



College Essay - Presenting Your Transferable Skills

Since colleges and universities place a large emphasis on intercultural understanding and perspectives it is encouraged that you incorporate your positive outcomes and study abroad experience into your college entrance essay. Here are some tips on how to get started!

Developing your Idea

The way you use your AFS exchange experience as the platform for your college essay will be dependent upon who you are as an individual and the essay prompt question. However, oftentimes some aspect of your experience, whether that is minute or holistic, can be applied. Take time to think about the following questions:

- What was the most difficult part of your exchange and why?
- What was the most rewarding part of your exchange and why?
- Which of your positive outcomes demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- Does any certain skill, attribute, or quality you gained from your study abroad experience set you apart from other applicants? Why?
- Did your AFS experience change your perspective on life? How and why?
- Are there any creative works associated with the country in which you studied abroad that impacted you? Could they be applied to your college essay (say, for example, a play that you saw about the Dirty War in Argentina or seeing the flamenco performed in Spain.)
- How did you transition your experience into your life when you returned? What parts of your exchange will you bring to your college campus? What can you share with your peers?
- What do you think a college or university would gain from a student who participated in an exchange program during high school.

Writing your Essay

You probably can see now that any essay topic can be answered by using your AFS exchange experience. Let's look at a couple examples of prompts and how you can begin to answer them.

Describe a time a risk you have taken and its impact on your life.

For a specific question like this it is important that you use details to support the impact your experience had on you. Of course studying abroad has risks and of course it taught you more about the world and yourself. But how? What would have happened if you hadn't gone an exchange? What personal qualities helped you to overcome the challenges and risks? Do the benefits outweigh the risks? You should pick two or three "impacts" (possibly from your positive outcomes list) to bolster your answer.

Write your personal essay

.Open-ended questions can be daunting but in your case you have the freedom to explore any aspect of your exchange. Pick a specific incident you experienced while abroad, a certain conversation you had with your host sister, or a time where you experience an "ah-ha!" moment. Use the questions above.