College Essay Rubric Competitive Norming

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
Team Members: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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|  | **J** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 3 | Standard Bearer J scores a 3 on Insight because identifiable positive characteristics and a positive message are conveyed to the audience. The overall message is that the essayist cares about dedicating time to others and derives pleasure from other people's pleasure. The text states, "The girls did not have to pay or even show gratitude...I realized how large a role I can play in building up someone's confidence...It brightens my day knowing that people can rely on me during their times of need." To score higher, the scholar would have to nuance the message beyond simply wanting to make others happy and/or discuss a larger social issue present in the work she is doing with others. |
| STORY | 2 | Standard Bearer J scores a 2 on insight because most important characteristics do not come through in the topic and feels a bit cliche. The text states, "It brightens my day knowing that people can rely on me during their times of need." The author does not give a deeper explanation for why/how it brightens up her day. To score higher, the scholar should provide some deeper insight into why doing hair is so important for her. She could also connect hair to the issue of race. |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 3 | Standard Bearer J scores a 3 on Structure and Arc because of its logically sequence organization without detracting from the movement/storytelling. The essay starts with a specific moment ("Shanice was due on stage in less than thirty minutes..."), then zooms out to a more general examination of her insight of helping others ("I first started experimenting with hair in the seventh grade.") before the final paragraph's introspective examination of how this characteristic (helping others) defines her life ("I realized how large a role I can play in building up someone's confidence...It brightens my day knowing that people can rely on me during their times of need." To score higher, the scholar could use less of a linear structure or other techniques that can help pull out her insight with more nuance. |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 4 | 4 Amy  |
| LANGUAGE | 3 | Standard Bearer J scores a 3 on Language because the language creates an appropriate tone and mostly avoids cliches. Rather than simply stating that she likes to make others happy, the essayist says that she "use[s] [her] talents...as a way to help others build their confidence," that doing so "brightens [her] day" and that "Just seeing a friend's face light up and knowing [she] played a role in helping motivates [her]." All of these are stating the same thing, but show more precise use of language. To score higher, the language would need to be more sophisicated and precise and create more vivid images of the different events as well as help convey a more nuanced insight. |

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|  | **L** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 3 | Standard Bearer L scores a 3 on Insight because identifiable positive characteristcs and a positive message are conveyed to the audience. It comes across in the essay that the essayist is both determined to overcome challenges both personal and structural and to lean on her community to build her own confidence and that of others. She states that she leaned on "a community of black parents who were determined that theirchildren build meaningful identities as college-going people of color" and that now "[e]ven in the face of adversity, [she] is now unwavering in [her] self-confidence and conviction." To score higher, the insight would need to be more unique and/or draw on a broader social context. The idea of facing and overcoming challenges created by race is not a new one, so her insight would need to be more specific to her experiences, her future intentions and her learnings than it currently is. |
| STORY | 4 | Standard Bearer L scores a 4 on story because she effectively uses vignettes and details to effectively connect her story to her insight and she effectively avoids cliches. Her use of the following vignettes: the girl caller her a "N", her principal asking her asipirational questions about college, and then her interaction during her summer program demonstrate her growth. Although the story could have sounded cliches (another story about race), the author includes the unique perspective about building "meaningful identities as college-going people of color." To score higher, the scholar should provide a more sophisticated awareness of her growth. For example, she might show how her growing confidence effected her feelings on race. |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 3 | Standard bearer L scores a 3 on arc because although the story is logically sequenced, the author does not use more sophisticated stylistic organizational structures. The essay moves in a linear fashion. To score higher, the scholar could use a non-linear structure or use an extended methapor. |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 4 | Standard Bearer L scores a 4 on Narrative Technique because the intentiaonal craft moves enhance her insight and story. The first paragraph ends with, "Brianna kept walking, leaving me in the wake of her cruelty." In the second to last paragraph, the scholar is faced with a similar situation but this time faces her attacker and perseveres through the situation: "I responded confidently. She swiveled her head to look at me, and her eyes were wide." The student effectively bookends her story in this way. The student also effectively uses show v tell throughout, for example saying, "We breathed a sigh of relief when my name was drawn, and I eagerly purchased crisp khaki pants and baby blue polos emblazoned with my new school's logo." To score higher, the scholar's narrative technique could be even more sophisticated and memorable. |
| LANGUAGE | 3 | Standard Bearer L scores a 3 on Language because the language creates an appropriate tone and mostly avoids cliches. She chooses precise words and sensory details to convey the story, stating "I eagerly purchased crisp khaki pants and baby blue polos emblazoned with my new school's logo," and "I knew that there would be students at Manhattan with different personalities, styles and complexions." To score higher, her control of language would need to move from "accurate" to "strong," employing more precise words and concise story-telling to make more solid use of the word limit. |

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|  | **M** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 2 | Standard Bearer M scores a 2 on insight because there are emerging and positive characteristics brought out in the essay but they communicated well to the intended audience. The scholar writes, "There are many lessons that I learned from this experience yet the main one is that from theses experiences I would be able to push through the challenges in college life like a weight lifter because it has taught me that there are times where things won’t come easy to you which means that you would have to push in order to succeed." In the final paragraph the scholar says, "I grasp Pre-Calc like a calculator. Such as me staying after school with Ashley and helping her by answering her questions the best I can and revealing the errors in her math that I was able to see." Both of these are examples are both positive and identifiable. To score higher, the scholar should consider the audience is admissions officers and flesh out one or other of these ideas in a way that more coherently demonstrates the characteristic consistently and with appropriate examples. |
| STORY | 2 | Standard Bearer M scores a 2 on story because the story is not fully aligned to one insight, lacks focus, and is cliche. The author uses the methaphor of learning how to ride a bike to signify how she learned to overcome obstacles in her life. The author is also unfocused in how she switches between learning how to ride a bike and pre-calculus. To score higher, the scholar needs to narrow down the topic. |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 1 | Standard Bearer M scores a 1 on Structure & App. because the essay is disorganized. The essay jumps between different obstacles throughout the essay. |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 2 | Standard Bearer M scores a 2 on Narrative Technique because the essayist attempts narrative craft moves but they are minimally effective. The author makes attempts at incorporating an extended metaphor, dialogue, and imagery but with little success. To score higher, the craft moves must be used more intentionally and and woven more seamlessly throughout the essay to help convey the story and insight. |
| LANGUAGE | 2 | Standard Bearer M scores a 2 on Language because the use of language is inconsistent and imprecise. The essayist attempts precise usage, such as her persistent use of the word "pedal" to represent forward-motion, but much of the rest of the essay fails to leverage the metaphor. To be stronger, the essayist should focus on concise and precise word choice such that the story is conveyed more vividly and the craft moves are more effective. |

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|  | **D** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 3 |  |
| STORY | 3 |  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 3 | Standard Bearer D scores a 3 on Structure and Arc because the narrative is clear (you can tell the story back), but it doesn't leverage stylistic structures to enhance the arc. This is a story you can clearly retell: she struggles with a new piece, realizes she is letting the challenge frustrate her unncecessarily, and, after getting candid advice from a friend, moves on. It's easy to see what this essay's outline might've looked like. Paragraphs are purposefully ordered chronologically to keep the story moving. To move this student forward, she could work to "enhance her connection between story and insight." This might involve adding additional "show" to the last paragraph to demonstrate how she has internalized her insight, or making a more direct connection to her education. |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 3 | Standard Bearer D scores a 3 on Narrative Technique because it uses craft moves that mostly engage the audience, they are inconsistently applied.The text begins with claim about how 'music is like a second language that serves "as a way to connect with different perspectives and cultures" but doesn't return to this idea for the rest of the essay. Instead, the author pivots and discusses how learning to play an instrument with new music was representative of a larger challenge of how learning new things and that that experience would be consistent throughout life. As a result, she would need to learn how to deal and persist through those challenges. To score higher, the essayist would need to revise the first sentence |
| LANGUAGE | 4 | Standard Bearer D scores a 4 on Language because the essay vividly conveys a story and has an appropriate tone. In the second paragraph the essayist accurately describes her feelings using precise language. |

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|  | **E** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 3 | Standard Bearer E scores a 3 on insight because it reveals a positive characteristic about the essayist and overall conveys a positive message. She tells the story of how she was forced to grow up after her mom had a heart attack. Overall the essay reveals a positive trait and conveys a positive message about the writer. To score higher, the essayist should add details about what her life was like before her mom's heart attack to make the insight more compelling. She should also cut extraneous details in paragraph two about her family members.  |
| STORY | 4 | No narrative yet  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 4 |  |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 4 | Standard Bearer E scores a 4 on Narrative Technique because the writer clearly makes craft choices to enhance her essay. Her essay is rich with "show don't tell" moments, and she demonstrates all of the different ways she took on responsibility, rather than just naming the fact that she had to do more for her family. To move to a five, the essayist would need to "effectively and seamlessly" use these tools. Presently, the first third of this essay is "show" heavy and the last two-thirds are "tell" heavy. Striking that balance more effectively would allow the essayist to enhance the insight more fully. |
| LANGUAGE | ? |  |

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|  | **F** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 5 |  |
| STORY | 5 |  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 5 |  |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 5 |  |
| LANGUAGE | 4 |  |

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|  | **G** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 3 |  |
| STORY | 2? |  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 3 |  |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 4 | Standard Bearer G scores 4 on Narrative craft because the writer makes choices about which moments in her essay to extend and use show to demonstrate. Each of the small vingettes allows us a small glimpse of her life as a homeless teenager, and allows us to put the puzzle pieces of that life together. She has a keen awareness of her audience in showing us moments that we would understand (getting wifi, for example) and then allows us to view them from her persepective, with her challenges. The bouncing around through time hurts the overall seamlesses of the narrative, and her "tell" paragraph at the end feels a little clunky, thus keeping it from being a 5. |
| LANGUAGE | 4 |  |

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|  | **N** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 1 | Standard Bearer N scores a 1 on insight because it focuses too much on her negative characteristics. The text states, "I get easily distracted by social networking sites, I don't seek help when I struggle on an assignment, and I have a big dislike of participating in class." The author spends three-fourths of the word count on the before, on her negative attitude, and only in the last paragraph addresses what prompted her shift towards trying harder in school: she didn't want her or her father to miss her family vacation to Puerto Rico. For the college admissions' officer, this does not reveal a positive trait, nor does it bolster confidence that this scholar would persevere in college without external motivation. To score higher, the scholar should dramatically shift the balance from primarily focusing on negative characteristics, shrinking that component, and instead, focusing on how and why she changed, ideally prompted by an internal realization. If there is not that internal realization prompting the change, and truly, the extent of motivation here was that she did not want to miss the trip, this scholar should reconsider both her insight and story. |
| STORY | 1 |  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 2 | Standard Bearer N scores a 2 on Structure and Arc. While neither are particularly compelling, the scholar does have an insight and story, and there is an attempt at a non-linear narrative, starting after Progress Report Night, flashing back to middle school and reflecting on how she got to this point, before flashing forward to her deciding to focus more on her academics. This use of flashback is not as clear as it could be, and there is an overreliance on insight, albeit weak, versus story. The selection of story (her father's disappointment regarding her grades) does not fully match her insight, and to score higher on Structure and Arc, she would most likely need to reconsider her story and insight. |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE |  |  |
| LANGUAGE |  |  |

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|  | **Oz** | **Rationale** |
| INSIGHT | 1 |  |
| STORY | 1 |  |
| STRUCTURE & ARC | 2 |  |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE | 2 | This essay scores a 2 on narrative technique because there is a solid attempt to use narrative craft moves, but they turn out to be relatively ineffective. The extended metaphor of Oz doesn't actually extend throughout the whole essay, thus making it unevenly balanced. The story also zooms in one one singular moment (the presentation of a single power point slide) but does not use sufficient "show" to allow the audience to fully grasp the significance of that moment. |
| LANGUAGE | 2 |  |

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|  | A | Rationale |
| INSIGHT | 4 | Standard Bearer A scores a 4 on insight because the essay communicates a compelling and positive message about who she is as a person – someone who pushes herself beyond her comfort zone and seeks understanding across difference. The text tells of a young woman who has experienced isolation in her own community and understands that similarity and difference is more than classifications of race and country so she” always sought ways to distinguish myself and to seek out forms of acceptance that looked and felt different from what I knew.” What makes her insight unique and approaches sophistication is her understanding that in learning about and trying out another culture: “I made some mistakes, but I refused to make another's culture bend to my own.” Additionally, the author places her story into a larger context when she explains the homogeneity of her community and earlier experiences: “My interactions with people of other cultures limited by race and class divides established long before I was born.” The author helps the reader understand her as a unique person with a unique insight that can be summarized as: Confronting a lack of acceptance in my own community pushed me to seek out other cultures where I might be better understood. These experiences have pushed me into challenging situations far outside my comfort zone where I have tried to retain an ability to be respectful of the culture I am inhabiting, but do not yet fully understand. To score higher, the author would need to shift the ratio of the essay so that more time could be spent developing an even more sophisticated insight. The reader is never clear about what, exactly, appeals to the author about the Mandarin language, the Chinese culture and people. The story as told articles in words a desire not to disrespect the culture or its people, but without additional detail and depth about the precise nature of the draw, what she has leaned, and what she hopes to learn more about – and perhaps to what end – the essay risks portraying the subjects she is so eager to respect as two-dimensional and replaceable with any other country/culture. Carefully-selected, well-placed details would push this essay to a five in insight. |
| STORY | 3 | Standard Bearer A scores a 3 on story because while the stories selected align to the insight of the essay and while key characteristics of author come through (unique perspective, determined, open-minded, respectful), the stories selected feel clichéd and somewhat hollow. The primary story used – the chopsticks dinner experience – uses a hackneyed subject to explore the concept of learning about pushing oneself and experimenting with a new culture. Other mini-vignettes focus on the similarly well-explored trope/metaphor of the challenges and humor involved in learning a new language. The language used in the story of the steak incident (“tumbles from my clutches” “oily splat” “my heart flattens, folds, and flattens again”) feel out of proportion with the actual subject at hand. To raise her score to a four or five, the story selected must be worthy of this kind of descriptive language – perhaps one of friendship, conflict, historical investigation. These deeper and potentially more nuanced subjects would have served the author much better in providing better fodder to make her point about what she learns about herself and others when she leaves her Brooklyn community to enter a world of Mandarin and chopsticks. |
| STRUCTURE & ARC |  |  |
| NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE |  |  |
| LANGUAGE |  |  |