**** College Application Essay Handout

**WHAT DO SELECTIVE COLLEGES LOOK FOR?**

* We want to learn more about your personality, creativity, depth of understanding, and sense of organization.
* Strong writing skills
* Fluency and technical correctness are important.
* Do you have something to say? How well can you say it? Say it in your own voice.
* Test scores, course selection, grade point average, and rank are not the only factors in the admissions decision.

**SETTLING DOWN**

* Don't wait until the last minute
* Don't wait until you are inspired - ideas don't always come in the middle of the night (see cartoon below)
* Find the right tools and the right environment
* Brainstorm

**COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY**

The personal statement helps us become acquainted with you as an individual in ways different from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. Please write an essay (250-500 words) on one of the options listed below.

* Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
* Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure.  How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
* Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea.  What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
* Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content.  What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
* Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.****

Cartoon by Pulitzer Prize winner, Zits cartoonist, Kenyon Alum

**Jim Borgman**

**SUGGESTIONS FOR CHOOSING YOUR TOPIC**:

* Answer the question - if appropriate, you can use the same essay for another college.
* The best topics are ones that complement and highlight information in other parts of the application.
* If you aren’t willing to let an older adult read your essay, perhaps the topic isn’t appropriate.

**WHEN YOU WRITE:**

* Tell the story only you can tell.
* We are interested in how well you write - complete sentences, don't overload on personal pronouns, limit contractions, avoid judgment words (e.g. obviously), do not begin with conjunction or preposition, and don’t swear.
* Put your reader into the action.
* Focus, flow of ideas, and organization all count.
* Use sound construction and word choice - don't distinguish yourself for the wrong reasons.

**LENGTH AND FORMAT**

* Follow the directions. In general you will want to write an essay that is at least one full page and seldom more than two pages in length. Economical writing is appreciated.

**ETHICS OF WRITING**

* As part of the Common Application, you sign an ethical statement saying, “I certify that all information in my application, including my personal Essay, is my own work.” We hold you to this and will DENY you if your submitted essay is written or heavily edited by someone else.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER TO DO BEFORE YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION**

* Let your essay sit, then reread it and critique it.
* Use spell check and word check appropriately – This tool does not differentiate between to, too, or two nor the names of different colleges should you personalize your essay by mentioning our college.
* Give attention to shorter-answer questions as well.
* Follow the directions.
* Honor deadlines.

Colleges look for ability, creativity, motivation, intellectual curiosity, self-discipline, and potential for growth. If you have any questions about the college admission process or about Kenyon College, feel free to contact me.

M. Beverly Morse, Associate Dean of U.S. and International Admissions

morse@kenyon.edu

www.kenyon.edu

@2014 not for distribution without written permission