

# College Essays: Student Worksheet

## Goal

You will brainstorm personal characteristics, values, and unique experiences in order to draft a compelling college essay.

## Part I: Bell Work

What do you think makes you a good candidate for college? List 3-6 characteristics that make you a strong applicant. Be sure to consider what colleges are looking for in a student. Under each characteristic, list an activity, accomplishment, or experience that proves you have that quality.

## Part II: Introduction

- Go to **CaliforniaColleges.edu** and sign in. Consider saving this worksheet as a Word or Google document so you can save your work.
- Type “college essay” in the search box on the top right side of the page and find the article titled **California Colleges College Admissions Essays**. Take several minutes to review the content of the page then discuss your thoughts with an elbow partner.

## Part III: Activity

1. With an elbow partner, answer the following questions:
  - What are the UC essays called? How many must you complete?
  - How many Common App essay prompts can you choose from?
  - If you apply to a CSU, in what cases might you have to answer special questions?
2. List college essay topics about which you have already considered writing. If you are not sure what to write about, list and/or describe things that really matter to you. List at least 7 potential topics.
3. Why do these topics matter to you?

4. How do these topics demonstrate something about you that grades, test scores, and teacher recommendations cannot?
  
5. Which topic(s) will give you the opportunity to reflect on and write about how you see the world? Select up to 5 topics from your list in #2.
  
6. Which topic(s) listed in #5 will give you the opportunity to reflect on and write about how you deal with tough situations?
  
7. Which topic(s) listed in #6 will give you the opportunity to present your authentic self to colleges?
  
8. Select one topic you listed in #7. Without worrying about writing a perfect essay, take some time to draft a few paragraphs that address the following questions. Instead of focusing on what you think colleges want to read, what your family might want you to write about or not write about, or what you have heard from others, focus on what you want to say.
  - How does this topic highlight your worldview? What is your worldview?
  - How does this topic demonstrate the ways you deal with tough situations? Be specific, honest, and creative in your reflection.
  - What does this topic tell colleges about you?

#### **Part IV: Upload**

Follow your teacher's instructions to save your essay draft (your essay draft may be this document or a separate document).