

Business School Personal Statement

For a large portion of my life, my biggest dream was to play at a major college football program. That dream was a central pillar in my identity, and was the frame for every decision I made. The pursuit of this goal is what got me out of bed for 6 am workout, led to me attending 3 different high schools, and took me around the country to try and showcase my talents and earn a scholarship offer. As a result, I became the first Massachusetts high school football player to be awarded a football scholarship to UCLA in over 30 years – my dream was becoming a reality. However, my last game in high school I tore my ACL running down the sideline on a broken play. While disheartening, I planned to rehab, train, and arrive at UCLA ready for training camp. Two years, five surgeries, and countless hours of grueling rehab later, I was brought into a room and informed that my football career was over. I had never even stepped on field. I had come as close as possible to achieving my lifelong goal, only to have it taken from me at the very last second. This marked one of the most difficult periods in my life, however it was not until later that I truly began to understand why this event had such a strong effect on me.

When I was younger, when people would ask what I wanted to be when I grew up I always responded that I wanted to be a teacher. While I could never had known at the time, I believe what drew me to that profession is a fundamental quality in myself which has shown its presence throughout my life: I enjoy community and I am drawn to being a leader in a community – the ability to lift those around me has always given me immense pride. This was one reason I had such a positive experience at boarding school. With only 400 students, it was not difficult to personally know everyone, students and faculty. Living at the school also gave me numerous opportunities to step into leadership roles and have a positive impact on those around me. While at boarding school I was elected student body president, chosen as captain of the football team, and even partially fulfilled my childhood goal by guest lecturing a math class every week as part of an independent study I created in projective geometry. The sense of accomplishment I felt when contributing to the community is what drove me to seek as many of these opportunities as I could and to put dedicate myself to each of those endeavors.

I believe this defining aspect of my character attributed to a large part of the difficulties I had while at UCLA. My retirement from football not only marked the loss of a lifelong dream, but also my closest community and my status within it. Even in the broader scope of UCLA, being a member of the football team automatically places you in a position to have a positive impact as a role model for the community. In my mind, I had suddenly been relegated to just another of UCLA's 30,000 undergraduate students. My academic experience at UCLA did not offer any respite from this feeling. My course load was filled with classes of 300+ students, based on recycled lectures from prior years, and relied heavily on memorization of lessons directly from textbooks. For a period, I was not participating in any collaborative activities which had until then been a major part of my identity. While losing the ability to play a game I love and had dedicated myself to certainly affected my greatly, I believe it was being estranged from a community that caused me to lose much of the motivation that previously drove me to excel. Further, the loss of direction took an even greater toll on my psyche as I began to question my self-worth and found it difficult to keep up meaningful relationships.

The turning point from this path came did not come from finding another community, but rather from creating one. During my junior year I was approached with the idea to found a fraternity chapter that was formerly a member of UCLA's Greek society. In the development of this organization I became reintroduced to the circumstances that inspire real passion within me. Simply building something as part of a team by working with the other founding members to define what we were and establish the culture that we wanted to enforce brought out my positive qualities that had been missing since my retirement from football.

In the elections that followed, I was chosen to be the first President of our renewed chapter. This recognition is still a source of intense pride for me, especially given the transition I had made from months prior. Further, it instilled a strong sense of responsibility to reward the faith that my fellow brothers had showed in me. As membership rapidly grew, new members quickly outnumbered the old guard. I thoroughly enjoyed acting as a mentor to the younger brothers, speaking with them frequently on navigating the pitfalls and taking advantage of their college experience. Following my term, I worked closely with subsequent presidents to advise them on the challenges which accompanied balancing the priorities of UCLA Interfraternity Council, our national organization, and the current membership. The sense of fulfillment I felt taking on those roles has led to my continued involvement with the fraternity to this day. I return a couple times a year to give professional development presentations, make myself available as a resource, and have even hired a current brother as a part-time intern for the boutique consulting firm I founded.

While it has been true throughout my life, it was not until I transitioned in the role as President of my fraternity did I begin to understand the circumstances where I have been able to achieve the most success. In reflecting on both times where I have struggled and times where I have excelled, it has become clear that situations where I am deeply involved in the community and able to assume a level of leadership are the best fit with my character. With this knowledge, I have begun to maximize potential in my career. By becoming invested in the culture and success of the groups where I have worked, I have established a community of sorts within my professional life. Additionally, I have constantly strove to position myself as a leader – which as a junior team member often means either leading by example or acting as a resource for younger members of the team. Regardless of the specifics, I recognize that the ability to have a positive impact on others and help shape values of my community is what truly drives me.

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