



Elite Education Student Service

“Raising the Bar”

Anonymous

MIT

This past summer I had the opportunity to participate in a highly rigorous academic program at MIT called MITES, Minority Introduction to Engineering and Science. For six and a half weeks I lived with 68 other rising seniors and college undergrads. Though we were all warned about how hard the program would be, we were all at the top of our classes and refused to believe it- after all, who did they think we were? The first day we sat together in a small auditorium, unaware of each other and of what lay ahead. We were told that our confidence would be shattered, our minds blown away, and our lives changed forever. Still somewhat unmoved, we were not afraid.

By the second week of MITES valedictorians, nerds, bookworms, and techies alike were leaning on each other's shoulders at two in the morning crying over problem sets they had imagined only in nightmares. It is a well-known fact that hard times bring friends closer together, but I would have never expected for these strangers to become my best friends, my support system, or even my family. The 16 hours days I was accustomed to at home did not last long. I was getting an average of four hours of sleep per night, finishing a book per week, zooming through subjects once foreign to me, and constructing a semiautonomous robot from drill motors all at the same time.

We were each enrolled in 5 classes, my schedule consisted of Introductory Physics, Engineering Design, Chemistry, first year Calculus, and Humanities. In the month and a half we completed a semester of Physics and Chemistry each, a full year of Calculus, the material equivalent to a semester in AP literature, and introductory level



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engineering. The work was so intense that when I entered school in the fall I enrolled in second year Calculus, and maintained the only A in AP Physics, having no physics experience prior to MITES.

Since this program I have not been satisfied with the regular coursework given at my school. I am constantly on the lookout for new programs to enroll in and other teams, clubs, and groups to join. This academic school year marks the peak of my involvement in educational opportunities. I have somehow managed to find time for the Speech and Debate team, ACE mentoring team, swim team, Science Bowl team, California Honors Society and Scholarship Federation, Play Production, Jewish Student Union, gear-UP Mentoring Program, and folkloric dancing.

MITES was the most challenging experience of my life. The program is the single most pivotal point in my academic endeavors to date. The assistants we had had all gone through the program and agreed that even in college at Harvard, MIT, Caltech, and Princeton, nothing came close. The motivation and encouragement I gained from MITES has fueled my academic pursuits and pushed me to raise the bar.



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Analysis

Many students choose to write about a transforming summer education experience. In “Raising the Bar,” the author describes the grueling, rigorous academic program at MIT in which she participated.

Foreshadowing the difficulties that lay ahead, the author writes, “We were told that our confidence would be shattered, our minds blown away, and our lives changed forever. Still somewhat unmoved, we were not afraid.” This fearless attitude gives way to “crying over problem sets.” The essay aptly describes the intensity of the program by explaining how busy the days were. She found herself “finishing a book per week, zooming through subjects once foreign to [her], and constructing a semi-autonomous robot from drill motors all at the same time.” While these tasks might seem like a list, they are necessary to account for the author sleeping only four hours a night. When describing an event with a scope that is quite broad—in this case, six weeks long—it is always helpful to hone in on a few highlights. Three is typically a good number of examples. This essay might be stronger had the author explained more about the robot construction, since this is an unusual activity that piques the reader’s curiosity. As a major project, the robot may have merited more space in the essay. The author could have spent less time listing the classes she took, especially if she could list this elsewhere in the application. What is more compelling than any course title is her observation that “the work was so intense that when [she] entered school in the fall [she] enrolled in second year Calculus, and maintained the only A in AP Physics, having no physics experience prior to MITES.” This demonstrates the extent to which her learning was accelerated because of the MITES experience.

At the end of the third paragraph, the author gives a long list of activities in which she is involved. It is unclear what some of the activities entail—for instance, the ACE mentoring team, or the GEAR-UP Mentoring program. These examples might be more appropriate in a



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resume or another section of the admissions essay. Choosing one main activity or event and elaborating on it is a strategy to help keep an essay focused. While it is tempting to list all of our accomplishments, it is more memorable to focus on just one, or a few. Ultimately, the author brings us back to her main point, that MITES was a pivotal point in her academic career. Having a main thesis helps tie together an essay. In this paper, the author summarizes by saying, “The motivation and encouragement I gained from MITES has fueled my academic pursuits and pushed me to raise the bar.” When editing your own writing, ask yourself if you’re various examples, sentences, and paragraphs serve the main point. This helps create a coherent, tightly-woven essay.