

Sample essay:
Diversity and Service

Author anonymous; Comments by Nestor Walters

Please provide a statement that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve. (650 word limit)

I have two reasons that drive my desire to transfer to [goal university]. First, I want to transfer to [goal university] because my life in and before the military drove me to continually pursue academic excellence.

I grew up in rural [some state]. My parents divorced when I was seven, and, having no siblings, I was permitted to do most things I wanted, as long as my grades remained high. My environment fostered an attitude of great independence; but unfortunately lacked parental guidance. My mother, in particular, seemed to move further and further away from her responsibilities as a parent as I aged.

I vividly remember lying in bed at thirteen, staring at my cell phone clock indicating it was three in the morning as she stumbled through the back door of our corner lot house. I remember her yelling, often yelling at me. Luckily, I have forgotten the words. Seeing her drift into a state of unwell motivated me to find a way out of the influences of small-town life. She was cracking underneath her carefully crafted facade: a college graduate with a reliable income working at social services, who bought her own house and was doing it all on her own. From the outside, she was admired and revered by her colleagues and friends, but when she returned at night, she was Mr. Hyde to her projected Dr. Jekyll. I didn't recognize it while it was happening; it was too emotional and chaotic a time in my life. Only now, with the clarity of hindsight and a better understanding of mental illness can I reconcile her actions during my adolescence.

While my home life was falling apart, it was my classes, educators, and after-school activities that kept me from becoming a negative small-town statistic. School was my safe place, and the staff provided me the encouragement and mentorship that I desperately needed to develop and mature. Academic institutions

such as [goal university] are a safe place for thoughts to become ideas and ideas to become actions. I want to be a part of an education process that encourages innovation and service to others. I love the classroom, but it wasn't until I needed school to get away from home that I truly appreciated the safety of its halls. I wanted to escape from [some state] and experience the world beyond the midwest.

My service in the United States Navy allowed me to escape disarray and understand the power of discipline. The military is powerful; with its rules, chain-of-command, and the built-in decision-making process there is very little left to the individual. For my first few years in the military, I took to its rigid structure with gusto. I thrived in an environment where following rules, keeping to a timeline, and self-disciplined practices are rewarded. The disadvantage of structure and rigidity is the continuous pressure it puts on people to behave the same. The structure can sometimes be too stifling and too rigid and not rewarding of unique qualities.

The second reason I want to attend [goal university] is that I want to thrive in diversity. The military is a male-dominated organization, often I was the only woman working in the Naval Special Warfare community. I was able to make a positive impression on my teammates, and lead decision making processes in my specialty and field. I want to continue to use those experiences to forge a difference for the next generation of women.

I hope that by transitioning away from the military and gaining an educational foothold, I can collaborate with others to bring issues to light that hurt decision makers. When you close off those with diverse and thoughtful ideas you limit your capability to solve problems. Through my transition out of the Navy and furthering my education I hope to achieve the following objectives: obtain a college degree from an institution that values diversity and to serve my nation through new and distinct ways.

Nestor's comments:

1. Let's talk about the third paragraph: "lying in bed at thirteen," "cell phone clock," "stumbling." These details help us connect to the author's experience. "Luckily," she says, "I have forgotten the words." And she contrasts the mother's outward lifestyle to the one at home with a Jekyll/Hyde analogy. How can you not feel for the author? Then, what makes it even more incredible is its last sentence, the

introspection: “Only... with a better understanding of mental illness...”
Wow.

2. In the fourth paragraph, the author talks about how schools are a safe haven for her, and how she’s used to spending countless hours in them. This is a great insight to share, especially if you have an unconventional (read: veteran) background. High-caliber schools want to know that, if they bring you in, you’ll take full advantage of the resources they offer.
3. In the second-to-last paragraph, the author states she “was the only woman working in the Naval Special Warfare community.” That’s fascinating and should absolutely be in there. I do, however, want to know more. If this piece were up for revision, I’d encourage the author to expand on this **idea**.
4. Notice, in the conclusion, how the author’s goals extend beyond herself. You will see it as a common thread through many of these essays. What do you plan on doing with your education that will help or impact others?

Commented [1]: Another consideration would be to even out the real estate given to the reasons for transferring. Since we start with “I have two reasons for transferring...” and “First...”, we’re kind of led to believe that the second reason should show up about halfway through. But we only get a hint at it in the second-to-last paragraph. An alternative would be to start the essay with “The main reason I want to transfer is...” and then throw in “Another reason is...” whenever it feels appropriate.