Ideally, you should enjoy writing your college essay. If you enjoyed writing it, an admissions officer is more likely to enjoy reading it.

Excerpted from “**A Plea From the Admissions Office to Go for the ‘Dangerous’ Essay” by Daniel Grayson:**

Here are your deceptively complicated essay goals:

 Show us how you think.

 Tell us what matters to you.

That is a really difficult task. It demands that you understand yourself in a way that perhaps no one has ever asked of you. It demands that you ask yourself dangerous questions perhaps no teacher has ever asked.

Questions like:

 What invigorates/inspires/angers me?

 What do I wish we talked or learned about in school?

 What are my most strongly held opinions and where do they come from?

 What are the differences between how I see myself and how others see me?

 What pieces of my life transform my thinking (whether I want them to or not)?

 What ideas fire me up just when everyone else is cooling down?

**If you write the “safe” essay, how will you stand apart?**

Here is every college’s goal**: to build the most interesting and intellectually diverse class they can.** They want to fill their seats with students who have things to say, who will challenge conventions and advance conversations, who will learn from each other.

The answers to those dangerous questions define who you are. They reflect what you value and how you think, as well as how you will enhance our community and classrooms. You need to be confident and proud enough to stand behind those ideas because **if you won’t, why would an admissions officer choose to stand behind you?**

**PREWRITING: PLEASE TAKE SOME NOTES IN YOUR JOURNAL OR ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS THAT PERTAIN TO THE ESSAY YOU WANT TO WRITE:**

* What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to just “big” accomplishments, since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have seemed minor at the time, but become crucial when placed in the context of your life. Consider that focusing on something unorthodox could be more engaging.
* Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from others? How did you develop this attribute?
* Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
* What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
* Have you ever struggled arduously for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
* Have you ever struggled arduously for something and failed? How did you respond? What did you learn?
* Of everything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.
* Have you experienced an epiphany in your life? Describe it.
* What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends describe you? What would they write about if they were writing your admissions essay for you?
* What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?
* What are your dreams of the future? What would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular university fit into your plans for the future?