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11/22/25

PIQ's for UC Application – FINAL DRAFT

Personal insight questions: You'll need to answer 4 questions: One question is required, and 3 are your choice.

We realize that not all questions apply to all applicants, so be sure to select the 3 questions that you believe give us the best information about you.

All 8 questions are given equal consideration in the application review process. Responses to each question should be between 250-350 words.

REQUIRED Question: Please describe how you have prepared for your intended major, including your readiness to succeed in your upper-division courses once you enroll at the university.

PIQ/ REQUIRED QUESTION — Educational Opportunity / Barrier – 330 words

I sacrificed my room so my parents could keep our home. When money got tight, my bedroom became a space we needed to rent out, and I moved to the living room. Guests cycled through the house. At age 11, I wasn't thinking about what I was giving up, I did what was needed, and I learned to stay steady while everything around me shifted.

Those years quietly taught me how to read people. I watched how stress changed a person's posture, how uncertainty softened or hardened their voice, and how emotion appeared in small movements before anything was said. Cleaning the rentals afterward, I could tell how a guest lived and treated others without ever meeting them. What they left behind; order, chaos, carelessness, or gratitude revealed more about their inner world than a conversation would have. I didn't have the academic language for it, but I was studying behavior, environment, and meaning.

Certain experiences sharpened that curiosity. When our family lost furniture to guests taking things on their way out, I wasn't focused on the loss. I wanted to understand what belief or pressure made someone justify crossing that line. That became the early shape of the questions I now bring to psychology: how people make meaning under strain, how beliefs guide decisions, and how identity shifts in response to fear or instability.

My academic preparation began at Stanford Continuing Studies, where I learned how to handle demanding readings and break complex material into patterns. At Pasadena City College, courses in psychology, humanities, and philosophy deepened my understanding of identity formation, trauma's cognitive effects, and human behavior under pressure. Earning Dean's Honors confirmed that the discipline I built could sustain upper division work.

My goal is to study meaning making and inner orientation, what some researchers describe as a form of "spiritual intelligence," not as religion, but as the capacity to create coherence and direction. I want to understand how people rebuild their inner world when something breaks.

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time.

PIQ 1 — Leadership Experience - 348 words

I learned what leadership looked like through the kind of work most people pass by. My first jobs were in hospitality and as a preschool janitor. I cleaned rooms and scrubbed floors. Those years taught me how to take responsibility without needing anyone to point it out.

My uncle shaped the rest. He is paralyzed from the neck down and still runs an immigration assistance business in Mexico. He once told me the story of the Spanish proverb about a donkey that played a flute by accident and thought he was a musician, but it was the wind. He wasn't criticizing the donkey. He was reminding me not to confuse a lucky moment with real ability, and to build skill through consistency.

When I started Collar Cavazos, I earned trust through repetition. I took the first jobs offered and learned each dog's routine until I could predict their needs. I stayed reachable and treated people's homes with the same respect I wanted for my own.

Trust comes from showing the same standard every day.

Outside school, one example of leadership came when I canvassed for Isabela Jurado's campaign in CD14. Most volunteers focused on English-speaking neighborhoods, but entire blocks of Spanish-speaking families weren't being reached. I grew up translating for relatives, so I took those blocks. I went door to door explaining who she was and why her run mattered. Some families didn't want to talk, but others listened because someone was finally speaking to them directly. When Jurado won, it felt like proof that quiet, steady work can move people in ways you don't always see at the time.

Leadership, to me, comes down to a few steady things: knowing what matters, keeping a clear sense of direction, holding yourself to a standard, and getting people to move with you because they trust the way you do things. Everything I've done; cleaning rooms, helping families at their doors, running my dog business has pushed me toward those same habits. I don't see leadership as a position. It's simply the way I move through whatever I take on.

2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

PIQ 2 — Creative Expression – 324 words

Acting was the first place I could move without worrying about what anyone expected from me. In high school, I ended up playing more female roles than any girl in the programs' history and I once performed more of those roles in a single night than anyone had done before. I wasn't trying to stand out. Those female characters felt like spaces where I could try things I didn't have words for yet. I grew up in a place where expression was controlled. Theater moved the opposite way. I paid attention to the small things-how people sit, how they pause, what they try not to show. Acting taught me to read people by watching details they didn't think anyone noticed. It changed how I understood the world around me.

When I was eleven, I walked into a public library and told the clerk I had left the congregation I was raised in. I asked for something to read. She handed me *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *The Prince*, and *The Alchemist*. I didn't know why she chose those books, but they pulled me toward a way of thinking I hadn't been allowed to explore. They showed me what it felt like to form my own judgments.

Creativity, for me, began as a way to make space for myself. Theater was the first place where I felt that room. I tried things onstage that I couldn't try anywhere else, and it taught me more about people than anything I had learned at that age. For a while, I even slept on the floor of the theater. It felt like the only place that was mine.

I see that same creative work in my life now. It shapes how I study psychology, how I observe others, and how I understand myself. Acting gave me a place to start. Those early books pushed me further than I expected. I've carried both with me ever since.

3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

PIQ 3 — Greatest Talent or Skill – 349 words

The skill that has shaped me the most is the ability to rebuild how I think. I grew up in a place where reading wasn't encouraged, so by the time I was a teenager, I struggled to get through a page. Books felt distant, almost like they belonged to someone else.

Writing changed that. My early sentences were rough, but it became the only way I could organize what was happening in my mind. It helped me see what I believed and whether those beliefs made sense. Over time, my thoughts started lining up, and writing became something I relied on to stay clear.

Where I grew up, most of our attention was on the afterlife. We weren't taught how to build a life here. After leaving, I began reading the doctrines on my own and understood more in a year than I had in the twelve years I spent being taught them. It was the first time I understood myself instead of accepting whatever I was handed.

Writing eventually turned into a kind of conversation with my future self. It wasn't fantasy. It felt similar to the instinct that kept me safe when I was young, quiet, uneducated. The pages became a place to shape a life I hadn't seen modeled around me and to test whether the person I wanted to become could hold up in reality.

That habit grew into real work. I published *Mi Unbiblical Teething Psalms*. I wrote more than forty thousand words of a novel called *Finger Cuts*. Before that, I released a book that reached over eighty thousand readers. I wasn't trying to claim a title. I was seeing how far I could push this new way of thinking.

When I returned to school, I read slowly, rewrote what didn't make sense, and

stayed with ideas until they formed a structure I could trust. The grades came after. I'm still working on this skill. I don't expect it to be finished, but it's the most reliable part of how I learn and the reason I know I can handle harder work now.