Justice Maddox

What Being Tall Means to Me

"Do you play basketball?"

These four words are the first thing I hear from almost every new person I meet. Once people realize that at 6'7” I do not play the infamous sport, confusion is written all over their faces. Then predictably, they ask me why not and then try to convince me that becoming a professional basketball player is the best career choice for my life. No matter what I say afterwards about my participation in orchestra, trivia bowl, or math club most people still assume that I must be some type of exceptional athlete. Okay, I did earn a varsity letter as a hurdler on my high school track team, but I have more interest than just athletics. What being tall, usually the tallest person in the room, means to me is that people will often automatically assume that I am a serious basketball player. I am not.

My mother always says that "God made sure that I would never blend into the crowd.” According to records, I have been in the 90th percentile for height since I was one month old. By the eighth grade I was already 6'2” and growing. I towered over my peers. In early photos, I was always a foot taller than everyone else my age. My parents, like others, originally assumed I would be great at basketball because I was so much taller than other kids my age. I was not. As I grew, so did the comments on my "untapped athletic potential." People, mostly strangers, would tell me that I was destined to be one of the greats, primarily because I am shaped like the capital letter L. I am 6’7 and wear a size sixteen shoe. Despite not being an exceptional basketball player, mom was right, I was always easy to spot.

Unfortunately, new people I meet usually never stop to consider that I might have other distinguishing talents, living in the shadow of my exceptional frame. One such passion is my

love for music. I love music. I love listening to it. I love playing it, and I love composing it. I have been playing the viola since elementary school. I have composed numerous orchestra pieces, three of which were performed by my school. Music is a bigger part of my life than any sport. I also have other non-physical activities that I love. I enjoy amateur photography, competitive video games, designing flags, and finding solutions to everyday mathematical conundrums. My oldest passion has nothing to do with sports. From a very young age, I have been fascinated with outer space. I find that I often agree with my favorite author, Dr. Randall Munroe, who said, "I love learning about the science that governs the universe around us and want to share the delight of discovering how things work and why (Randall Munroe, Press Interview 2016)." Sadly, being tall means my intellect and musical talents are often initially ignored.

Being tall is bittersweet. On one hand my other meaningful attributes are usually overlooked until a person takes the time to get to know me. While on the other hand, I always stand out and am usually treated very kindly by strangers curious about my height. Another very positive thing about being tall is that I can use the obvious and visible reality of my height to start a conversation with anyone. This really is the crux of what being tall means to me. My height is my ice breaker, door opener, and conversations starter. However, it is so visible that any other qualities that I want to highlight often get hidden by seventy-nine inches of vertical presence. It is a little complicated, but that is what being tall means to me.

Thank you for considering my application.