



**JENNIFER BORENSTEIN**  
COLLEGE CORNER

## More choices on UC essay questions

This is the year of application changes. As you may have seen in my column from last month, a new application will go live starting this summer called the Coalition for Access and Affordability.

Now I have yet another new application development to report for the 2016-17 cycle. Over spring break, the University of California released new essay requirements. This is the first change to the essay section of the UC application in almost 10 years.

Starting this application cycle, students will no longer need write two UC personal statements but will have a choice to answer four short essay questions out of eight options. Yippee! Choice! Shorter essays! Let's look more closely at what changed and how this will impact students applying to the UCs this fall.

Previously, freshman UC applicants were required to answer the following two essays:

- Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

The maximum word count was 1,000 for both combined, and applicants could allocate words as they saw fit providing that neither essay was fewer than 250 words. Transfer applicants had a different first question to address that asked about their intended major, but still had to answer the second question.

If you know any students who have answered these essays, then you know how excruciating they can be. Often I go through several different brainstorming sessions just to help students select an appropriate topic. "Dreams and aspirations?" "Relate to the person you are?" Not many fully actualized adults — or just adults, for that matter — can answer such a question.

I think moving away from these long essays and allowing students to select questions definitely will work in the students' favor.

The new essays are called personal insight questions, and each has a 350-maximum word count. Each question now "aligns with one of the 14 criteria that UC uses in its admissions process" according to the UC website.

Overall, students most likely will end up writing more (1,400 words versus the previous 1,000). But, in my experience, these types of short-answer questions are less daunting and easier to complete. Smaller, more discreet tasks seem more doable for many students.

Also, I am quite pleased with the topics. They ask about leadership, your creative side and favorite academic subject, just to point out a few. In my opinion, these are more familiar, straightforward topics; plus as an added bonus — these new insight questions are relatively similar to short-answer questions at other schools. Thus, there may be more opportunities to re-use essays. It's always nice to gain some efficiency.

Here's a link to the new freshman questions (yes, you can finish your UC essay section now if you are so inclined) and some tips from the UCs about how to answer them: <http://bit.ly/1Ue77Tt>. (Transfer applicants — There will be one required question and then a choice of three out of seven to answer.) Here's a link to the transfer questions: <http://bit.ly/1q9bwKq>.

After looking over the new questions and sifting through the UC information, I have some tips about answering these new questions.

- Look at the whole not just the parts. Now that there is a choice about which questions to answer, be strategic when selecting questions to ensure that the answers fit together to provide as well-rounded and complete a picture of yourself as possible. Always provide fresh information. Avoid overlap.

- Make every word count. With a maximum word count of 350 for each essay question, it is imperative that students do not waste words. Every word should add value. No need for a long-winded introduction.

- Show your true colors. Consider varying tone or seriousness from question to question. Maybe have one answer be more of a risk in terms of topic or use humor in one ... of course, while still being appropriate.

- Give each essay proper attention. Since the UCs state that they will treat each essay equally, make sure to give each one its due. Do not lovingly craft one at the expense of the others.

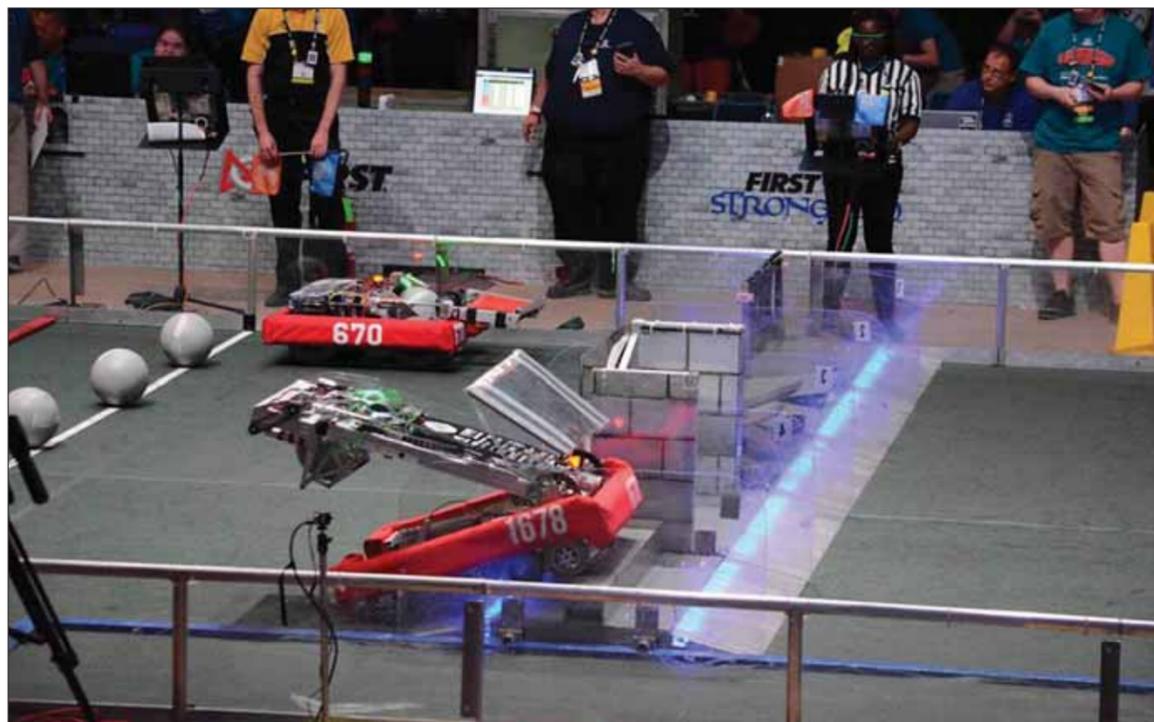
- Remember the classics. Just like before, aim to "show, not tell"; be as descriptive as possible; edit carefully; and refrain from just listing achievements.

Here's a link to some tips from the UCs: <http://bit.ly/1SCDQMv>.

On the whole, I see this as a positive development: more flexibility, shorter questions, salient topics. I look forward to this next application cycle to gauge how students feel about the changes. Hopefully better!

— Jennifer Borenstein is an independent college adviser in Davis and owner of *The Right College For You*. Her column is published monthly. Reach her at [jenniferborenstein@therightcollegeforyou.org](mailto:jenniferborenstein@therightcollegeforyou.org), or visit [www.therightcollegeforyou.org](http://www.therightcollegeforyou.org).

# Champs back in the ring



COURTESY PHOTO

Citrus Circuits' robot goes into action Thursday in St. Louis, where the Davis-based robotics team is looking for a championship repeat.

## Citrus Circuits' world-title defense gets underway in St. Louis

By ANNE TERNUS-BELLAMY  
*Enterprise staff writer*

The reigning world-champion Citrus Circuits robotics team has arrived in St. Louis and will attempt to defend its crown at the FIRST Robotics world championships this weekend.

The trip to St. Louis marks the culmination of eight weeks of competition involving 3,000 teams in 80 countries around the world. More than 900 of those teams qualified to compete at the world championships this weekend, including the local team composed of Davis students in grades 9-12.

This is Citrus Circuits' fifth trip to the world championships and the first time they arrive as defending champions.

All of the teams are competing in the game FIRST Stronghold, which involves alliances of three teams using their robots to breach enemy defenses and shoot boulders

into opponents' towers in order to capture and defeat them.

Alliances compete against each other in tournament style matches, beginning with a qualification round followed by playoffs and the finals. Teams are separated into eight divisions with division winners advancing to vie for the world championship.

Citrus Circuits — also known as Team 1678 — is competing in the Hopper Division and all of their matches can be viewed live via livestream at <https://www.thebluealliance.com> beginning Thursday.

Throughout the season, which began with teams building their robots in January, Citrus Circuits has never veered from its champion status. The season started with a win at the Central Valley Regional in March, continued with a victory at the local Sacramento Regional held at the

ARC Pavilion at UC Davis, and finished with a third first-place finish at the Silicon Valley Regional.

Along the way, the team picked up a number of special awards, including the Quality Award, sponsored by Motorola Solutions Foundation, at Central Valley Regional, and two Excellence in Engineering Awards, sponsored by Delphi, at the Sacramento Regional and the Silicon Valley Regional.

Citrus Circuits was formed in 2004 and operates out of Davis High School but includes members from Da Vinci Charter Academy as well as the local junior high schools.

The team is coached by DHS teacher Steve Harvey and supported by several major local sponsors, including UC Davis, FMC Technologies, NVIDIA, DMG Mori, the Davis Joint Unified School District, Sunpower, the Davis

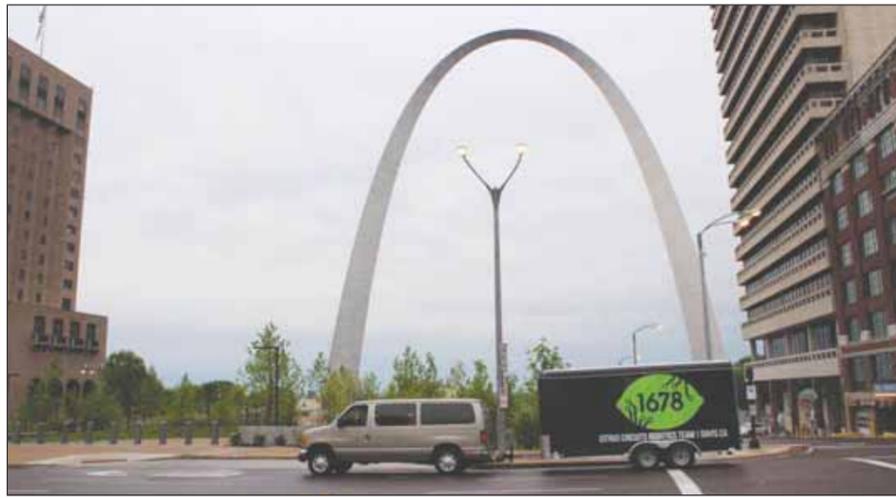
High School PTA and the DHS Blue & White Foundation.

The NVIDIA sponsorship is a recent one — NVIDIA is the world leader in GPU-accelerated computing — and the sponsorship made it possible for Citrus Circuits to purchase a trailer to transport the team's robot supplies to competitions, including to St. Louis.

NVIDIA also will work with the team's students this summer to advance their knowledge of the company's software and hardware, as well as their applications to robotics. The NVIDIA Jetson TX1 embedded systems module will be used as a co-processor to run advanced robot functions.

Learn more about the team at [www.citruscircuits.org](http://www.citruscircuits.org).

— Reach Anne Ternus-Bellamy at [aternus@enterprise.net](mailto:aternus@enterprise.net) or 530-747-8051. Follow her on Twitter at @ATernusBellamy



The Citrus Circuits trailer arrives in St. Louis as the team prepares for the world-championship competition. Thanks to sponsorship from NVIDIA, the robotics team was able to buy a new trailer to transport the team's robot supplies to competition sites.

COURTESY PHOTO

## The colors of the rainbow



WAYNE TILCOCK/ENTERPRISE PHOTO

Participants in César Chávez Elementary School's Color Run celebrate in an explosion of colored powder on Saturday. The school hosted the run for Davis families, with all proceeds from the inaugural fundraiser going to school programs. Participants chose one of two distances — a one-mile or a three-mile — to walk, run or jog along and passed through "splash zones" where they were doused with colors. The event was made possible by local sponsors and supporters, including SEC Auto Solutions, Swim America, Ink Monkey, Ken's Bike & Ski, Coldwell Banker, Emily Bay — Massage by the Bay, H2O to Go, Fat Face, AllStar Rents and Fleet Feet.