

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

With the goal of gaining experience while earning money for college, I started working at Carl's Jr., where I have the opportunity to practice my leadership skills by training co-workers and serving customers.

After working for just a couple of weeks, opening the store at 5:30 am, my manager deemed me the trainer. Whenever there are new employees, I teach them how to clean, take orders, prepare the food, and interact with customers. One challenge is that many of the employees are unable to speak English. I am learning some basic Spanish phrases, and am finding creative ways to communicate with them, including lots of hand signals and gestures. When I learn a Spanish word, I often teach it to the cooks in English.

I think that a successful leader is assertive and proactive. This is essential when helping customers who each have different needs. Situations like angry Uber drivers, backed up drive-thru lines, invalid coupon codes, spilled milkshakes, and special requests come up frequently. In each of these situations, I am forced to think *muy rápido* and take action to solve the problem. When I was still relatively new, my manager had miscalculated an inventory order, and we were out of many items, including french fries and ketchup. I had to find creative solutions and talk to many unhappy customers including offering alternatives, giving discounts, and when needed, empathy. I believe that empathy is one of the most important qualities I can develop as a leader because with it, I can see things from other people's points of view, and take that into account when making decisions. This empathy also helps me be more understanding when I am the customer at other restaurants and stores, so I make an extra effort to thank the workers.

I am grateful for the opportunities this job has given me to improve not only my work skills but also my social skills and my values, and I hope to continue developing these traits in my upcoming years at college.

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

Ever since I could hold a spatula, I have loved cooking and baking. Some of my favorite childhood memories include rolling out cinnamon rolls with my grandma, giggling while punching down bread dough with my dad, and carefully wrapping homemade caramels to bring Christmas caroling with my mom.

I now seek any opportunity to experiment in the kitchen and develop my talent and passion for cooking. I check out cookbooks from the library, find seasonal recipes on blogs, and call my relatives for family recipes. To further develop my talents, I have attended teen cooking classes to learn with others who share my appreciation for food. Freshman year I joined my school's culinary club, but was disappointed with it. I felt constrained by the way the teacher taught and how exact she wanted everything to be. I much prefer intuitive cooking and experimenting with new flavors and combinations. So, I decided to quit.

When the coronavirus lockdown hit, my sister and I embarked on a self-initiated challenge to research, create, photograph, and post a dish from all 196 countries around the world. In order to

find ingredients like pomegranate syrup, purple hominy, and Thai bananas, we ventured to many ethnic grocery stores. Armed with ingredients like these, we made new dishes like cornmeal fu-fu and ginger lime tofu.

For China for our challenge, my friend from Beijing taught me how to make Jiǎozi, traditional dumplings, via Zoom. Inspired by how much joy cooking brought me and my friend, we co-founded a virtual cooking club. I thought about what we should do differently than the culinary club to make it more of a creative environment. In order to get people involved and different perspectives, we prepared ethnically diverse recipes and collaborated with guest speakers and other clubs. Even though we are now back in school, we continue building connections and celebrating culture through our meetings.

My sister and I finished our challenge with malva pudding cake from Zimbabwe. Still hungry for more, our cook books remain open as we are currently cooking through the 50 states.

Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

When asked to describe Freestyle Academy, I wonder if I should give the long or the short version.

The short version: Freestyle is a separate campus that I go to for Film, Digital Media, and English.

The long version: Freestyle Academy of Communication Arts and Technology motivates me to pursue my passions. It is what makes staying up late and waking up early to work on projects not only bearable, but enjoyable. It allows me to create films, documentaries, short stories, poems, photos, and websites with professional equipment. Each course, although taught by a different teacher, is intertwined. For example, we wrote a story in English and recorded it with sound effects in Digital Media. Then we designed our own album cover and posted it on our website. Using the narrative skills we learned in English, we wrote, pitched, storyboarded, directed, shot, and edited a narrative film.

When I am in the zone editing a film, time flies by as my mouse clicks and I watch the clips over and over again, trying to find the perfect place to make a cut so that the sound effect fits just right. When I break free from the zone and re-enter the world, I continue thinking about my projects throughout the day.

With the editing and software technology skills that I have acquired from this program, I am not only able to work on projects for myself, I am also a resource for others. I design and edit flyers for club events, am employed by an elderly woman to edit her knitting videos and maintain her website store, and I have edited commercials for a non-profit organization.

Just today, I went to an exhibition downtown where our artwork was displayed in window shops. It was rewarding to see the designs I have created and show them to my friends and family. As I stood looking at my photoshopped watermelon whale and my personal engraved mandala, I was also able to see my reflection smiling back at me, proud of the artist I have become.

Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

I try to spot my family in the crowd, but the spotlight is too bright, and all I see are dim figures in the audience. I take a deep breath and begin to dance, counting in my head, “one, two, three, four,” as rhythmically as possible. When the song ends, my heart pounds to the beat of the clapping in the audience. I look into the crowd, beaming.

As a sixth grader, I participated in my church’s musical production, Stake Play. It was a completely new experience for me, and although it definitely stretched me out of my comfort zone, I absolutely loved it. Little did I know that from that experience I would not only take on a lead role in the next Stake Play, but also take an acting class freshman year, and assist in the next two school musicals.

Even though Stake Play had given me the confidence I needed to sign up for acting, I was once again stretched in many new ways. As I took the time to memorize lines, write my own scripts, and experiment with different techniques, my confidence not only grew in my acting abilities, but also in myself.

One of my favorite parts of acting was learning about all of the work that goes on behind the scenes. We learned how to be costume designers, sound directors, lighting technicians, and set stagers.

At first, as the assistant stage manager for my school musical, I felt overwhelmed with all of the responsibilities: managing props, curtains, set movers, calls, and communication from the main booth to backstage. As I carefully marked up my script with cues, practiced, and asked lots of questions, I was able to harness some of the confidence I needed to be successful. The weeks leading up to the performance proved to be challenging with five-hour rehearsals and tech run-throughs. Even though by the end of the week I had blisters on my hands, as I pulled the curtains back the last time, my cheeks hurt from smiling, even though I could not spot my family in the crowd.

