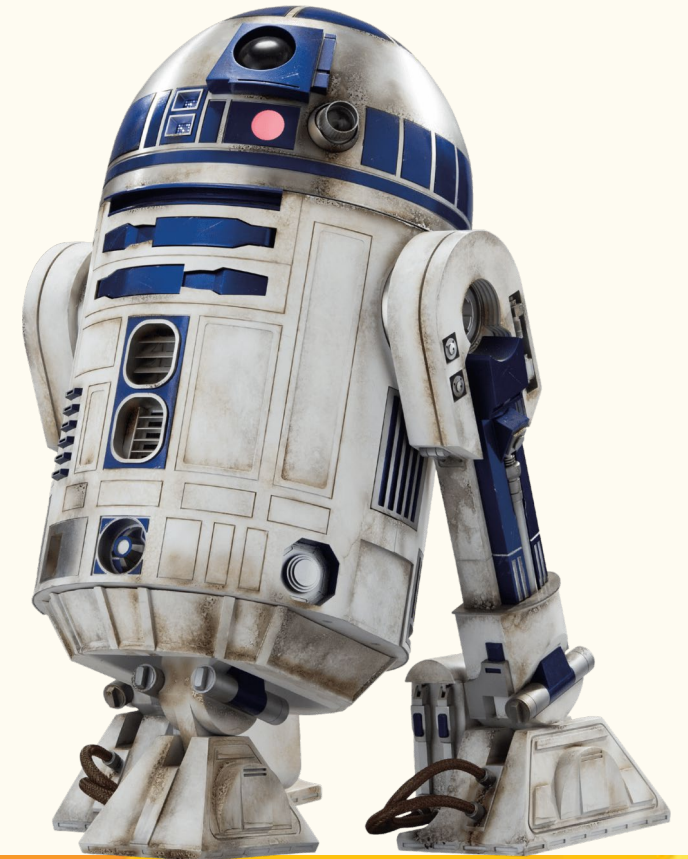
- Details, details, details. This clearly describes an actual project, the number of people in the group, their role in the group, and their problem-solving response to a mistake.
- The response provides a strong sense of the student's skill/knowledge, their leadership ability, their resilience (problem solving the waterlogged electronics) as well as sense of their commitment to diversity (they taught a recent immigrant about robotics).



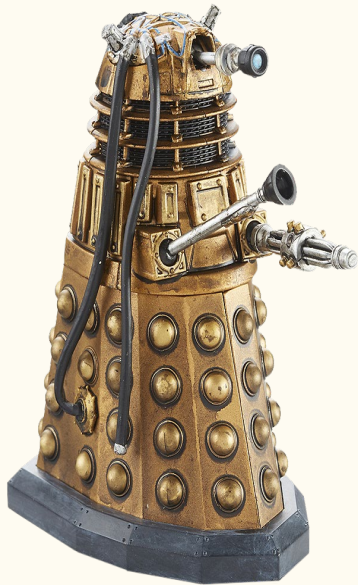
A few final thoughts...

AI: A tool, not a replacement

- A useful tool:
 - Organize thoughts
 - Resource, not a source
- Something to note:
 - Statement of Application Integrity
- An interview, not an essay:
 - Student's voice
 - Student's experience
 - Short, direct responses
 - Adding value



UC resources: PIQ resources/worksheets



Thank you!