

2015 Common Application Personal Statement: Ryan Liu

I remember that day...

When I was engulfed in a flood of legislators, a tidal-wave of suits – pinned between seas of customized pins belonging to 435 individuals representing the people. As House Members passed by me after votes, I knew I found my place. Interning in Congress reinforced my commitment to public service, providing insight into the political system I've been passionate about since my History-Channel-obsessed childhood. This passion has driven me to seek to transfer to a four-year institution, in order to major in Political Science and attain the knowledge necessary to work within the political and legal system to increase access to opportunities for others.

My interest in politics came early, through learning how my family escaped the Cambodian Khmer Rouge genocide. Aware of when past voices were silenced, I understood the importance of political participation and of varied opinions, becoming fascinated with America's political system of welcoming voices from all corners – an antithesis to the one my family escaped. I carried this interest as I enrolled in community college, due to financial hurdles, to become a first-generation college student.

In community college, I witnessed how many similarly faced socioeconomic challenges attaining an education. This opportunity gap refocused my interest in the political system: to use it to help others. I became active, creating scholarships for underserved students, joining shared-governance committees, and advocating in DC for education accessibility. Eager to learn more, I interned in Congress to work on policies to close the opportunity gap. Witnessing individuals shape the legislative process motivated me to strive to increase others' opportunities to have a

voice in decisions affecting them. I saw that for progress to occur, change was needed not only from the outside, but also from within our political constructs.

This realization forged in me a commitment to attain the qualifications to work within the political and legal system. While community college has provided me with invaluable opportunities for individualized learning and for campus and community involvement, I'll need to temporarily part-ways to transition to an environment that offers new prospects for involvement and learning and the opportunity to attain a four-year degree in order to work within the political process. Access to vast resources will allow me to turn what I learn into actual actions, through opportunities like representing students through joining student government, for while I was involved in the process at my community college, we lacked sufficient autonomy as a part of a smaller institution with strapped resources during state financial hardship.

I've always striven to attain differing perspectives, believing that solutions can best be found through various opinions working together and being taken into account. Through transferring to an atmosphere with multiple individuals from varied backgrounds and experiences, I hope to attain new perspectives in order to explore potential solutions to issues. Just like how I hope to attain others' perspectives, I hope to also contribute my own experiences and all those viewpoints I've listened to throughout my life to the environment I transfer to – to make sure that all perspectives are heard and that all students are served. After attaining an education, the necessary skills, and varied perspectives from this transition, I hope to return to my community with the objective to work within the political and legal field to forge a path for others to have ladders of opportunities for an education, a prospect my parents never had.

Politics isn't neat or flawless, but it can help individuals. In the flood of lawmakers, I didn't see 435 individuals – I saw the millions they represented. In the heart of American

democracy, I gained a better understanding of our government, and through what I seek to learn and gain from transferring, I hope to get others involved in this system that determines so much. After all, in a flood of political change, voices either get drowned out or rise to-the-top; one either sinks or swims.