I had the opportunity to volunteer at the UCSD Medical Center Emergency Department for over a year. One night we had an unusual emergency: a teenager in the midst of a schizophrenic episode was brought into the center. He was surprisingly strong and clearly terrified. After kicking a paramedic in the leg and a technician in the groin, he proceeded to spit in the physician's face. I was taken aback and expected the physician to respond negatively. However, to my amazement, the physician did not even bat an eye: he worked diligently and calmly to soothe the distraught young man and assured him there was nothing to fear. The young man's anxiety eventually subsided. After ensuring the teenager's mother that her son was stable and safe, the physician quietly left the room. Through his compassion and ability to communicate effectively, this physician turned a distressful and potentially dangerous emergency situation into a safe and healing experience for a mother and her son. Although varying in degrees, I noted this type of compassion and empathy delivered from physicians each time I volunteered. Over the course of more than 200 hours at the UCSD Medical Emergency Department, I shadowed numerous physicians, observed hundreds of procedures, and spoke with many patients. All of this drastically increased my desire to pursue a career as a physician.

The opportunity to shadow an array of physicians proved highly valuable; I was exposed to a variety of personalities, perspectives and approaches. Many of the physicians were kind enough to thoroughly explain the patient's conditions and treatments. I was taught underlying mechanisms, shown details on x-rays and charts, and several times requested to aid in various, simple tasks. All of this contributed to my growing appreciation of the field. Each physician demonstrated a unique way of working with patients; however, as a whole they taught me compassion is essential to effective care. Not only was my interest in the science behind the medicine stimulated, but my appreciation for the delivery of outstanding care continued to grow.

I took full advantage of the opportunities the Emergency Department provided. Listening to hundreds of ambulance calls in the radio room gave me insights into how care was provided prior to reaching the emergency room. In the trauma bay I observed teams of physicians and nurses working diligently to provide rapid assistance to patients in critical conditions. I saw everything from burn patients, to car accident injuries, to gunshot victims. I also had the opportunity to converse with the patients. While either transporting them or being present in their room stocking supplies, they often volunteered information: they shared their thoughts, concerns, complaints, and even satisfactions about being in the hospital. Most importantly, I became comfortable conversing with patients and eventually looked forward to hearing what they had to share.

This experience definitely confirmed my desire to pursue a medical degree. I enjoyed every moment in the Emergency Department and I continue to admire the remarkable knowledge and compassion demonstrated by the physicians.
Why have you selected the University of ***** ***** School of Medicine for your medical education? Please be as specific as possible. (500 WORD LIMIT)

One of the largest influences on my desire to attend the University of ***** ***** School of Medicine is the institution’s dedication to the promotion of primary care. I have a special interest in primary care and am very passionate about family medicine. The University, with its several programs and initiatives supporting this path, embodies the exact type of learning environment which I feel will best prepare me for my future career.

My special interest in primary care stems from my upbringing. I grew up in a rural region of California with my parents and four siblings. We did not have a single neighbor within a mile of our home. My siblings were my best friends and are the people who have most shaped the person I am today. We also had over twenty cousins living within fifteen miles of our home. We were extremely committed to one another and frequently spent time together. Though large, our family has always been close; even as we find ourselves following our different paths, we maintain strong bonds and continue to share our lives. I feel this commitment to family will carry over to my future career in a primary practice and allow me to provide my patients with more efficient and better care overall. Because I happily and naturally develop genuine connections with people, I feel open and effective communication with my patients is guaranteed.

My relationship with my family has had a tremendous influence on me and significantly impacts how I interact with people today. I develop close relationships with friends, truly making them a part of my life; shallow interactions are of little interest to me. I make a sincere effort to develop bonds with the people whom I work, study and associate with. This is what really attracts me to the primary care field, and thus the University of *****. Pursuing a career in primary care will allow me to establish genuine connections and bonds with patients in order to provide consistent and nourishing care. I am eager to take my energy to the University of *****, which I feel presents the best possible opportunity to continue developing my compassion for people and medicine.

In addition to the University’s emphasis on primary care, I would like to attend ***** for the region itself. Attending college in a metropolitan southern California city and having been raised in a rural border town, I now seek to explore a third perspective on the East Coast. ***** offers another aspect of the nation and an opportunity to broaden my exposure to a wider array of values and lifestyles. Seeking a medical career in one of the world’s most diverse nations, I feel it is necessary to understand and appreciate all the factors contributing to this diversity. I am certain ***** fulfills this purpose. I am confident the University of ***** ***** School of Medicine will provide me with the focus and perspective I need to become the best physician possible.
Please discuss a situation where you had to use your leadership skills. (500 WORD LIMIT)

The laboratory in which I work takes on new undergraduate volunteers each semester. This past semester, I shared an analytical chemistry course with one of these volunteers. Though I did not know this student particularly well, after the first exam she expressed her doubts regarding her ability to pass the course. Because she and I volunteered in the same lab, I felt we had something in common and I was not comfortable standing by while she struggled in class. I took it upon myself to offer my assistance in helping her grasp the core concepts of the course in the hopes that she would be able to raise her grade. Throughout the semester, we met for tutoring sessions on a weekly basis. I took time out of my schedule because I realized the benefit to her was greater than the sacrifice made by me. By the end of the course, she had brought up her grade and developed a solid understanding of the material.

I attempt to demonstrate this type of leadership on a weekly basis. I feel leadership is not only in the form of titles or officer positions; rather, I feel it is present in less obvious actions. A leader not only has to be capable of recognizing situations in which action may not be obviously needed, but also have the initiative to take control during these situations. My classmate had no intention of asking for assistance, yet the leader in me could not help but respond to the needs of the situation. I developed a plan which would work for us both: establishing a calendar to accommodate our schedules, creating a list of topics on which we would focus, as well as taking steps to ensure our communication was productive and effective.

I also tend to exhibit leadership skills in other aspects of my life. Throughout college I have been the classmate who usually organizes study sessions. Also, when planning events and trips with friends, I am the person the group counts on to organize the trip: deciding which cars to take, establishing the best route to get to our destination, designating the time we need to leave by, etc. Organizing and planning are not only indispensable in a leader, they must also be enjoyed by a leader. I love integrating information, devising plans, and organizing ideas. I enjoy filtering through options and strive to develop the most efficient and effective approach. Being a leader is about taking initiative, and this is what I do—naturally and with enthusiasm.

Please briefly discuss your research experience.

I have dedicated a tremendous amount of time to researching and co-authoring “Pim1 Preserves Mitochondrial Morphology by Inhibiting Drp1 Translocation.” The manuscript is currently up for review and will be published soon. Since its submission, I am already immersed in another project involving the protein kinase Pim1 and its global deletion leading to premature cardiac senescence. Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the western world and I am thrilled to be researching in such a fascinating and relevant field.

The interactive, hands-on experience of being in a laboratory has had an exceptional influence on my decision to pursue a medical degree. Laboratory work fosters self-directed
and collaborative learning—both of which are important in medical school. Not only do I learn from others, but I also teach others. I teach new undergraduates how to make stock solutions and explain some of the basic science techniques used in the lab. This summer I continue to spend 20-25 hours in the lab each week. I am excited to know that at the University of ***** ***** School of Medicine research opportunities are available to medical students; I will undoubtedly pursue this opportunity and hopefully be an asset to the University's research community.

Please provide a description of any activities involving the FINE ARTS (dance, drama, music, art, photography, etc.)

I have always been interested in film and have studied a few cinema courses as partial fulfillment of my undergraduate degree. I relish the opportunity to apply my artistic side while crafting small, yet highly personal and meaningful videos. To this day, I have made a music video, sports highlight films, video autobiographies, and several other films depicting family events and trips.

I recently had the opportunity to see all of the dynamics involved in creating a professional television production by competing on the show Wipeout. The show consists of putting several contestants through outrageous obstacles designed to produce the most entertaining “wipeouts.” I enjoyed observing all the behind-the-scenes nuances necessary for this production. Taking what I learned in class and seeing it first hand at the Wipeout ranch greatly enhanced my appreciation for the efforts made by the folks who make these shows possible. Though there might only be one contestant on the course at a time, there were always hundreds of personnel working behind the camera. Several camera operators, audio operators, safety personnel, equipment managers, machine operators, and so on, all worked efficiently as a team to capture the action. Away from the camera were obstacle designers, contestant managers, and various others who worked hard to guarantee that operations ran smoothly. I was very fascinated by the equipment and various techniques utilized to ensure the most thrilling angles and shots.

Just as I did with my cinema courses, I will take what I saw and learned from my participation on Wipeout and apply it to my own personal video projects. One of my favorite recreational pastimes is making videos for my family and friends. Since taking both a mass media and a video production course in high school, I have grown to love capturing moments and turning them into timeless memories. Whether it's handling the video camera on vacations or spending hours on the computer editing images and footage, I find great joy in the art of filmmaking. It takes a certain skill set to turn a camera on and point it towards an event; yet it takes an entirely different set of skills to manipulate the lighting, angles, and sound to turn those two-dimensional scenes into memorable moments worth watching and sharing again and again.
Please provide a description of any activities involving SPORTS (organized team sports, recreational activities that you play, watch or follow)

Sports play a significant role in my life. My participation began at the age of six and will continue until after I reach my sixties. I played soccer, baseball, and rode dirt bikes for most of my childhood. While in high school, I participated in football, basketball, and track & field. I have come to realize that exercise, competition, and camaraderie are essential to my growth and maturity.

Weekly, I hike a local mountain and play basketball at SDSU’s gymnasium. I firmly believe my involvement in exercise has helped my academic career. It serves as an outlet to relieve stress and allows my mind to relax. After a long day of class or research, nothing is more refreshing than running around on the basketball court or escaping on a trail to hike. Because exercise provides a healthy balance to my academics, I feel my commitment to staying active will help me handle the rigorous demands of medical school.

Competition is another reason for my enjoyment of sports. During college I have competed on several intramural volleyball and basketball teams, a local flag football team, and a summer softball team. I greatly enjoy the pressures and expectations competition places on me; I feel confident when confronted with the high-pressure situations sports present. Every time I am on the court, I make split-second decisions integrating my surroundings, abilities, and confidence. My ability to do this effectively has allowed me to become a more decisive and confident individual, which translates well into other areas of my life. Competition motivates me to push myself in academics. Although I always strive to reach my potential, I feel an extra incentive from the competition of my classmates. Just as on the court, life often demands rapid decision making and quick action, both of which I handle well.

Although I participate in a number of solo sports such as wakeboarding, snowboarding, running, and others, I truly enjoy team sports. My involvement in team sports has greatly contributed to my growth and maturity. I receive satisfaction from knowing others are counting on me to make my best effort. Although athleticism is important, communication and encouragement go a long way in achieving victories. During softball games, my team faces struggles, challenges, and victories—all of which allow me to appreciate and connect with my teammates. In group settings, I tend to encourage others and effectively communicate and listen to ideas. Most importantly, I demonstrate reliability and commitment.

I also enjoy watching sports. Basketball and football at both the professional and collegiate levels are among my favorites. Because I also participate in team sports I view these events not only as entertainment, but also as experiences to which I can relate and from which I can learn. Every four years, I avidly follow the summer Olympics. I admire the men and women who train so diligently to perform at the highest levels. Because I understand their dedication to the sport, I am consistently inspired by their sacrifice and self-discipline.
Describe your most meaningful involvement in STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS.

I have been a member of the American Medical Student Association since September of 2009. Since then I have participated in a number of events raising money and awareness for various groups and causes. AMSA has served as a tremendous resource as I attempt to thoroughly understand the core concepts and ideals in the field of medicine. During the past few years, a variety of physicians and medical students have spoken at AMSA meetings and inspired me to pursue a medical degree. They have increased my awareness and have given me insights into the challenges and opportunities which they encountered in their lives. Prior to joining AMSA I had little knowledge of medical school or the demands of a career as a physician. After hearing numerous guest speakers give detailed accounts regarding their own journeys, I realized I had already begun developing the character and qualities necessary to succeed as a medical student and later as a physician. AMSA initially served as my connection to the medical field but later became an invaluable reservoir of detailed accounts which helped shape and bolster my decision to pursue a career as a physician.
Please provide a description of your most memorable TRAVEL experience.

Immediately after concluding my sophomore year of college in 2010, I began a summer studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain. Although the majority of my eight weeks were spent in Spain, I also spent a significant amount of time traveling Europe. The people I met and the memories I made will truly last a lifetime.

While in Spain I immersed myself into the Spanish culture through my host family. My host mother did not know a word of English and, out of respect for her, I felt compelled to quickly develop my Spanish language skills. I also had the opportunity to participate in one of the most well known Spanish traditions: I ran with the bulls through the streets of Pamplona. With my heart nearly pounding out of my chest and my eyes stretched wide, I weaved in and out of the hundreds who crowded my path with the bulls close in pursuit. Fortunately, I walked away unscathed. Later I journeyed to Costa Brava where I had the opportunity to visit some of the world’s most stunning beaches and meet some of the world’s most humble people. Eating at local restaurants, I was welcomed with the biggest smiles, the friendliest service, and some of the best meals I have ever eaten. Life there was simple and pleasant, yet rich and fulfilling.

My time in Spain gave me the opportunity to meet some truly amazing people. I nearly cried the morning I had to say goodbye to my host mother. She had helped me understand and embrace an entirely new way of living. She did not own a car, computer, or big house. She simply lived in an apartment: happy to own and run a local clothing store. The smile on her face told me she was genuinely happy and pleased with her life.

I also formed strong bonds with several other travelers. Approximately fifteen of us from my study abroad program reunited a year later in Dallas, Texas to watch the Barcelona soccer team play at the Cowboy’s Stadium. We became wonderful friends and many of us still keep in touch two years after our adventures. Because of them, the memories we shared, and the bonds we have today, traveling Europe will always be my most memorable traveling experience.

Please provide a description of your HOBBIES and what you do for fun and relaxation.

At least once a week you can find me playing basketball at the SDSU Aztec Recreational Center. I am drawn to the competition, camaraderie, and exercise experienced while playing the game. Currently I also participate in a weekly softball league and I regularly hike a local mountain with friends. Exercise has always been a part of my life and will continue to be a personal priority. To clear my mind, I often take my bike or long board and coast up and down the boardwalk while enjoying the fresh ocean breeze. I am always eager to challenge myself with new experiences; because of this, I have participated in “mud runs,” beach volleyball, trail running, wakeboarding, skydiving and many other non-traditional sports.

Aside from sports, I enjoy leisure reading. Immersing myself in a compelling book is a great change of pace from the textbooks I am so accustomed to reading. I most recently
completed “When the Air Hits Your Brain,” by the neurosurgeon Frank Vertosick Jr. The book depicts the exciting, bizarre, and challenging moments he experienced as he matured from medical student to world-class neurosurgeon. Although I enjoy fiction, I really enjoy reading nonfiction based on peoples’ experiences in the world of medicine. Reading these books helps me feel productive while I relax: I am able to continue expanding my awareness of the medical field while relaxing my mind and enjoying a good story. Thus I am currently reading “The Intern Blues,” by Robert Marion, in a similar fashion to Vertosick, this book traces the fascinating experiences of several interns during the course of a year.

Spending time with my immediate family is also one of my favorite ways to relax. I currently live with two of my siblings in San Diego. The other two live reasonably nearby, and my parents live less than two hours away. Many weekends consist of family get-togethers and dinners. We gather with close family friends to share stories, laugh, and enjoy one another’s company. Although I demonstrate the qualities and capabilities of an independent individual, I cannot deny how much I benefit from my family’s love and support. Spending time with them allows me to let go of stress and confront new challenges with a clear mind. I am thankful to know that I will continue to have their love and support regardless of where my future career in medicine takes me.