



How To Write Winning MBA Essays

June 11, 2019
Scott Edinburgh
Founder, Personal MBA Coach



I have been helping clients around the world get into dream schools since '08

- 14 years of professional experience
- Consulting, financial services and travel & hospitality experience
- 11+ years of MBA admissions consulting expertise
- #1 ranked consultant on MBA Insight
- #4 ranked consultant on Poets & Quants
- Hundreds of clients served
- 96% success rate
- \$4.5M in scholarships secured last year



**Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology**

Deloitte.

J.P.Morgan



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Boutique, one-on-one MBA and graduate school admissions consulting & tutoring

- Comprehensive GMAT tutoring and admissions consultancy
- Full-time support from an expert (Since 2008)
- Personal MBA Coach is available 7 days a week
- AIGAC Board Member (Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants)
- Early MBA planning (1-3 years pre-application) through post acceptance support
- Former M7 MBA interviewers on our team
- Former clients to network with at every top school





Essay
Development



Most Common Essay Categories

- Personal Story Essay
- Goals / Why MBA Essay



Personal Story Essay Examples

Harvard Business School:

As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA program?



Stanford GSB:

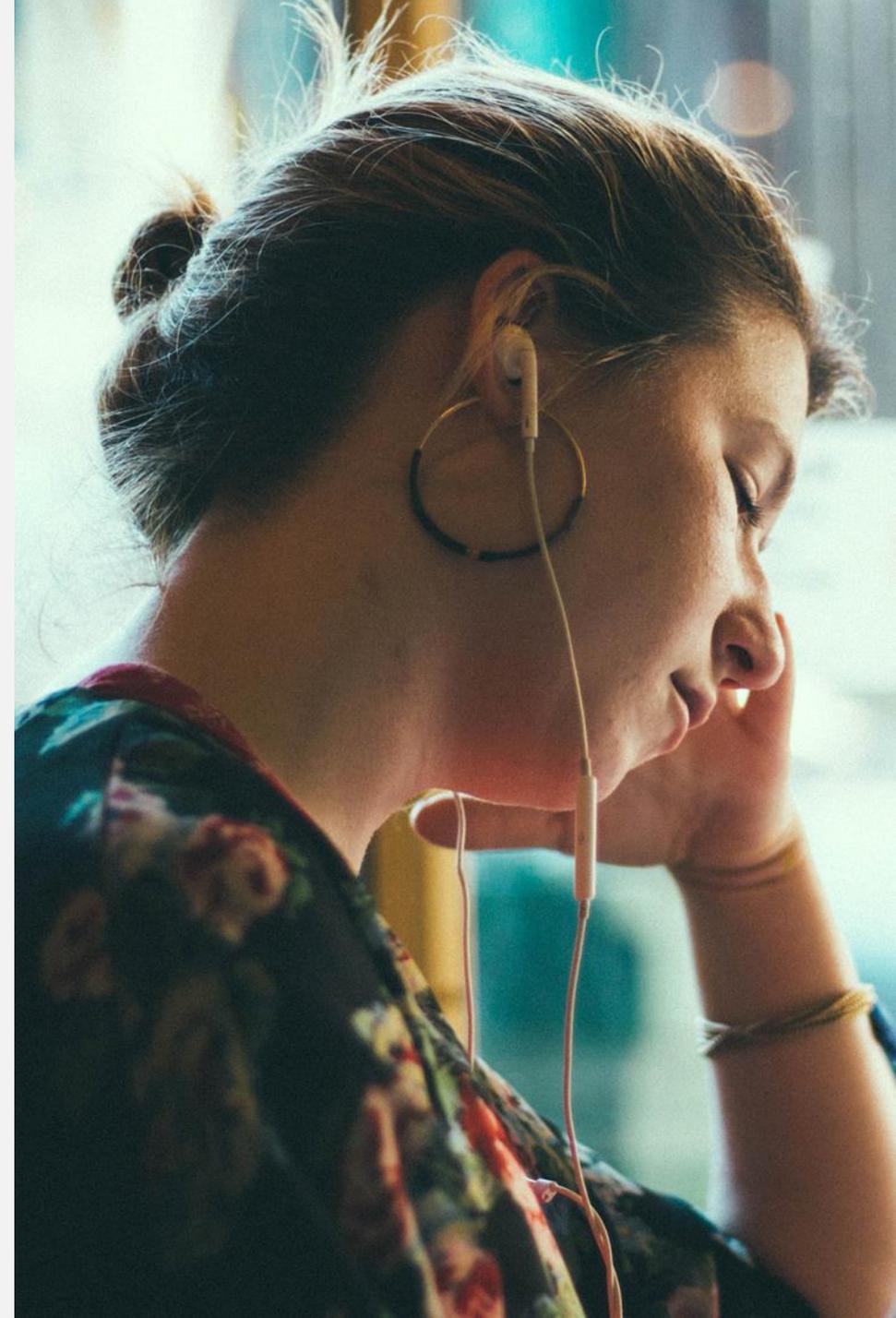
What is most important to you and why?



Thinking about your personal story can be the hardest part of the process

It is important to truly assess your “personal story” and what makes you unique

- Ask yourself what really drives you
- Take stock of your true passions
- Think about how you are unique from your peers
- Consider the circumstances and choices in your life that have shaped you the most



Everyone has a “unique” personal story

Jenny

Undergrad: Yale GPA: 3.8

GMAT: 750

Work exp: 3 Yr Deloitte Consulting, Clients: Aetna, BCBS, Dell, Sears

Interests: Music aficionado

Extra-curric: Junior Achievement 5hr/mo

ST Goal: Work in a tech start-up

LT Goal: Start a company in digital media

Michael

Undergrad: BC GPA: 3.7

GMAT: 730

Work exp: 3 Yr Deloitte Consulting, Clients: major tech

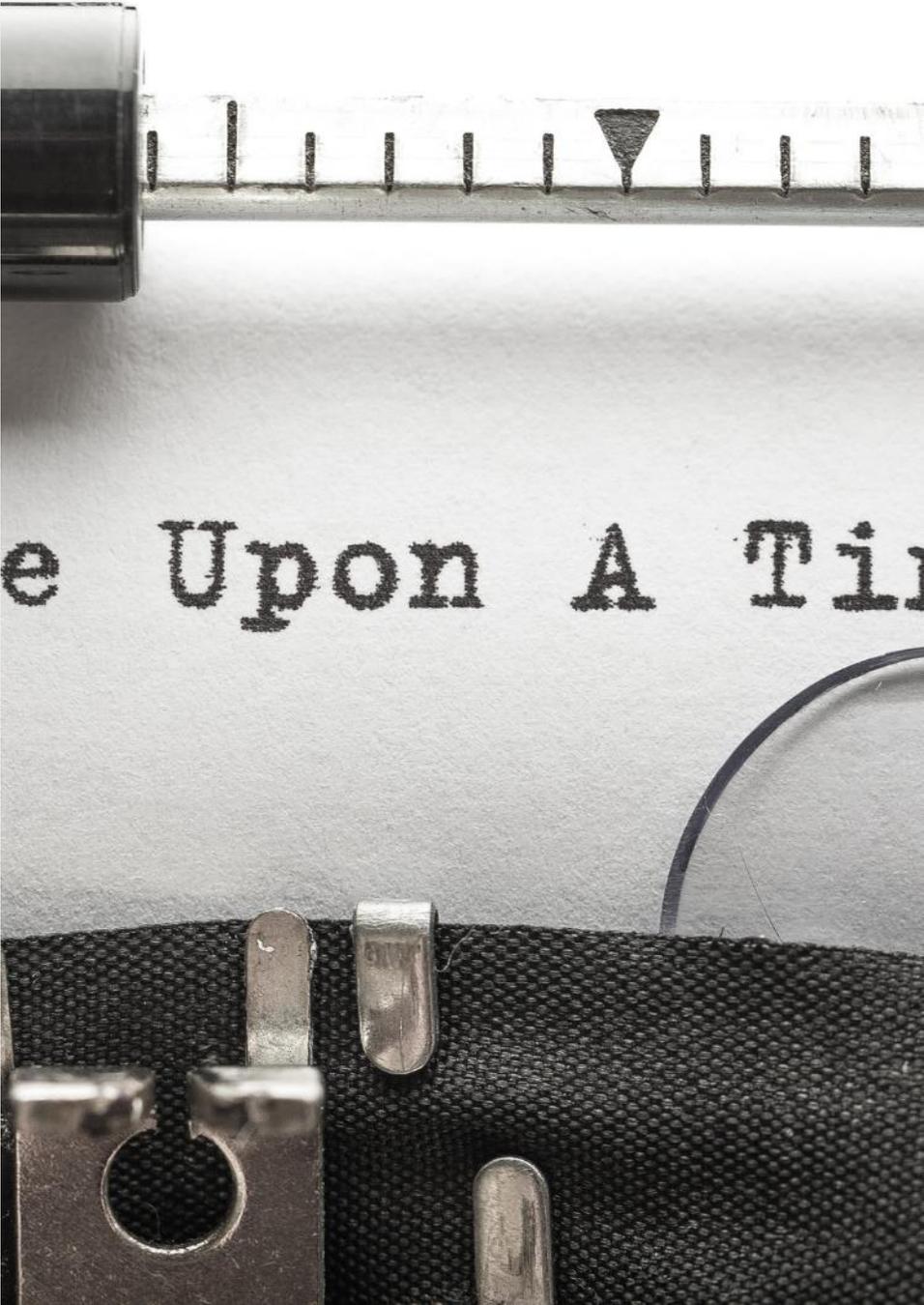
Interests: Competitive swimming

Extra-curric: Teaches underprivileged how to swim, mentored 2 teens for 5 years

ST Goal: Deloitte, build product management expertise

LT Goal: Run product management at technology firm

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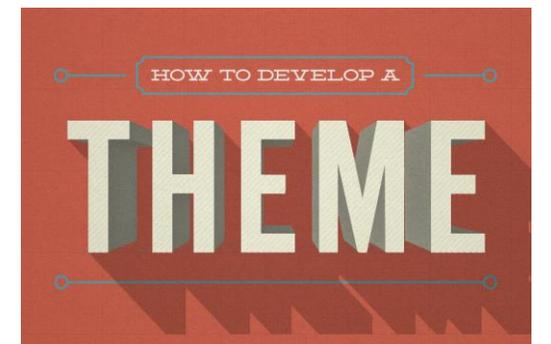
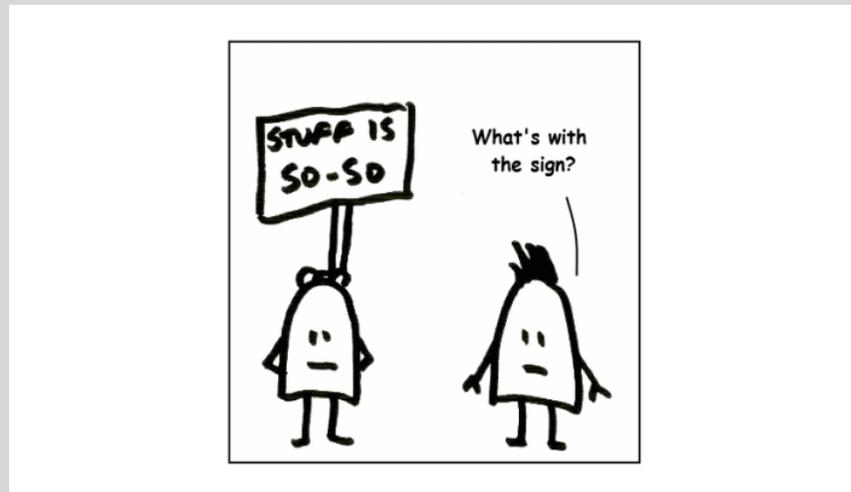
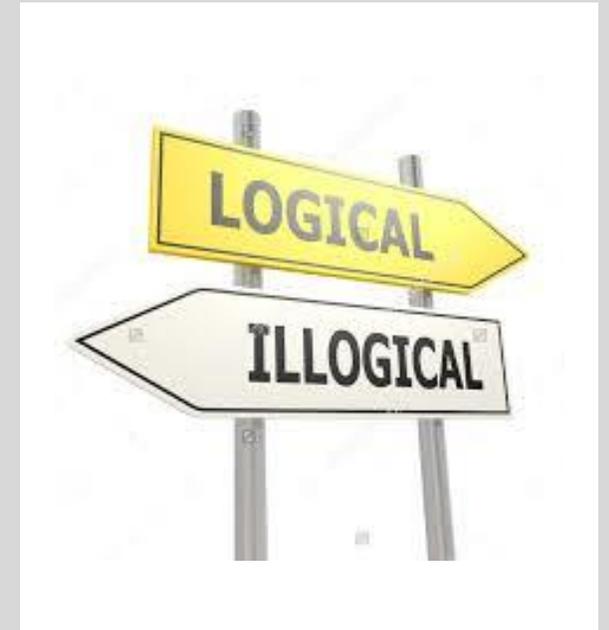
LT Goal: Run product management at technology firm

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Common Personal Story Essay Errors

- Too Much Detail
- Illogical
- Too Vague
- No Theme



Goals/Why MBA Essay Examples

Dartmouth Tuck:

Tuck students can articulate how the distinctive Tuck MBA will advance their aspirations. Why are you pursuing an MBA and why Tuck?



Wharton (2018-2019):

What do you hope to gain professionally from the Wharton MBA?



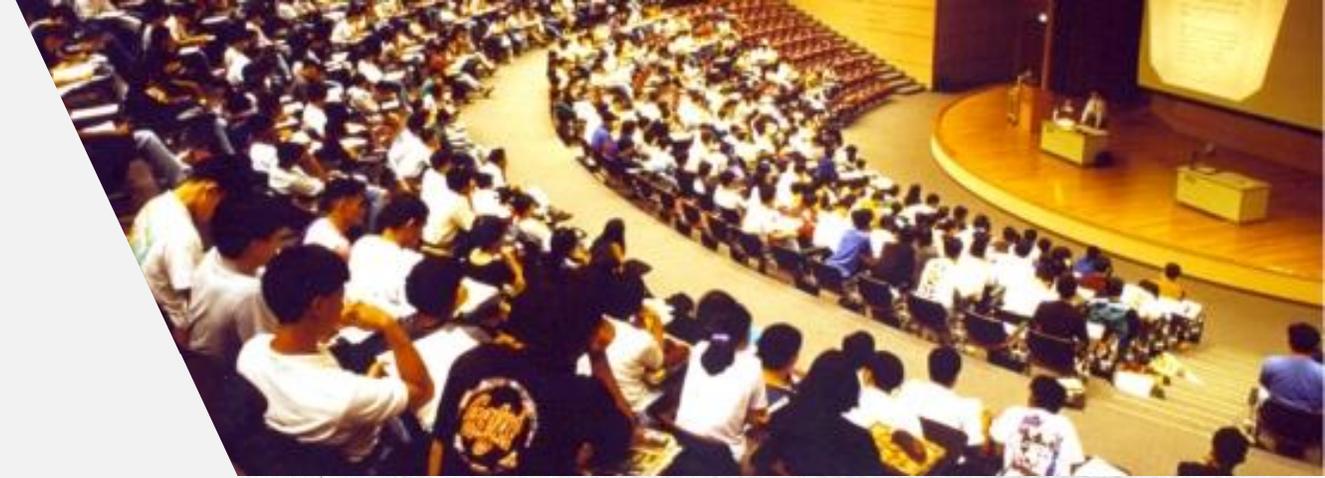
Columbia GSB:

Through your resume and recommendations, we have a clear sense of your professional path to date. What are your career goals over the next 3 - 5 years and what, in your imagination, would be your long-term dream job?



Answering a Why MBA/Goals Essay

- Goals should be specific and ownable
- Consider both short-term and long-term goals
- Discuss skills you will gain during your MBA and how you will apply them
- Name specific programs and classes on campus



Essay writing itself is a multi-step process

—

1. Brainstorm
2. Outline
3. Draft
4. Edit Again & Again
5. Proofread



I. Intro - Thesis

II.
A.
B.
1.
2.

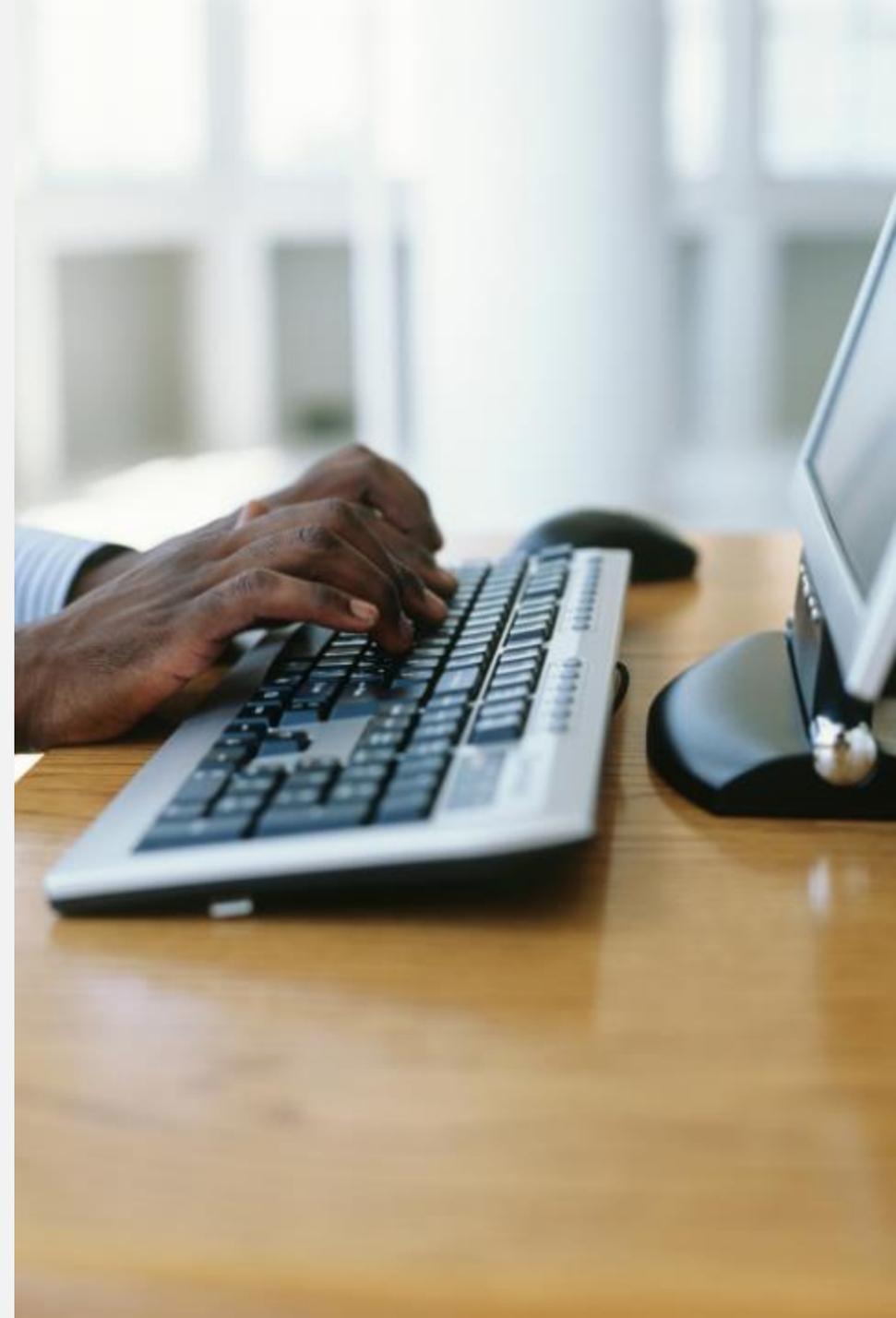
III. A.
B.
Conclusion

the best way to get
you focus on the
you're

General essay guiding principles

Keep these tips in mind for each essay

- Answer the question ASKED
- Write authentically
- Ensure each essay fits with your “personal story”
- Do not repeat yourself
- Be succinct
- Keep your language approachable
- Try to pick unique topics where possible



Edit your applications



- Put the finishing touches on your essays and ensure your story is coherent
- Have someone else read your essays to ensure those outside of your industry understand your accomplishments
- Ask a friend if your essays seem “authentic”



Essay Deep Dives

Harvard Business School Essay

As we review your application, what more would you like us to know as we consider your candidacy for the Harvard Business School MBA program?

Potential HBS Topics

What are some things you could include?

- An interest or passion of yours
- How you have overcome a health issue / are trying to overcome
- Your love of building things and life as an engineer since age five, now turned consultant

What should you keep in mind while writing?

- Ensure the topic is exciting. This isn't the place to write a career goals essay
- Don't try to throw everything in here. Good essays usually cover one thing
- This should be personal and unique. That said, you can still write about your career, what you want to do next and why HBS makes sense (briefly)

How long should the essay be?

- Most will fall between 600-1,000 words (though 800 – 1,000 is more common)
- Consider quality over quantity. I have seen fantastic 600 word essays that work!



Case Study: Poorly Written Personal Story Essay

Excerpt From Answer:

*“As a child, when my parents asked me what I wanted to do later I life, I said “**help people.**” Although I did not know what it meant to help people then, I have been focused on figuring out how in everything I do. From being a dominant participator in **school and social life**, to being involved in different organizations and improving the businesses I worked for, I have focused on helping organizations to ultimately help people. My **curious** and **adventurous** nature led to my top performance in school. But strong school grades are not a goal themselves. Since school I have been helping my community in ways ranging from tutoring to sports assistance to public speaking, the same approach I would bring to HBS and my fellow classmates. Working as a XYZ, I learned how to **balance multiple team priorities, problem solve** and **communicate**, something I do personally and professionally today.*

Columbia Business School Essays

Essay 1: Through your resume and recommendations, we have a clear sense of your professional path to date. What are your career goals over the next 3 - 5 years and what, in your imagination, would be your long-term dream job? (500 words)

Essay 2: Why do you feel Columbia Business School is a good fit for you? (250 words)

Essay 3: Who is a leader you admire, and why? (250 Words)

Columbia Essay 1:

Essay 1: Through your resume and recommendations, we have a clear sense of your professional path to date. What are your career goals over the next 3 - 5 years and what, in your imagination, would be your long-term dream job? (500 words)

- Include short-term and long-term goal
- Be specific and share how you will leave your mark
- Dream big but stay logical
- Include past experience for context only
- Mention how CBS will help



Columbia Essay 2:

Essay 2: Why do you feel Columbia Business School is a good fit for you? (250 Words)

- Do your research
- Name 3-4 specific offerings
- Include a mix of classes, clubs, seminars etc.
- Mention at least one NYC specific offering
- Where relevant, include cultural fit



Columbia Essay 3:

*Essay 3: Who is a leader you admire, and why?
(250 words)*

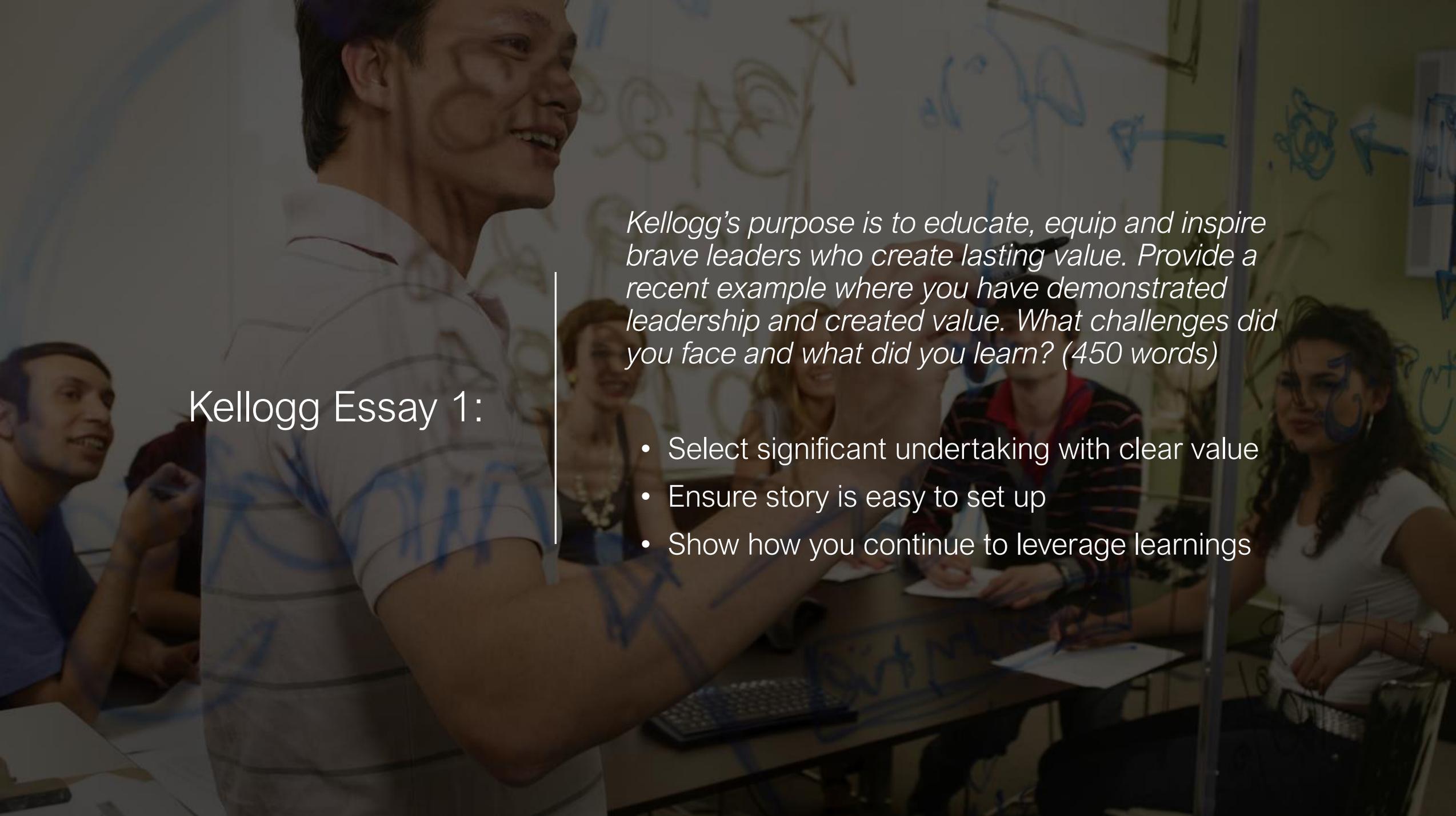
- Pick someone you want to emulate or with a shared belief
- Consider someone with a similar background
- The “why” should speak to your personal story
- Essay should show your leadership style



Kellogg Essays

Essay 1: Kellogg's purpose is to educate, equip and inspire brave leaders who create lasting value. Provide a recent example where you have demonstrated leadership and created value. What challenges did you face and what did you learn? (450 words)

Essay 2: Values are what guide you in your life and work. What values are important to you and how have they influenced you? (450 words)

A man in a white polo shirt is standing in a classroom, pointing at a whiteboard. He is smiling and looking towards the right. The whiteboard is covered in blue hand-drawn diagrams and arrows. Several students are seated at desks in the background, some looking towards the man. The overall scene is a classroom or workshop environment.

Kellogg Essay 1:

Kellogg's purpose is to educate, equip and inspire brave leaders who create lasting value. Provide a recent example where you have demonstrated leadership and created value. What challenges did you face and what did you learn? (450 words)

- Select significant undertaking with clear value
- Ensure story is easy to set up
- Show how you continue to leverage learnings

Kellogg Essay 2

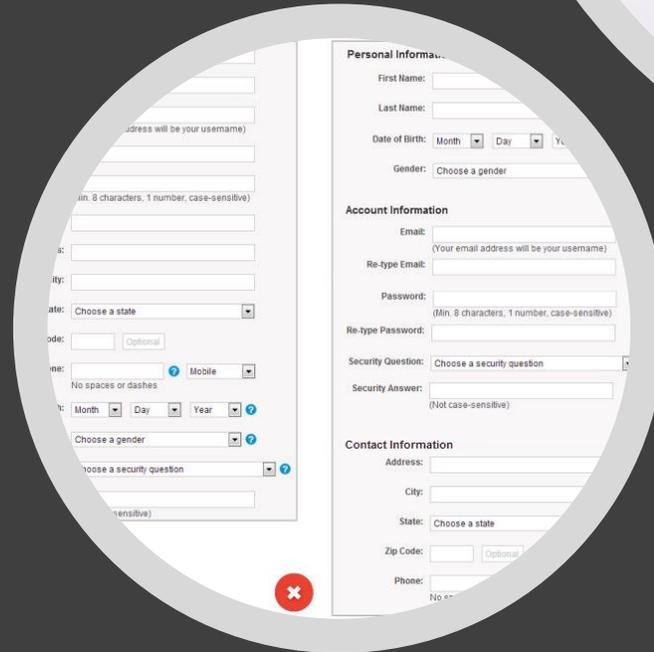
*Values are what guide you in your life and work.
What values are important to you and how have they
influenced you? (450 words)*

- Authenticity is key
- Explain “why”
- Get personal



Save time for the “last minute” items

- They will take longer than you think
- Ensure short-answer questions complement the rest of your application
- Share your completed essays with your recommenders
- Always have someone unfamiliar with your essays conduct a thorough proofread



A circular inset showing a screenshot of a web application form. The form is divided into several sections: "Personal Information" with fields for First Name, Last Name, Date of Birth (Month, Day, Year), and Gender; "Account Information" with fields for Email, Re-type Email, Password, and Re-type Password; and "Contact Information" with fields for Address, City, State, Zip Code, and Phone. There are also dropdown menus for "Choose a state" and "Choose a security question". A red 'x' icon is visible at the bottom right of the form.



**KEEP
CLAM
AND
PROOFREAD**

Personal MBA Coach clients received \$4.5M last year

Below is a sample of the schools clients got into



How Personal MBA Coach Can Help?



Call: +1 617 645 2424

Email: scott@personalmbacoach.com

Web: www.personalmbacoach.com



Download our MBA Planning Kick-Start Guide!

<https://www.personalmbacoach.com/kickstartsignup>



GMAT prep



Extra-curricular strategy



Network development

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**MBA
PLANNING
KICK-START**