Writing college application essays can be a difficult part of your application process, but fortunately for you your certification(s) can be highlighted to make you stand out from the crowd. Below are three commonly asked essay questions from [fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com/college-search/articles/72-sample-essay-questions-for-college-apps) with sample answers that showcase some of our certifications. Please use these sample answers to guide your thinking of how you can use your certification(s) in your essays.

**Pick a controversial problem on college campuses and suggest a solution.**

A controversial problem on college campuses today are students graduating who are unable to find work. The economic landscape plays a huge factor in this issue, but many jobs are going unfilled because graduates do not have the skills required for these positions. They are not “career-ready” in terms of what the industry demands. For example, in a study commissioned by Microsoft they found that one in four IT positions worldwide is currently unfilled because people are not skilled to take these positions. Students and Colleges can’t do much to impact the economy, but they can impact how career-ready they or their students are at graduation by implementing certification.

While in high school I received a Microsoft Office Specialist certification in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Essentially, Microsoft has put their stamp of approval on me for having the most in-demand skills in business today. Nearly every job today requires some amount of use in Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. Instead of listing on my resume that I’m “proficient in World, Excel, and PowerPoint,” I can list my certifications. This sets me apart from a crowd of job applicants and gives the employer confidence in my skill-set. Colleges would be providing a great opportunity for their graduates by offering industry certification, such as the Microsoft Office Specialist or any IT certification, as part of their current curriculum and testing. It would solve the problem of having graduates who are unable to fill the job openings due to a lack of skills.

**Discuss a special attribute or accomplishment that sets you apart.**

One accomplishment that sets me apart from my fellow applicants is my receiving of the HP Accredited Technical Associate – Cloud certification. Receiving this certification required me to be certified in three other HP exams – Connected Devices, Networks, and Servers and Storage – in order to become certified in the Cloud certification. This was no easy task and it took years of intensive study and practice, but I’m confident that this certification will make me a valuable asset in any organization I am a part of.

Not only am I able to translate business objectives into technology strategies and end-to-end solutions, I learned other life skills through this process. I learned that hard work and dedication lead to successful outcomes. I learned how to study and put that study to practice. I also learned how to be efficient and effective with my time in order to accomplish all of the things I needed to do to receive this certification.

Very few students my age have received the HP Accredited Technical Associate – Cloud certification, which makes it an accomplishment that sets me apart. I think more importantly though are the life skills I learned that set me apart. They will be used by me throughout life, even after my IT schooling and career are over.

**Describe your most meaningful achievement and how it relates to your future goals.**

One of my most meaningful achievements was becoming an Adobe Certified Associate in Visual Communication using Adobe Photoshop CS6. It is a dream and goal of mine to become a professional photographer for the New York Times. My first step in achieving this goal was to take an advanced photography and editing class at my local art center. I had been doing basic photography of my friends and family for many years, but I knew I needed to improve my skills in order to be considered by the New York Times.

At the end of the class we were given the opportunity to become certified in the industry standard for image editing and compositing—Adobe Photoshop. I studied and prepared for many hours in order to learn the correct usage of and tools available in Adobe Photoshop CS6. My preparation paid off and I am now an Adobe Certified Associate. This certification will give the New York Times confidence in my ability to quickly and effectively edit and prepare my photographs for use in the paper and on the web. It put me one step closer to my goal.