

UC Prompt 1: Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.

I shouted frantic commands to the rowers as the boat came to an abrupt halt, narrowly avoiding a collision. The remaining boats surged ahead while eight frustrated rowers glowered back at me, a disheartening conclusion to the summer rowing camp where I began coxing.

During my freshman season, my difficulties persisted as I still struggled not only with technique but also with being accountable for our losses. I spent the remainder of the year coxing only during practices and rowing in sculling boats during regattas, refusing to face failure again. Leadership was not an intrinsic strength, so I assumed that I was just unfit for the position.

From the time I spent in boats rowing, I paid attention to the other coxswains, their techniques, and how they handled situations. I realized that mastery of the position didn't require natural talent, but rather an acceptance of responsibility and a determination to perform well. With that, leadership came naturally.

The summer before and throughout my sophomore year, I resolved to improve and to not be deterred by failure. I spent hours listening to tapes of Olympic coxswains, writing up detailed race plans, listening to recordings of myself from practices, and taking notes on elements that I needed to fix. The hard work eventually paid off as our boat won some of the first medals that I was proud of.

Before I began coxing, I never saw myself as someone capable of making a difference. But the leadership abilities that I've acquired through rowing gave me the confidence to take on leadership positions in other areas. Now, as president of our school's Environmental Action Club and Young Democrats, positions that I would have previously deemed unattainable, I've had the opportunity to discuss issues in front of large groups, take action on pressing matters, and share my passion with others. While I had always thought of leadership as a quality that some had and others, like me, lacked, coxing taught me otherwise. Leadership is a skill, an acquisition that requires commitment, and is within the reach of anyone with the right mindset.

-Jasleen K 2017