

Application Essay Example [The “Why Us?” Essay]

In the basement of my local library, there is a shelf labeled “International Political Economy.” I found it at fourteen while looking for something easier. Instead, I discovered Adam Smith, whose arguments about markets felt less like history and more like a blueprint for understanding conflict. Since then, my interest in international relations has moved from curiosity to structured study.

The Global Governance Lab, which publishes undergraduate policy briefs each semester, offers a structure I have been searching for. I do not want to study theory in isolation. I want to test arguments against data, draft proposals, and receive critique from faculty who treat undergraduates as junior researchers rather than observers. Your emphasis on undergraduate-led research aligns with how I learn best: through iteration and public accountability.

In reviewing course descriptions, I noticed that “Political Economy of Development” integrates case analysis with quantitative modeling. That combination matters to me. In high school, I learned that argument without data drifts into abstraction, while data without context loses meaning. My AP Seminar project on trade sanctions reinforced that balance. I analyzed historical policy outcomes and presented findings during a regional public speaking competition, where judges challenged my assumptions about causality. Their questions reshaped my research design.

Beyond coursework, the International Policy Forum stands out. Student moderators invite speakers and facilitate discussion rather than simply attending lectures. That model mirrors the kind of engagement I value. In my school’s debate club, I shifted from competitor to organizer because I realized that shaping conversation influences outcomes as much as winning arguments.

Your institution’s approach to interdisciplinary study is equally important. The joint concentration option between Economics and Government would allow me to examine global markets not as isolated systems but as forces embedded within social and historical contexts. I am particularly interested in how emerging economies navigate regulatory reform while maintaining growth. The Center for Global Development’s undergraduate research assistant program would give me exposure to real-time policy analysis rather than retrospective study.

I am applying because your programs match how I learn: testing ideas, revising them, and getting feedback from people who take undergraduates seriously. Your curriculum rewards evidence and revision, which is exactly the kind of training I want.

I am not looking for a campus that simply confirms my interests. I am looking for one that challenges my frameworks and requires refinement. Your university, through its research integration, policy labs, and student-led forums, offers that environment. I see a direct line between my past engagement with economic theory and the kind of work your programs make possible.