

Why do you wish to study outside of your country?

How would you benefit from a liberal arts education?

How would you benefit from an Oberlin College education, in particular?

On my 18th birthday, the notion that I have come of age struck me as completely sudden and terrifying. 18 years has gone by in the blink of an eye. The retirement age for Vietnamese women is 55, their life expectancy is 70 years. With two more blinks I will be a retiree. One more and I may never open my eyes again. Is there anything more frightening?

In these short 18 years, what have I achieved? A few awards, a few trips, a few events. There are still too much left to do, to see, to learn. Here comes the second most terrifying notion: I will die before being fully aware of the place I am living in (honestly, “Earth” is but a planet to me. It must be more than that, isn’t it?), the people I am living with (I would love to have a hundred more culture shocks than the only one I had 3 years ago), and the kind of person I am.

Thus I must go. Away from home, out to the world, into a completely alien environment. I want to see how different my country is from others, especially to throw myself into the “melting pot of the world” to test my strong adaptability. Most importantly, I long to study in a more advanced educational system, to have opportunities I cannot have at home. Our universities still endures old-fashioned, passive teaching and learning. There is no class discussion, because lecturers simply dictate to the students. I cannot stay and contribute to Vietnamese education at the present, because I myself am “underdeveloped”. Studying

abroad, I will equip myself with necessary skills and knowledge in order to provide the next generations with the conditions I cannot enjoy now.

Of all countries, I choose the US to study, mostly because the multicultural nature of the country, its first-rate education, and a characteristic that no other nation has: liberal arts colleges. I always deem learning a lifelong process, for which a liberal arts education is the best preparation, as it will teach me how to learn as an independent individual. This knowledge is crucial to my plan of going further in education, of continuing to graduate school instead of jumping right into the job market (earning money is the most boring thing in the world).

Moreover, the high faculty-student ratio unique to liberal arts colleges is absolutely what I need. For senior high I chose High School for the Gifted over other selective schools specifically for its small class size. It proved to be the right choice as I became close to my favorite teachers, which considerably enhanced my learning. My History teacher and I often stayed on after class to talk about new history books; my 11th grade Physics professor agreed to tutor me during year 12 although he is a busy assistant professor; and I still exchange emails with my 11th grade English teacher even though she no longer has class at our school. The personal attention a faculty member can give to a student is undoubtedly a great chance to learn from him/her things he/she does not have time to teach in class. In addition, getting to know a scholar as a person will broaden not only my academic but also social knowledge.

Among over 300 liberal arts colleges in the US, Oberlin is my first choice, as it has everything I ask for from a liberal arts education. Oberlin professors are often referred to on www.collegeconfidential.com and www.princetonreview.com as being “unusually easy to access” and especially “terrific people who you can a lot from both in and out of class”. Reading the “Q&A” in the faculty profiles on oberlin.edu, in which all the professors express heartily the love for their students, I know that these scholars are more than willing to interact regularly and closely with their students, and this will give me, as their student, the ability to exchange opinions, discuss lessons, and learn from them more easily and openly.

Besides the faculty, Oberlin is also known as the home for distinctive individualists. I was pleasantly surprised to see compliments by professors on their students, such as “truly fallen in love”, “most impressed”...Being surrounded by such capable peers, I can only become more motivated in my study. The student body of the first college to admit African-American is also invaluable for an Asian who is rarely exposed to diversity like me. I am eager for my viewpoints to be challenged, changed, or even thrown out of the window, once again (*do you remember my first time mentioned in the main essay?*). I can be overly conservative when it comes to Vietnamese traditional values, but sometimes can also be excessively progressive about modern social issues. Both sides of mine are waiting to be tested by the liberal “Obies”. What good can studying abroad do if I fall into an homogeneous community?

Side note: Did you feel tired reading the two paragraphs above? I know I was being so unoriginal-perhaps I should have found a less clichéd way to write about truths. I was so frustrated at my inability to explain in depth how I would benefit from an Oberlin education for the sake of a concise essay. There are still many

points I want to make, such as how great it would be for a bibliomaniac like me to enjoy the unlimited resource of the Oberlin library systems, how cool it would be to take (and even teach) classes at ExCo (given my “hobby” of learning miscellaneous things-through 10 years my courses outside class range from piano, ballet, drawing, to hip-hop dancing, graphic designing...but I am only loyal to Japanese and violin up to now)... How would I benefit from a college that has the highest percentage of alumni with PhD, when I myself aim to be one? The answer is so obvious that I could not think of anything more interesting to write.

In conclusion, I want to study abroad, because I am dying to be exposed to opportunities that are non-existent at home. I choose the liberal arts education because it will give me the best opportunities. And I fall for Oberlin, because you have the best of the best opportunities.