

Sample Essay #1:

My mother loves telling the story of my response when my parents asked me what I wanted for my third birthday. I responded by pounding both fists against my chest and jerking violently. Eventually they realized that I wanted defibrillators, as seen on the beloved television program "Emergency."

Although impressed with the technology, even then I was attracted to the idea of helping people. Through example and upbringing, my family instilled in me the importance of being involved in all levels of life. Their dedication to living a full life kept my grandparents participating in family and worldly matters, active and vigorous well into their eighties. My parents are also lifelong students and give of themselves in many ways to their family and community. My father is a pediatrician. My mother has a masters degree in Special Education and is currently a resource teacher. My sister now attends graduate school studying clinical psychology. They all emphasize education and are all concerned about the well being of all people.

I have patterned my life similarly. Academically, I chose honors classes and a challenging major in Cognitive Science. My original academic interests were in neuroscience and research. While pursuing my interests in education in neuroscience, I had the opportunity to work as a research assistant in the neuroscience department of the Biotech company, Amgen. I helped design and carry out research to explore the possible correlation existing between the learning and memory deficiencies of Alzheimer's Disease and altered levels of neurochemicals. I am a co-author of two experimental reports from these studies which have been accepted for publication in the Spring of 1995.

As I progressed in school and maturity, my interests evolved into the people-oriented aspects of medicine. In retrospect, this interest in people was manifested in many of my extracurricular activities. A central theme of my extracurricular activities has been helping people of all ages. During my experience as the Valley Convalescent Hospital, I gained profound insight into the healing relationship between patient and doctor/healer. While I was there, I delivered ice-cream to patients for their afternoon snack. As soon as I brought the ice-cream into their rooms, their faces, which had previously appeared somber and withdrawn, began to glow. At first, I had believed that this response was in anticipation for the cool, sweet treat; however, I soon realized that this response was a reaction to the company I was providing. Even a brief visit, or a cheery "Hello" had the effect of powerful, healing medicine, transforming them, temporarily, into a vibrant, healthy state.

Since then, I have had health related experience both from the perspective of a patient and that of a physician. An athletic injury resulted in an extensive and complex orthopedic surgery to my knee. The surgeon, Dr. Smith, impressed me with his combination of surgical expertise and concern for the personal needs of his patients. After I recovered, I accepted his invitation to be his extern during the summer of 1991 at the Southern California Orthopedic Institute where I got hands-on experience in orthopedic medicine. I observed surgery and participated in the office care of his patients. After learning the anatomy of the shoulder and the knee I performed diagnostic tests on patients to help determine the location and extent of their injuries. I have also authored a pamphlet about adhesive capsulitis that is being given to the Institute's patients with that condition. This interaction with patients in the medical setting was the crucial factor in the culmination of experiences leading to my decision for a career in medicine.

As a patient myself, as the son of a pediatrician, as a hospital volunteer, and as an extern of an orthopedic surgeon, much of my active life has been involved with healthcare. Having been exposed to both the research and clinical aspects of medicine, I have decided that I prefer the clinical interaction with people, and look forward to becoming a primary care physician. I would like to help people as a physician knowledgeable about the medical and personal needs of my patients, while enjoying the intellectual and emotional rewards that such a career provides.

Sample Essay #2:

“Sally, we need you over here.” Marisa, a nurse at City of Hope calls over for me. I grab a pair of gloves and am at her side in a moment. “We need to lift this man to do a chest x-ray,” she informs me. Placing my hands beneath the patient, I await the countdown: “3...2...1...lift.”

I am a volunteer in perioperative services at the hospital. My tasks include: transporting patients to and from surgery, running samples to the pathology lab, and assisting patients in recovery. Often, I imagine myself in the role of a physician. I am guilty, at times, of considering the patients whom I am helping as my own. It is these Monday afternoons, then I take time away from my studies in the Post-Baccalaureate Pre Medical Program at Scripps College, that my commitment to becoming a doctor is affirmed. While I am unswerving in my desire to become a physician, I have not always had such intentions.

As a young girl, I was always one of the final contenders in the spelling bees, timed tests, and even kickball games at recess. I enjoyed the challenge of schoolwork, the competition amongst peers, and the rewards of my successes. Yet, as I grew older I was more often complimented on what a pretty young woman I was developing into, and less noticed for my scholastic achievements. This shift of attention from my educational pursuits towards my physical attributes had an effect on me, as I had always valued the opinions of others in order to get their approval. I began to believe that my value was in my looks and not in my mind, and was, therefore, not as inclined to pursue my education as vigorously as before.

Coinciding with this digression in school was a turbulent divorce between my parents. Conflict in my family, coupled with the efforts to maintain a pristine image in the eyes of others, led to the onset of an eating disorder. This problem followed me to college, where it initially interfered with my academic work. Yet, I was able to overcome this illness, and even use my experience as the basis of art.

I designed my major in Visual Arts in which I utilized Film, Photography, and Computer Arts to create installation artwork. My motives in creating art were primarily to resolve issues in my past; yet through this process I found that my work affected a broader audience. I was approached by students who identified with my work. They related similar experiences within their family life, and remarked how my art served as a means of communication amongst their friends as well.

When I was asked by a professor about my plans after graduation, I reflected on how much I had grown through my degree. I was rewarded by helping others through my artwork. I wanted to continue to assist others, yet in a different field. I wanted work which provided intellectual challenges, as I had enjoyed my scholastic endeavors. I was considering studying medicine and becoming a doctor. My professor informed me about the Scripps program intended to prepare non-science majors for medical school. The program was not due to begin until the following year, thereby allowing me an opportunity to thoroughly consider my decision. During that year I tried to apply my art skills towards jobs in advertising and gallery work. Yet, my attempts were somewhat halfhearted and, thus, not very successful. My determination towards pursuing medicine had strengthened.

I am now in the final months of the Scripps College Post-Bac/Pre Med Program. I have found that my education as an Art major provided me with a unique perspective towards science. The same techniques I applied in creating an exhibition prove useful in tackling an organic chemistry reaction. In creating my artwork, I sought to ensure that it conveyed what I had intended; this involved approaching my work from many different angles in attempt to clarify its meaning. This process is analogous to the method I use to study organic chemistry. Rather than simply memorizing the mechanisms of reactions, the ability to really identify with and understand the behavior of molecules is a much more useful method of learning. In identifying with the subject, I can reason and understand its course.

I want to apply these skills to medicine. Rather than simply administering a standard diagnosis, I want to approach each case with respect for its unique circumstances. My ability to understand and empathize with others will help me to provide personal care to patients. Medicine is the field in which my background in the humanities, my fascination with science, and my commitment to helping others will coalesce. Until then, however, I may be found on Monday afternoons in the hospital. I am the one peering over shoulders in surgery, anticipating the day when I hold the scalpel.

Sample Essay #3:

My decision to become a doctor did not come in a moment of blinding revelation, but as a result of a variety of experiences which began during my first years at college. Before, attending college, however, I knew I would enter a profession which involved service to others. Although I had no definite career plans, from childhood, my parents instilled in me values, such as compassion and respect for others, stressing the importance of giving back to the community.

At college, removed from the protected environment of a small community, I experienced tremendous growth. Early on in my college career, I took science courses as a part of my graduation requirement and performed poorly. The science program at my high school left me ill-prepared for the rigors of a college curriculum, and I lacked the discipline required to do well. I recovered well from my initial faltering, but my academic self-confidence was shaken, as previously I had excelled in school. I decided to major in history, for I had loved to read history when I was growing up and it appealed to me in that it effectively integrated several disciplines, such as politics and economics, into a global view. My coursework gave me an excellent background in independent research and analytical thinking. Furthermore, through my college's core curriculum, with its emphasis that a well-rounded education should be based upon a solid liberal arts foundation, I took courses in Western philosophy, literature and music. Throughout my time at college, I pursued many volunteer activities: performing political work at the National Organization for Women, tutoring inner city schoolchildren, serving as an advocate for homeless rights. As an intern at NOW, I researched and drafted position papers on issues such as reproductive rights and health care for minority women; I also wrote speeches that were delivered by the chapter president at rallies. I worked on the NOW hotline, which provided referrals and counseling services to women who called in. I also served as the coordinator of a tutoring program of a public junior high school, acting as a liaison between the college student tutors and the faculty. The work was challenging since many of the children enrolled in the program had emotional as well as academic problems, but it was very rewarding to see the kids respond and make progress in the schoolwork. From each of my volunteer activities, I gained immense satisfaction from knowing that I had made a difference in the lives of a few individuals—whether it was watching the growing self-confidence of a child who had mastered a math problem or offering guidance to an abused woman on the NOW hotline.

Ultimately, it was my experience as a volunteer at the emergency room which left the indelible mark on me and influenced my decision to become a physician. The hospital is located in the Morningside Heights area of Springfield and on a busy night the ER would be teeming with cases, making it an exciting and thrilling career.

Sample Essay #4:

“I see something inside,” said Dr. Mabie. The patient held still. Her mother and I waited in mild suspense. The patient was a 14-year old girl who had come to see Dr. Mabie for severe soreness in her right ear. “Well, what do we have here?” He used his ear “scoop” and gently fished out a large piece of thin, clear plastic. We were amazed. The girl felt immediately relieved. No one could tell from where the plastic originated—let alone how it got lodged in the girl’s ear. But Dr. Mabie had found and removed it.

That was one of the many patient visits I was privy to during my internship with Dr. Mabie. For months, I shadowed him and his three colleagues in their pediatric practice. I enjoyed every moment. Watching them provide the most sensitive, comprehensive care they could was truly inspiring. All of the physicians revealed their love of their work to me. Day after day, I thought, “this is it. This is what I want to do.” I admired the long term doctor-patient relationship clearly built on mutual respect and gratitude. Several children were second generation; Dr. Mabie had been their parents’ pediatrician too. The experience gave me a good sense of what primary care entails, from infant check-ups to teenage angst. Being there also reconfirmed my desire to work with children.

Working with children is my passion. After I graduated from college with a degree in English and Art History/Studio, I went on to teach. I have taught children of various ages from diverse backgrounds—ranging from first graders in a private school to immigrant youth at a community center. In each setting, I strived to be both a role-model and a resource—providing guidance and (hopefully) sparking curiosity about the world around them. At Exploration, a summer enrichment program, I planned and led unique art workshops for junior high school children. Through daily journal/sketchbooks, students searched their imagination while I taught them color theory and laws of perspective. Like Dr. Mabie, I relished in helping the children to grow. Students entered insisting “I can’t do it,” and left with final projects they produced with glowing pride. As the Multi-Cultural Alliance representative at Katherine Delmar Burke School, I designed a study unit on China for the first grade. In conjunction with Chinese New Year, I read them folk tales and taught basic calligraphy. The children studied maps and learned that they were born in the fortuitous year of the dragon. While the students gained exposure to the richness of Chinese culture, they also learned how it could relate to themselves.

I am actively interested in art. I paint and draw, mostly still life in mixed media. In 1994, I established a small greeting card business, Triad Designs. I have created over 20 original card designs which I sell to specialized stationary distributors and individual clients. As an artist, I have an investigative mind—compelled to make connections in search of better understanding. I see medicine as a naturally creative endeavor, committed to progressive action, driven by hands-on discovery. Perhaps, that is quality Hippocrates referred to regarding the “art” of medicine.

While I have enjoyed teaching, I recognize becoming a physician as a more effective way in which I can apply my talents to serve larger populations. My ambition is to use my understanding of children to help alleviate their suffering. Children’s health need interest me deeply, from allergies to attention deficit disorder. Starting with Calculus and volunteer work in a hospital, I quickly discovered I like scientific analysis. Completion of the Scripps College Post-Baccalaureate Premedical program further strengthened my will. I visited a free clinic in downtown Los Angeles led by Dr. Mabie, and a pediatric orthopedic clinic Calxico. Both serve Spanish-speaking populations that rely heavily on the doctors’ services. Many families without regular access to care traveled long distances seeking assistance. One 12 year old Mexican boy had been using the same leg braces since age 8; the knee hinges were painfully at his shins. The doctor promptly ordered a new pair. Each case reinforced my desire to become a physician on whom others can depend.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “if anyone were to ask me what I want out of life I would say—the opportunity for doing something useful, for in no other way, I am convinced, can true happiness be obtained.” I believe I can maximize my capacity though the study and practice of medicine.

Sample Essay #5:

My grandmother, Maria, was born and raised in Puerto Rico. I used to love to listen to stories about her nine brothers and sisters who each took turns going to school and working to support their family. My grandfather was an English bank inspector whose job required quite a bit of travel. As a result, my mother was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and lived in South America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. My mother lived in a turbulent Cuba with my grandparents at the start of the communist revolution. Since my grandparents were unable to leave the bank in Cuba unattended, they sent my mother out of the country alone at the age of 15. After emigrating to the United States, my mother attended college and married my father. My sister and I were both born in the U.S., and moved to Puerto Rico as small children. I spent six years on the island, moving with my family to California at the age of ten. Here I was forced to adapt to a new cultural environment which included shifting from the daily use of Spanish to English. Adjusting to a new culture was difficult, however, I feel very lucky to have experienced a bilingual and bicultural upbringing.

In June of 1992, one of my worst nightmares came true. My grandmother, whom I was very close with, became ill. The doctors believed it was her gallbladder which was causing her pain and scheduled her for surgery. I flew to San Francisco the night before her operation in order to take her to the hospital while my mother was at work. In the waiting room, my grandfather and I grew impatient, as the surgery took longer than expected. Finally, the surgeon emerged from the operating room and called us into his office. "She has cancer", were the first words out of his mouth. After this, everything was a blur. My grandfather, whose memory was failing, wrote furiously in his notebook while asking the doctor to repeat himself. The words, "metastasized...pancreatic...no treatment...hospice...3 months at the most..." stayed in my head as I sat in disbelief.

During her stay at the hospital, my grandmother experienced some difficulties due to cultural differences. For example, she did not want a male nurse assigned to her to change her bedpan or bathe her. She felt more comfortable with a woman. In addition, none of the nurses spoke Spanish. I dropped the summer school course in which I was enrolled in order to help transport my grandmother home and take care of her full time. Over the next month, I watched this horrid disease take over her body until she was unable to eat, speak, or move. She did not live for three months as we had hoped. Her funeral was that July.

This experience caused me to re-examine my goals in life. After much consideration, I decided I want to contribute to the field of medicine. I began to explore the idea by volunteering at a local hospital in San Diego. Later, I shadowed my sister, an intern OBGYN, at work in order to learn more about being a doctor. Finally, I started a post-baccalaureate premedical program in order to tackle all of those "science" and "math" courses I had been avoiding as an undergraduate. The ironic thing is that I find these courses fascinating.

In addition to studying sciences, I am currently working as a volunteer at the Clinica de la Divina Providencia, a privately funded free clinic offered twice monthly in central Los Angeles which serves a primarily Latino population. I serve as an English/Spanish translator between patients and doctors at the clinic. In addition, I take temperatures, weights, and assist with the intake procedure. I have also volunteered at the Pediatric Orthopedic Clinic at the Calexico/Mexicali border. This free clinic provides patients from Mexico with orthopedic medical care including casting, leg braces, and consultations for free surgery. These experiences have greatly enforced my desire to become a doctor, and I thoroughly enjoy the looks of comfort and relief I see on the faces of patients when they find out I speak fluent Spanish. I feel I can help fill a need for Spanish speaking doctors and improve the lives of others by promoting primary and preventative care.

Since I can remember, I have held an intense interest in health care and the health community. I studied Psychology in order to learn more about the human mind, now I would like to learn more about the human body. I believe the knowledge of more than one culture and language has given me a greater sense of empathy for, and understanding of others. Education has been the means of survival for my family and I am a person who has overcome many obstacles to achieve success. I am aware the road to medical school will be challenging and rigorous, but I am confident I have the ability and perseverance to be successful.

Sample Essay #6:

There are few certainties of what one will encounter during life. A common joke names two: death and taxes. I would be so bold as to add one more, disease. Of the three, the one certainty human beings have the most “control” over is disease. Death is inevitable and as long as governments exist, so are taxes. Disease is also inevitable, however, there are methods to combat the recurrences, spread and danger of this malady. My dream is to learn the techniques required to assist my fellow human beings in their struggle against disease.

Since graduating college I have given considerable thought toward finding the best path to blaze in pursuit of this quest. In doing so, I have had to face mistakes that I made during my time at Pitzer College. I committed a grievous error of judgment due to an underlying lack of maturity. Being young and naïve I did both my girlfriend of the time and myself a tremendous disservice by completing her work for her. This increasingly heavy load is responsible for the downward slope in my grades. Through college I found it neigh impossible to ask for help, as the thought petrified me. From an early age, my father mistakenly led me to believe that if I did not instantly grasp a concept I would be looked down upon with the utmost disapproval and pity for someone who is so stupid. My grades faltered because I relied solely on class notes and my own abilities, to succeed. Since graduating college, I have learned that there is nothing wrong with asking questions or seeking help. Professors did not look down on you for seeking their assistance. My improved performance since graduating is a display of my new willingness to ask for clarification or assistance as well as the time to focus solely on my own studies. My switch from the realm of Astrophysics came about due to the lack of personal interaction in this field, as well as an intense desire to stave off death, stemming from my sister’s murder at the Pentagon on September 11th. Attending medical degree in medicine is the personification of this dream.

My time of search led me to join the Clinical Care Extender’s (CCE) at the recommendation of one of my old advisors as well as the experiences of a classmate involved in the program. I desired an inside look into the medical profession so I could decide once and for all if I belonged there or not. I was instantly hooked. Once I entered the ER, I never wanted to leave. I would stay for twelve hours instead of the required four, staking overnight; I soaked up knowledge and experience like a sponge. No one could teach me or show me enough and I would continue to hunger for more.

My thirst for knowledge is seconded only by my desire to rise above limitations and accomplish what others say cannot be done. What seems insurmountable today is tomorrow’s commonplace understanding. Every patient that walks in into a doctors office is looking for a solution to some problem, they cannot solve on his or her own. My dream is to be able to use my knowledge of medicine to help these people triumph over what at one time seemed invincible.

Doctors I met through the CCE program, my pediatrician, and the pediatrician I work for have shown me what it really means to practice medicine. From both pediatricians I learned that solutions can be found by developing a rapport with ones patients and that a little compassion and understanding can mean the world to a child. From one emergency physician I saw the face of medicine that I wished to practice. While in the ER one night we saved the life of a little girl who had stopped breathing and whose parents mistakenly took her to the Labor and Delivery building instead of the ER. A week later the little girl and her family came back to the ER, this time to visit. She had made a card for the doctor who saved her life. The doctor called me over, showed me the card, and said simply, “This is why we do this.” Those words and the fire they ignited within me resonate still, building in strength. The little girl should have died, but due to the heroic efforts of a doctor, two nurses and a volunteer, she lived. To help someone, to challenge what is inevitable and to do this with no expectation of fame or reward, is what being a doctor means to me.

Having determined my calling in life, I will not allow anything to interfere with attainment of this goal. I understand not all medicine is life and death situations. I eagerly anticipate both the edge of your seat cases along with the more routine ones. I know that all medicine is not a success, that there are many pitfalls along the road; I believe with all my heart that my place is to follow this road. I have made mistakes in the past and I take full responsibility for them. While I continue to learn from them, I have been able to forge myself into a person who has the compassion, the desire, the love, the dedication and the capacity to survive, no, thrive during the trials and tribulations of medical school and the rigors beyond.

Sample Essay #7:

Signora Ferro lay heavily on the gurney which threatened to succumb to her enormous body. The air smelled of fresh sweat, unwashed bodies, and rotting flesh. The doctor to my side shook her head at the site of the gangrene on her foot which now seemed to be taking over her entire leg. Signora Ferro was likely in her late thirties, but homelessness, poor hygiene and even poorer nutrition had begun to take a toll and had changed her appearance to that of a fifty-year old woman. Her condition was so severe that her entire foot was amputated and even this drastic measure was not enough to guarantee her condition would not worsen. I will never forget the look of utter desperation and hopelessness with which her gaze met mine.

I was born and raised in Europe until the age of thirteen (my mother is German and my father Italian) and during my semester abroad, I decided to utilize the opportunity to explore healthcare in Italy. My jobs included shadowing and assisting the doctors at the clinic as well as on a motor home transformed for the purpose of traveling to locations such as the central stations to cater specifically to illegal immigrant patients, who otherwise, had no access to medical care. Signora Ferro was no exception to this rule.

Being a doctor encompasses much more than being intelligent and having achieved expertise in the field. Without a genuine drive to make a difference in another's life, and the courage to stand tall in the face of uncertainty, the best academic is just a mediocre physician. When I was twelve, my mother and step-father decided to leave Germany and move to a small town in northern California. As a teenager, it was difficult enough to leave my home, my friends, and my father. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that I spoke very little English and thus was unable to communicate with my peers and make new friends, let alone what was being taught in class. Many times I almost lost hope, but my determination to succeed and overcome my obstacles drove me and enabled me to graduate third in my class.

During my first year of college, I stumbled upon a genetics class for non-majors. I quickly became uncharacteristically infatuated with the subject, especially in regards to human diseases. Upon completion of a few more science classes, I changed my major from psychology to biology and enrolled in every science class related to medicine. The most influential course I have taken is Biology of Cancer because it applied empirically acquired knowledge to designing treatments with very specific molecular targets of known biological mechanisms. The concept of making a discovery in the laboratory which can then be applied to saving lives fascinated and inspired me to explore this further in my thesis research which studies the effects of the drug viox on small cell lung cancer. One of the most hopeful outcomes of this research is the potential of prolonging the lives of those with resistant disease. Many of the results acquired through previous theses are now in clinical trials. My thesis research was an opportunity for me to be an active part in possibly extending the lifespan of millions of patients and has shown me the other equally important face of medicine: research.

Though my initial interest in medicine sprung from my classes, it was confirmed and strengthened through my volunteer experiences. Besides the internship at the small non-profit clinic in Milan, Italy, the most shaping and memorable volunteer experiences I have had was at the Queen of the Valley Hospital in West Covina. I have volunteered in a number of very different departments including, the ER, the OR, Labor and Delivery, and the Medical Oncology department. My jobs include, observing procedures, transferring patients, and running errands. The actual exposure to the healing process and the elegance and grace with which the surgeons produce small miracles every day has convinced me that medicine is the field for me.

While clinical experience and a genuine desire to help others are essential, it is the need for the intellectual challenge and the drive to be a part of discovering new scientific phenomena that set apart physicians from other medical personnel. The constant intellectual challenge is at the core of my desire to become a doctor and upon graduating from medical school, I hope to continue to be an active part in the research field. In fact, during the year between graduation from college and entering medical school, I plan to volunteer at a hospital in Honduras after which I hope to be doing research at the University of Duesselforf in Germany.

At times, being a doctor requires incredible emotional strength and a continuous devotion to serving others while providing a constant challenge to think critically and improve oneself intellectually. Through experiences I have had, I can think of no other profession that is so fulfilling and rewarding as that of a doctor. Every new person is a new chance to make a difference in another person's life and help someone less fortunate than I am.

Sample Essay #8:

The sun exploded into a million shades of orange. I sat, friends at each side, atop a monstrous pile of boulders. I looked over the vastness of Joshua Tree National Park, and saw a glimpse of myself. Love filled my soul; love of people, love of family. The backcountry has always helped me find this love; it has been my personal north star, shepherding me toward research and medicine.

I started backpacking at 13, trekking across the winter-harsh lands of Idaho and Montana. It was difficult, but despite this, a feeling welled within me that pushed me forward. This feeling warmed my numb fingers and soothed the ache in my thighs. It drew me close to my friends, fostering the teamwork required. Each new trip allowed me moments of introspection. The teamwork led to trust, trust led to caring, caring led to empathy; eventually I understood the satisfaction of helping others. This is how the backcountry shaped me. Over the next year many choices I made would be based on these lessons.

When I was in high school, I had no inkling of where I was going, but I tested the waters. I volunteered at the Mrs. Tewillagar Wildlife Foundation and did a rotation observing anesthesiologists in San Francisco. I was a green advocate and spent much of my time reading about and debating the travesties visited upon the environment. In my young explorations I found that medicine and environmental politics peaked my interest.

In my first semester at Pitzer College, I started to study chemistry, with a developing focus on environmental concerns. Professor Purvis-Roberts introduced this field to me, and in my sophomore year provided me with my first research opportunity. I sampled the air in the San Bernardino Basin, using air suction and a filter. Then I conducted an extraction process and analyzed the rinse using a GCMS (gas chromatography mass spectrometry) machine. In the fall I will begin my thesis, supervised again by Professor Purvis-Roberts. I will be using a Particle into Liquid sampler (PLS) to analyze specified Southern California air basins. This project offers a great number of research directions, many of which I am still becoming familiar with. Exploring the unknown has always been a passion for me. Yet, despite the intoxication of the new, research alone could not satisfy me. I still feel a need to interact with and directly help other people.

It wasn't until I actually got involved in medicine through volunteer work that I knew my direction. I saw the scary moments, the look on a nervous mother's face. I saw the tedious moments; I cannot count the number of hospital beds I have made. I saw the triumphant moments; the occurrence of an occasional true miracle. I saw the sad moments. I have watched some people come to the hospital for the last time. When I went to Nicaragua as a volunteer for Operation Rainbow, based in San Francisco, I saw the disabled transformed before my eyes. I saw a small Nicaraguan girl, cute as a button, and full of life. She acted as if the entire world lay before her; she was disabled but brave. All it took was a simple operation she had never been able to afford. I gave time in the Queen of The Valley Hospital in West Covina, where as an EMT I assisted nurses. Here I witnessed a less obvious medical marvel. I watched the worried and the sick seek refuge in the arms of doctors and nurses. Even when I heard the staff complain of a lack of sleep, or poor work conditions, they still rose to the occasion and acted selflessly. I knew I had found my calling.

What excites me most is that a life of medicine will allow me to help others and explore the depths of the unknown. I recently came back from China, where I studied Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). I conducted research on the perceived efficacy of acupuncture, as well as on the nature of the TCM doctor-patient relationship. But there was seemingly no end to the questions for future research. Did the herbs work? If so, what chemical or combinations were responsible? What is the mechanism of acupuncture? Is acupuncture a cost-effective treatment for chronic pain? My questions never stopped. This was only in the course of a single four-month trip. Medicine supplies both endless opportunities for research and endless opportunities to help people.

I have been guided all my life by a strong sense of love. In today's world this sounds naïve or more likely downright foolish. To me it's a matter of survival. I know the world is often a harsh and terrible place. However, to reach the peak of a mountain you must push through cold and exhaustion. Love is what pushes me. It is my pick and my crampons, and without it I cannot peak life. It has guided me through every experience, putting me in a place where I know what I want and have prepared to get it. I will soon summit the peak of college, finish my thesis and graduate. I do not presume to know my exact path in medicine, but I know that passion and love, of people and science, are the core values I will bring to my explorations and leadership.