

Campbell Collins

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Application Essay for the American College Foundation Scholarship

"May it please the court."

Two years ago, I stood behind a rickety lectern made of a pile of books and a blue crate in a tiny classroom and said those words in front of a "judge" (really a student wearing a black robe and holding a gavel) for the first time. I was about to launch into a ten-minute legal argument about the intricacies of the Sixth Amendment. It was my first appellate court competition, and I stood shaking in my highly uncomfortable, newly purchased, demure black heels. What if a question tripped me up? What if the other side referenced a case I'd never heard of? But by the end of my allotted ten minutes, I was grinning. The legal language, the back-and-forth with the opposing team, the relentless questioning by the judge—all of it was intoxicating. That's the moment I realized I wanted to be an attorney. Perhaps a relentless prosecutor determined to put a criminal in jail, or environmental lawyer, fearlessly safeguarding the climate from polluting corporations, or a defense attorney, protecting a client who was falsely accused.

When I started moot court, I didn't know anything about constitutional law, and the knowledge I'd need seemed vast and impossible to learn. But I started a little bit at a time. Soon, I was amazed at how far I'd come. The questions I'd asked at the beginning seemed simple to me, and phrases like "standard of review" and "prosecutorial misconduct" became familiar. I learned more and more, and last year, I became the president of the team and a mentor to new students. Because of how much I've learned from my moot court experience, I want to pursue an interdisciplinary major to broaden my general knowledge so that I can view cases from a variety of perspectives. That way, I'll be the very best advocate for my clients that I can be.

I want to be a lawyer because I want to help people, and college is the next stair-step that will take me there. People with specialized skills have always fascinated me: my grandfather was an elevator mechanic, and every time I step into an elevator, I wonder what he would see if he were there. My best friend's dad builds bridges, and I look at bridges and wonder what he sees that I miss. Everyone has skills that they can harness, and I want to put my skills—digesting complicated cases, articulating positions in written briefs, and advocating fearlessly in oral argument—to work protecting the unjustly accused, the environment, and the most vulnerable sections of society.

I know what it takes to get there: relentless studying for the LSAT, a network of mentors, years of school during which I'll be swamped in pages and pages of reading. But I'm determined. Now I picture myself standing in front of a judge (a real one, not a dressed-up high schooler), running through my watertight argument in my mind, and saying, "May it please the court."