

## **SAMPLE ESSAYS FOR THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COMMITTEE APPLICATION**

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## **Sample Candidate Introduction 1**

I was born and raised in a suburb located about 25 miles east of Manhattan. My father, an alumnus of Fredonia College, has been working in sales and specializes in corporate printing equipment. My mother, a graduate of Westchester Business Institute, is a bookkeeper for a small clothing company. My parents have worked extremely hard to provide for their three children. Thinking back to our childhood, I distinctly remember my mom putting us to bed and leaving for her nighttime shift at the local food store after my father came home. From an early age then, the value of hard work was impressed upon us. Currently, my sister works as an office assistant after spending five years as a full-time caretaker; my brother is at the University of Delaware on an Army ROTC scholarship.

My dad loves to tinker and build. He constructed our deck, two bathrooms, and basement; he also fixes plumbing, cars, and even computers. Too young to be of any practical help, I would sit and watch him. It was fun to make something I thought was broken work like new again. Together we would take apart and rebuild intricate toy models to figure out what made them tick. His curiosity was infectious. A little older, I may have gone too far when I dismantled our computer, accidentally bending the tiny pegs on the CPU, trying to figure out how the miniscule circuits operated. Surprisingly, my parents were not mad — I just had to pay for the \$100 repair, though a lot of money for a 12 year old.

The day I turned 14, I went to the local pizzeria and asked for a job. I spent almost 4 years there working closely with ten undocumented immigrants from Guatemala and Honduras. I learned about their lives back home and why they took a long, dangerous journey across the border. Most were escaping drug wars and gang violence and planned to send their earnings home. Their struggles did not cease when coming here though: limited access to healthcare and a lack of insurance wreaked havoc when one of them got sick or injured; they lived in constant fear of deportation and the law. I became acutely aware of the injustice and inequality surrounding the underserved community.

Academically, my interests varied from history and literature to math and biology. In high school, my sights narrowed when my father was diagnosed with and cured of legionella. It took physicians almost a week to figure out the issue, and by then my dad was very ill. As a naive teen, I thought medicine was perfect and doctors were omnipotent. However, I began to realize it wasn't, and that there is a need to further develop and improve the field so that a similar event wouldn't happen again. I was lucky to have two inspiring math and biology teachers who espoused the mystery and beauty of their fields, so, with my existing interest in computer science, it was a great opportunity to combine them by studying BME. Though I came to Hopkins with an open mind, I aspired to help improve the state of medical care.

## **Sample Candidate Introduction 2**

My childhood was neatly divided into two very different environments. I was born in Mammoth Lakes, California, population: 7,500. Nestled between the peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, my childhood home was nearly 10,000 feet above sea level. My younger sister and I grew up without television, Internet, or any concept of an urban metropolitan lifestyle. Instead, we hiked, skied, fished, and explored every inch of the mountains my parents would allow.

Despite their dissimilar backgrounds, both of my parents were passionate about raising my sister and I in a wilderness environment. My mother never went to college, and instead devoted her life to wildlife conservation. My father has been in the wine industry for 30 years, and prides himself not on his academic accolades, but on his certifications in wine specialties. My family enjoyed our meager but fulfilling lifestyle, but we fell on hard times when my grandmother received a liver transplant. We unexpectedly relocated to Birmingham, Alabama for a year during her operation and recovery, and our finances did not recover as well as she did.

The next phase—and perhaps more formative years—of my life began when my family moved to Austin, Texas. I was entering middle school and had never spent more than a few days in any major city before. Needless to say, I underwent a major lifestyle readjustment. Never before had I been exposed to such a wealth of new opportunities, and I was quick to utilize all that I could. I transferred from my suburban school to the city's magnet math and science program where I nurtured my burgeoning thirst for science and joined the rigorous club swim team at the University of Texas. In high school, my typical day consisted of swim practices before and after school, my ten AP class schedule and various extracurricular involvements. My schedule was uncompromising, but I was devoted and determined. Johns Hopkins was a natural choice for me, as it allowed me to pursue athletics and academics in a similarly rigorous environment. I was never the type to shy away from a challenge, and the challenges I faced at Hopkins taught me how to embrace and thrive in the face of them.

I feel that my diverse interests are a good reflection of the diverse environments of my childhood. My passion for swimming taught me not only the value of hard work and dedication, but also cultivated within me a great respect for the intimate yet often overlooked connection between the mind and body. The human body is an amazingly tenacious specimen and I am equally as interested in the lives and minds within the bodies. As I grew up and moved from a rural town to urban city, I became intensely fascinated with the science of people, which shaped my decision to pursue neuroscience and ultimately psychiatry. I want to understand the way people work on both a molecular and cognitive level, and I believe that a career in psychiatry would combine these interests of mine in an enriching, productive way.

### **Sample Candidate Introduction 3**

I was born and raised in a relatively small, farm town-turned-suburbia in southern New Jersey, about twenty minutes outside of my beloved City of Brotherly Love. My father has been working in sales since he graduated from Penn State with an engineering degree. My mother, also a Nittany Lion, worked in Center City, Philadelphia, managing the corporate advertising campaign for Aramark's international headquarters. Once my twin sisters were born, my mom stayed home to raise the three of us. My younger sisters are now freshmen lacrosse players at Drexel University and the University of Delaware, respectively, and are both headed into health careers as well. From an early age, we were encouraged to intensely pursue our interests, and to challenge ourselves whenever possible.

My mom loved art history, and I could list influential artists by the time I reached elementary school. Our learning wasn't always through books, and I think hands-on experiences were most influential. I distinctly remember sitting in the galleries in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, jockeying for position in front of Monet's Water Lilies with my sisters. My mom gave us each a sketchbook and a handful of colored pencils, and we were instructed to mimic types of brush strokes – swift dabs for Monet, small points for Surratt, and diagonal lines for Lichtenstein.

My interests through elementary and middle school varied, but the passion to learn was always evident. However, once I reached high school, my biology teacher introduced me to the biological sciences, and I never looked back. High school bio came easily to me, and I was initially attracted to the idea of continuing along that path all the way to my M.D. I was also fortunate enough to become involved in successful athletic teams, and the combination of academics and athletics during that time started to shape me.

My high school varsity lacrosse team won two state championships, and I was proud to serve as captain both years. Being involved in athletics became an invaluable experience that instilled values that were as relevant on the field as off. Athletics taught me the value of positive mentors, supportive teammates, and exceptional competitors. Sports demonstrated the need to adapt to new circumstances and new challenges, and pushed me to find a way to motivate myself and my teammates to come out on top. By the time I entered my senior year, I was confident that I had the athletic and academic background necessary to accept an offer to Johns Hopkins as a member of the women's lacrosse team. Now as I embark on my next step, I feel equipped with the tools necessary to be a productive citizen, engaged in the community, and prepared to develop into a physician that will make a difference in the world.

#### **Sample Candidate Introduction 4**

I spent the greatest portion of my life in Connecticut, and accordingly, I most often think of myself as a New Englander. I love the year's first snowfall and drives to the beach that fill my summers. But even so, my childhood was far from typical. I was born in China and moved to Italy shortly after I learned to walk. In subsequent years, I lived in Germany, during which time I spoke fluent German and Chinese. After my family settled in the States, I spent my first year here simultaneously attending elementary school and ESL courses. Relocating so often was hectic, but my childhood was diverse, rich and colorful; it cultivated in me a sense of curiosity and strength of purpose.

When I was nine, my sister was born. Despite our age difference, she and I have always had a great dynamic. Our relationship motivates me to try and set the best example for her, but I am also not above sneaking her out for an occasional pre-dinner ice cream together. My parents are both scientists who have often relocated for their careers; my mom works in industry, and my dad is a professor. Both grew up in the rural parts of China and were the first in their respective families to attend university.

My mother's favorite movie is "The Red Shoes," and before I ever spoke English, I loved to watch the ballet scenes. I decided, at four years old, that I was going to be a ballerina. Although my career choices have evolved, I did eventually find my niche in ballet. When I moved to Connecticut, I joined New Haven Ballet and have since danced virtually all my life. As I got older, I spent most of my free time in the dance studio. I relished every moment of it, as ballet was more than the dance itself. It was an interest I developed on a childhood whim, but it became a crucial lesson in dedication and commitment.

In contrast, my academic interests have not always been as distinct. Largely because my family moved so often, I found a great deal of solace in books. I indulged myself in their stories about love, mysteries, and adventures in exotic places. Through my parents, I also had sufficient exposure to science, but I did not consider pursuing it until I was well into high school. As a sophomore, I started volunteering in the pediatric primary care unit of Yale New Haven Hospital. I saw my first glimpses into the medical field, and it was enough to light a spark of interest. I pursued this new development both in school and outside the classroom. I took on more challenging science courses, and before my senior year, I spent a summer in my first medical research internship. The experience was a catalyst in my interest in scientific innovation and ultimately contributed to my choice to attend Johns Hopkins University, an institution known for its encouragement of undergraduate research. As a Hopkins student, I have tried to balance the different aspects of my intellectual and artistic pursuits, all of which have contributed significantly to both my education and personal character.

## **Sample Academic Accomplishments 1**

Enrolling in the BME program at Hopkins was a great opportunity to explore my already existing interests at the intersection of several fields. I didn't have much prior credit, so I spent the majority of my first two years taking prerequisites in chemistry, math, and physics; similarly, my latter years were almost entirely invested in completing the core and focus area courses. I continued to pursue various interests outside my field when given an opportunity though. Understanding the ethics and equality in healthcare was very important to me from my experience working with disadvantaged and undocumented immigrants. As a freshmen, I enrolled in a course in bioethics, which exposed me to the limits and challenges of a medically advanced society. We spent a great deal of time discussing the issues involved in regenerative medicine, which inspired me to eventually join a stem cell engineering lab after freshmen year.

I spent 1.5 years working at the lab and learned about designing and running experiments, collecting data, and reading scientific papers. Throughout this time, I also began to dive deeper into my major, taking fascinating classes in mathematical modeling and systems level analyses of human physiology. My interests began to shift away from a wet lab approach and more towards a mathematically intensive study of biology. My coursework culminated in an exciting Mathematical Biology course, exposing me to a rigorous study of areas such as game theory and epidemiology. From my coursework and interactions with various professors at Hopkins, I now know I want to utilize my quantitative skills towards medical research as a future academic physician.

To further diversify my academic pursuits, I took several classes in literary study and history, most notably Detective Fiction and Rise of Modern Science. Both courses were a great outlet where I could explore other types of creativity and expression without the quantitative aspect of my engineering classes.

During senior year, I was fortunate enough to be a member of a successful BME design team. Under the guidance of two neurosurgeons at Hopkins, we worked on an improved surgical device for spinal fusion procedures. We presented our work at conferences and even competed in and won a few business plan competitions. It was a great exposure to the medical technology world, though it further affirmed my aspirations to pursue the provider side of healthcare.

Overall, I would not trade in my academic career at Hopkins for anything. My time there has exposed me to many fields in math and science, and Hopkins has also cultured me greatly in other pursuits. I discovered topics I am very passionate about as well as others I may not find as fulfilling. However, the sum of my prior experiences made me who I am today. I now consider myself a much better-rounded individual with the knowledge and problem solving capacity for my future endeavors.

## **Sample Academic Accomplishments 2**

My decision to attend Johns Hopkins was firmly rooted in my desire to pursue neuroscience, and I feel I have benefitted immensely from the unique experience of concentrating in cognitive neuroscience. As a freshman, I was impressed with the ease in which professors like Dr. McCloskey and Dr. Rapp synthesized what I had always believed to be two competing sciences—the “hardness” of natural science with the “softness” of cognition. Their introductory classes to Cognitive Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuroscience ignited within me an enthusiasm for the richness of human consciousness and was formative in my desire to pursue psychiatry as a future profession. I was also given the opportunity to appreciate the intricacies of the human brain on a more molecular level in classes such as Nervous Systems and Biochemistry, which has also been additively significant in my desire to pursue neuroscience further.

I have always been particularly preoccupied with the mysteries of human consciousness, and believe that systems of balance should govern my study of said mysteries. I believe that one could not fully understand one facet of neuroscience or human experience without an equal appreciation and knowledge of the other. This idea is intimately tied to my passion for English, and was absolutely at the core of my decision to pursue the English minor at Hopkins. It’s always been about more than just “loving books”—I feel that literature allows us to access ourselves and our connections to each other in meaningful ways that perhaps could not be gained in other mediums. My English minor has allowed me to explore philosophies, traditions, and modes of thinking and expression that I do not feel I would’ve gained otherwise, and I am so grateful for the depth and richness of the English department at Hopkins. Because of classes such as British Literature and The Modernist Novel, I was able to become immersed in worlds and methods of conscious experience that were entirely unlike my own, and I learned to see connections between themes, ideas, and people in entirely new and unscientific ways. I believe my background in English benefitted me in so many ways beyond strengthening my writing—I grew, developed, and matured as an intellectual, a communicator, and ultimately, as a multidimensional person.

This sense of wholeness that I find so important has also been one of the ways that I have integrated my research, volunteering, and even athletic pursuits. Instead of feeling as though I needed to sacrifice or compromise one interest at the behest of another, I’ve been lucky enough to integrate them all into a synthesis that both reflects who I’ve always been and is also the reason I am the person I’ve become. I believe it was exactly this desire to balance all of my interests while consistently pushing myself to learn and do more that led me to be on the Dean’s list every semester at Hopkins, become a Bloomberg scholarship recipient, and a 4-time All-American Scholar.

### **Sample Academic Accomplishments 3**

As a Hopkins freshman, I enrolled in basic pre-med classes knowing that I ultimately wanted to go to medical school. During the summer after freshman year, I was accepted into a research-intensive program that placed me in a molecular oncology lab. It was this experience that revealed to me my interest in molecular biology and the research sciences. When I returned to Hopkins, I enrolled in basic biology classes and thoroughly enjoyed them, while also pursuing research in a neuroprotection lab at the Wilmer Eye Institute. It was through these experiences that I decided to settle on Molecular and Cellular Biology as my major.

During my junior year, I took “Biochemistry” and “Cell Biology,” which were the two courses that helped solidify my choice in the major and helped lay the groundwork for my medical and research-based mindset. These classes honed my ability to think critically about the work that I was doing outside of the classroom and helped me come up with better ideas for my research. In an effort to become more diversified in my studies, my schedule was also filled with music history and theory courses, things I had genuinely appreciated in high school. I fully enjoyed the time that I spent in “Intro to Popular Music” and “Western Classical Music,” listening and analyzing classic works, while also working through my music theory classes. These courses helped me understand that science and music were actually two very similar subjects. They both had a set of rules that can be followed, but deviation from these rules could create a revolutionary new art form, much like a new scientific theory that transforms the field.

Throughout my senior year, I earned Dean’s List honors for the first time. However, despite of my improved academics, my GPA was not yet competitive enough to attend medical school upon graduating from JHU. Therefore, I have continued to enhance my academic studies by pursuing of an MHS degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. I am pleased to share that I have achieved a 4.0 GPA over the first three terms at Bloomberg. The MHS program was a discernible next step for me because of the heavy science curriculum combined with an additional focus on public health. As a graduate student, I have been studying vaccine development and application and stress management, while still reviewing the basic sciences like biochemistry and molecular biology. My thesis topic, *Molecular Biomarkers in Prostate Cancer*, allows me to use my molecular biology background in connection with my public health knowledge to make cost effective recommendations as to the best way to clinically screen the population for cancer. This balanced curriculum and experience has fostered my love for research and science, but also has given me insight on the important cornerstone public health has in medicine.

With my science background, I am ready to tackle medical school classes and participate in cutting edge research at leading medical facilities. In addition, my public health and humanities background indicate that I can work effectively in different environments. Through these accomplishments and pursuits, I hope that medical school can be the next step in my educational journey.



#### **Sample Academic Accomplishments 4**

As an incoming freshman at Johns Hopkins, I took a course load that built upon strengths I already had in Spanish, calculus, and chemistry, while introducing a field that was new to me: cognitive science. The first class I enrolled in, "Introduction to Cognitive Neuropsychology," focused on deficits caused by brain damage, and how those deficits can help explicate unimpaired cognitive functioning. To do well in this course, I was required to implement a method of critical thinking that was like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. The prospect of learning methods to hypothesize cognitive structures and their roles in everyday functioning led me to eventually major in Cognitive Science.

Poetry has long been an outlet for me, as it combines elements of music and writing that allow me to be lyrical and expressive. I wanted to supplement the core classes I was taking for my major with courses that would help me to formalize this creative skill. I enrolled in both fiction and poetry classes offered at Hopkins. I am currently enrolled in "Poetic Forms II," an advanced poetry class through which I study poets' structural techniques, and learn to implement my own forms when writing. These creative writing courses have helped me hone on my writing style, expand the ways in which I can use poetry as a form of expression, and broaden my appreciation for the humanities.

When I started at Johns Hopkins, I knew that receiving an education from the university was not cheap. I told myself that if my parents were working as hard as they could to put me through college debt-free, it was only fair I worked just as diligently in return. When looking at my transcript, the GPA I have maintained can be put forth as evidence that I have succeeded in this goal. I do not, however, take my academic accomplishments for granted, and I will admit that at times I struggled. My second semester junior year, I was enrolled in "Cell Biology," a notoriously difficult upper-level biology class. After taking the first two exams, I was not receiving the grades I was accustomed to. Instead of accepting this as my fate, I changed. I attended every recitation session that fit into my schedule, altered my study habits, and engaged more with the instructors.

My time spent at Johns Hopkins is irreplaceable. This academic experience has bestowed critical thinking skills upon me, allowed me to harness my creative abilities, and enhanced my flexibility in challenging situations.

## **Sample MD-PhD Essay 1**

I developed a passion for science long before attending Johns Hopkins. In elementary school, I loved solving puzzles and was fascinated by simple experiments. I still remember a Friday afternoon in kindergarten when my teacher rubbed a potato chip, a raw potato, and a tablespoon of water on three brown paper towels. Our class was asked, "Which spot will last the longest?" Of course we all chose the water. On Monday, I was bewildered to see that only the potato chip grease remained and asked, "Why?" In middle school, I had my first formal exposure to chemistry and biology. I particularly enjoyed our 8th grade "sludge" project where we spent a week isolating and identifying the various components of a heterogeneous mixture of 20+ materials based on physical and chemical properties. Summer internships during high school at an endocrinology lab and an anesthesia lab introduced me to the basics of biochemical research. After these experiences, I knew I wanted to conduct research in college. I chose to attend Hopkins for precisely this reason.

While I have been interested in medicine since high school, I did not fall in love with chemical research until college. My experience in Dr. Lectka's synthetic organic chemistry group has made me eager to pursue a combined MD/PhD degree. In Dr. Lectka's lab, I have progressed from being supervised by a graduate student to instructing new group members and developing experiments independently. My research on the development of novel difluorination methods has garnered institutional and national recognition. While I enjoy synthetic organic chemistry research, I am attracted to the medicinal applications of modern synthetic techniques to drug design, a field that is too often overlooked.

As a physician-scientist, I hope patient interactions will promote translational research. By helping the chemistry department develop a combined BA/MA program, I realized the invaluable opportunities dual-degrees offer. I am not applying for a PhD alone because I also want to provide patient care. I hope clinical experiences will inspire specific research questions. It is often difficult to observe direct applications of synthetic chemical research. As a physician-scientist, I want to overcome this hurdle by ensuring the molecular work conducted in my lab is directly applicable to my patients' conditions and hopefully will culminate in collaborative clinical trials.

Most physician-scientists are trained in biological disciplines; chemistry is more unconventional. However, I believe chemistry is at the heart of biology and most medicinal work. There are tremendous possibilities for medicinal chemistry research. I hope my training in synthetic organic chemistry gives me a unique research perspective that will set me apart from most physician-scientists and allow me to complement their work. I understand the road to becoming a physician-scientist is long and rigorous; however, I wholeheartedly embrace the challenge.

## **Sample MD-PhD Essay 2**

My interest in academic research began not in a lab but in a Lego box. As a kid, I spent hours sprawled on the floor of my bedroom, immersed in Lego projects and “I Spy” books, skipping meals and stretching bedtimes. As I grew older, my obsession with puzzles and elusive clues persisted but my lens shifted, and I began to see that puzzles existed all around me in the natural world. I became transfixed by the Discovery Channel, back when it was about discovery; I enrolled in bug camps and attended university summer programs for middle school students. In high school I worked in a neuroscience lab at the University of Pennsylvania. I read papers, ran stains, and performed data analysis, and landed a publication for my efforts. From this point on I was hooked.

While my interest in research brought me to Johns Hopkins, once there I began volunteering in several healthcare settings. What started as an exploratory apprenticeship developed into an intense commitment that spurred my decision to pursue a career in medicine. I saw firsthand the diseases, barriers in access-to-care, and mistrust in healthcare systems that percolated through the disadvantaged populations we served. I learned a novel form of empathy, to connect with a diverse clientele honestly and humbly. I also saw the necessity of treatments that facilitate patient compliance and the translation that must exist not just between the lab and the clinic, but between the lab and the patient’s home.

In the tumor immunology lab of Dr. Charles Drake, I studied the immunosuppressive effects of brain tumors on the immune system. While this work sparked my interest in the field I hope to pursue, it also opened my eyes to the power of a dual degree. I saw how Dr. Drake’s MD/PhD training influenced both his work in the lab and in the clinic, how each was molded to perfectly complement the other.

Finally, in the lab of Dr. Kristina Nielsen, I learned that I could thrive in academia. I had the opportunity to conduct my own project involving the development of a protocol for thick tissue clearing. I became an expert in this small field. I built relationships with labs across the country as I networked with graduate students and scientists working on questions similar to my own. It was here that I learned to embrace thinking weirdly, and the nonlinearity in which solutions often arise for our problems. I learned the importance of grit, optimism and indefatigability in a grueling research setting, as we pushed through experiment that had us working 70 hour/week. I was returned to my roots: skipping meals and stretching bedtimes once again.

### **Sample MD-PhD Essay 3**

In the early 20th century, Dr. von Economo investigated Encephalitis Lethargica, an obscure epidemic of “sleepy sickness” that affected five million people worldwide. Long-term effects of this putative autoimmune attack on the basal ganglia included behavioral symptoms characteristic of depression, mania, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and hyperactivity. This constituted undeniable evidence that organic imbalance of brain circuits is sufficient to induce complex psychiatric symptoms. I believe that brain research is at the tipping point of explaining such symptoms from an organic standpoint, and I wish to contribute to discoveries that will transform the ability of physicians to improve patients’ outcomes through those means.

My passion for scientific inquiry is a long lasting one, first inspired by my father, a biochemist. As a teenager, my own experience with mental illness triggered my desire to understand the brain. While participating in several neuroscience research projects during college confirmed my passion for this intellectual pursuit, shadowing doctors drew me toward academic medicine. I met many patients enduring terrible suffering, such as a woman forced to spend her life alternating between psychotic crises outside the hospital and short-term remission as an inpatient. When I witnessed her psychological pain, her personal potential wasting away in the wake of her illness, I yearned to directly contribute to her well-being as much as to the scientific understanding of her disease.

Those interests eventually grew into two deep convictions. First, insights from patient interactions are necessary to address the complex dimensions of mental diseases in the lab. When attending schizophrenia teaching rounds, I saw the common pattern of symptoms that psychiatrists use for diagnosis, but also noticed how different one patient can be from another. I ached to find the biological explanation for such symptomatic diversity, and to shrink the gap between diagnosis and understanding of its underlying biology. Second, rigorous knowledge of brain physiology is needed to elucidate disease mechanisms and provide solid bases for treatment. As I learned about brain regions involved in schizophrenia, I was inspired to seek how those regions could give rise to observed symptoms. Specifically, having researched hippocampal neurophysiology for two years, I sought how we can use computational models of this structure to start explaining its role in a subset of symptoms.

Von Economo revealed that organic imbalance can lead to psychiatric symptoms. Similarly, I believe that we can unlock doors for successful treatment of patients with complex diagnoses by identifying how mental illness affects brain circuits. As an MD-PhD, I want to join multidisciplinary teams to apply discoveries in human brain function to therapeutic avenues for mental disorders.

## **Sample Competencies Essay 1**

The personal competencies I want to highlight are service orientation, resilience and adaptability, and teamwork, which are best demonstrated by my commitment to the Incentive Mentoring Program (IMP), working as a TA, and my current project with Accenture, respectively.

As a head of household (HOH) with IMP, I managed our 4 mentors, maintained our allotted finances, and conducted meetings to brainstorm approaches to problems our student faced both inside and outside the classroom. His family lived in one of the most underserved areas in Baltimore, and they struggled with issues financially, emotionally, and medically. As he got older, we had to constantly adapt to keep him on track towards graduation and, several times, out of trouble and away from prison. Even though our student dreamed of earning a diploma, his parents were unemployed and struggling. There is a perverse situation facing him and many youth in the inner city, where the immediate financial reward of drugs and gangs oftentimes trumps the arduous path towards academic success. One summer, he was in a credit recovery program and our team was unavailable. Though technically away from my role that month, I took the full day trip, via public transportation, from DC to his residence in the inner city to tutor him. Though I may not be able to remove him from the socioeconomic situation of his birth, I was fully committed to his success.

As a TA for an intro-level computing course, I quickly learned that not every student learns and thinks identically. Most of my students had never programmed before, so intuition was not necessarily natural and had to be developed. I strived to understand and gauge when my students did not comprehend a topic, so I could change my teaching methods if something wasn't effective. While planning out my material before each class, especially before the all-important review sessions, I would brainstorm different ways to describe the material in order to address the varied learning styles and perspectives of each student.

I am currently working on the first wave of a new consulting partnership between Oracle Marketing and Accenture. There are now 5 analysts across the country, and I was paired up with one for my local project. Since we had barely any exposure to the software prior to onboarding, it was pertinent for us to rely on each other's skills to succeed. Over the past 3 months since the project began, we have each developed individual specialties with the software. Together we have completed all our deliverables on time. Without my partner and our ability to work together, I would have been unable to finish many of my assigned tasks.

I thoroughly believe my experiences have made me a stronger, more determined, and understanding person. However, I am also self-conscious and aware of my current faults and continuously strive to improve on them. I am confident I will be a resilient, empathetic, and adaptable future physician.

## Sample Competencies Essay 2

I feel that my past experience as a collegiate athlete, Health Leads advocate, and current position as a clinical research assistant are excellent experiences to effectively demonstrate my personal competencies of resilience & adaptability, cultural competence, and social skills.

Two of the most important life skills that swimming has given me are those of perseverance and resiliency. I believe I am in an especially unique position to understand these values because of the unique nature of the sport. As a sprinter, I trained thousands of hours in and out of the pool only to see improvements in the range of tenths to hundredths of a second—the smallest out of any of my teammates. For a while, that was very difficult for me to grasp and be proud of; and it was incredibly frustrating to have entire seasons in which I saw no improvement at all. I learned to not let past failures determine future outcomes, and how confidence can fill the space that fear sometimes occupies once you learn how to be mentally flexible, adaptable, and determined—all competencies that I believe to be immensely important in becoming a physician.

My time as a Patient Advocate at Health Leads allowed me to work with a client base unlike myself and form relationships built on reciprocal trust and insight. It gave me the opportunity to understand the social determinants of health in my local Baltimore community, as I worked with a single mother on welfare trying to access a food pantry, a previously-incarcerated man trying to obtain health insurance, and a homeless woman trying to access transitional housing for herself and her family, just to name a few. I believe this experience taught me how to actively appreciate and respect the human similarities that often underlie the multiple dimensions of diversity, how to recognize and address bias both in myself and others, and ultimately gave me a unique cultural competence that I don't feel I would've attained elsewhere.

As a clinical research assistant at the Penn Frontotemporal Degeneration Center, I've learned how to uniquely communicate with patients and their caregivers in thoughtful, effective ways. I have always considered myself a person with good social skills, but I was never met with the same social challenges before as I have now working with this particular subset of patients. I routinely interact with our center's patients and their families, whether it's scheduling a research day, taking medical and family histories, performing cognitive tests, or consenting them on our protocols and each patient and family is very different. Often our patients have language disorders that render them entirely non-verbal, and others have frontal lobe disease which cause them to be extremely impulsive, apathetic, or sexually inappropriate. Learning how to connect with each person and caregiver has been not only integral to our research goals, but also a valuable asset that I intend to employ on my journey towards becoming a physician.

### Sample Competencies Essay 3

The personal competencies that I want to highlight are my service orientation, oral communication, and adaptability. These three competencies have been best demonstrated through my passion for tutoring with the Jail Tutorial Project, working as an organic chemistry teaching assistant, and serving as a MAPP mentor.

My long-term service to Jail Tutorial, where I currently serve as president, has opened my eyes to see the humanistic side of incarceration. Aside from the responsibilities of communicating with inmates, wardens, and student volunteers, this experience gave me a unique perspective to working with a demographic very different from mine. I was intensely focused on my goals, whether that was to best prepare a young man for a GED exam, or help an elderly man learn how to read. I know with certainty that I will apply the same passion and focus to my journey as a physician.

As a TA for organic chemistry lab, I help run weekly labs, ensure proper laboratory techniques, and grade assignments. This experience has further enhanced my communication skills and made me realize how adaptable and flexible I need to be when working with different learning styles and personalities. I see direct parallels between the roles of teachers and physicians. Education is a major component of disease prevention and health promotion. And education requires the teacher (or physician) to easily and succinctly communicate with students (or patients) to teach a subject (or explain medical treatment.) Also, the teacher-student and physician-patient relationships require a great deal of trust. I believe this trust grows from a genuine effort on the part of the teacher/physician to understand those that he or she works with.

I was recently accepted to City Year Boston, where I will spend my gap year as a tutor and mentor for children in the inner city school system. I hope to instill confidence in students and make them realize they truly can succeed. I also hope to engage my students in their communities as a means of showing them their own capacities to produce positive change. After getting to know Baltimore, I am looking forward to learning about some of the underserved areas of Boston. I also anticipate using my Spanish language skills to more effectively communicate with the large Spanish-speaking population in many of the communities in which City Year Boston works.

In closing, I hope my work in Baltimore's urban communities, in addition to my future work with City Year Boston, demonstrate my strong communication skills, commitment to service, and adaptability as a future physician.