Angelynn Nguyen’s UC application essays (accepted: UCLA, UC Berkeley, UCSB, UCSD)

***PLEASE DO NOT PLAGERIZE THESE ESSAYS. THANKS, ENJOY!***

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

My bare feet creep to the edge of the block overlooking the vast pool of chlorinated water. Instead of snoozing in bed before school, I decided to wake at 4:45 AM for swim practice. I dive into the water which is like the ocean on a winter day. I immediately execute five rapid dolphin kicks, excited to test my skills. I am in my second home, where I can develop towards my ambitions.

I joined Santa Clara Swim Club as a fourth grader who loved the water. I would frantically splash my arms and legs, convincing myself it was swimming. But, as I grew as a person and athlete, I learned to approach my goals with equal parts of persistence and prowess. Instead of performing unconscious strokes between walls, I analyzed every slight movement, gradually revising to improve my sprints. I was preparing for my league's championship competition.

I had two months before the major meet, and I had to determine the most efficient form for my backstroke. Each lap was a trial. How can I maximize my speed? I practiced twelve hours every week, adjusting the angle of my arms and the position of my body relative to the surface of the water. My pinky entered the water, as my other thumb exited. My legs were straight and pointed. With love and logic, I strived to achieve the goal I dreamed of, breaking my school's record.

The finals portion of the anticipated competition arrived. During trials, I had swum the 100-yard backstroke, only to miss the record by 1 second. Persistence ran through my veins. BEEP! I was off, implementing my rapid kicks and quick but precise strokes. My breath was heavy. My feet felt like weights. I made my final push to touch the wall. I had beat the record by 3 seconds with a time of 1:04.38 and placed second in my league.

I am not a naturally gifted swimmer, but my greatest talents lie in my stamina and studiousness as I conquer my aspirations. As much as I love sleeping, I must prepare for afternoon practice.

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

Go to the left. Now a little to the right. Got it! Under the microscope, I finally found a thriving group of Listeria monocytogenes. I carefully examined the bacteria, trying to brush away the sinking feeling that my hypothesis, for the experiment, may be wrong. It was 9:30 PM, as my graduate student mentor and I worked together on my project in the Theriot Laboratory at Stanford University as part of the Raising Interest in Science and Engineering Summer Internship Program (RISE). At first, I didn't know what to expect regarding the lab work and environment. But after settling in, I was calmed and enlightened by reading papers describing Listeria's cell-to-cell spread. Expanding my knowledge by evaluating literature and interacting with mentors, allowed me to create an original experiment.

I was enthusiastic to explore the effects of nutrient amounts on Listeria's replication. Split, seed, infect, and examine the cells. As I carried out my procedure, I was flooded with joy and wonder. However, my mind continued to fret over obtaining data that didn't corroborate with my initial hypothesis. Despite my worries, I cautiously finished observing the cells, while thinking about the results from my previous sets. Data analysis followed; I spent hours counting each bustling bacteria.

After completing five trials, I realized my theory was incorrect. Anxiously, I challenged myself to determine a reason for the disjunction, by communicating with the graduate students and diving into more research papers. I stayed studying in the lab for twelve hours. Doing so introduced me to new variables, such as microscope functions, that I had not noticed before. Since I did not receive results I had expected, I persevere and ultimately allowed myself to learn even more. At the beginning of the summer, I struggled with the concept of having hypotheses not supported by my experimental data. But throughout my experience in the RISE program, I was able to accept my incorrect theories, to grow myself and my work. I moved my fixed mindset to the left then a little to the right, developing a growth mindset and love for microbiology.