Statement – typed 250 words or less describing the meaning behind your entry and what inspired you.

My entry for the I Am USC Dornsife contest is a short essay describing my time and goals in college, as well as what I have learned along this bumpy road to knowledge and experience. I discuss my reasons and motivations for studying in the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences and the growth I have felt manifest in and out of the classroom. I describe my desire to always learn and be better so that I will have the means to help others in the future. My inspiration has been and will always be my family, and I hope that this is extremely visible in my essay. My family has always encouraged me to be the best that I can be, and I believe my time in USC Dornsife has helped facilitate this goal. That is something I hope to share through this essay and to the whole Dornsife community. Thank you for your time and consideration.
"Because I Follow My Dreams"

I am USC Dornsife. "Why?" one may ask. For one, I am a Biological Sciences major and I often find myself dodging reckless bicyclists on my way to class – although perhaps that is characteristic of all USC students. Once in class, I struggle the same way as my peers to make sense of the convoluted arrows of Organic Chemistry. I peruse my over-stuffed brain for any open spaces to cram more images of amino acids and pray to the biology gods that those structures will stick.

But deeper than that, I am USC Dornsife because I am passionate about the reason behind my studies. My major may be a simple label that a curious classmate plasters onto my forehead after he asks me what I am studying during my ephemeral time at USC. But to me, it is an integral facet of my ongoing, hopeful journey to become a doctor.

When I was five, my dad endured a quadruple bypass surgery – one of the first of its kind to be performed in San Diego by a team of surgeons. He was not overweight; his arteries were simply too small in proportion to his body and were thus clogging up and blocking blood flow from his heart. Without the doctors’ immediate decision to operate and their determination to save my father’s life, I might never have stumbled through my first roller blading lesson with my father running by my side or smiled so widely at my high school graduation with his arm around me. It is because of the innovation and dedication of doctors that I still have my father, and it is also why I have the drive to continue to learn and grow in college in order to help others the same way the doctors helped my father.

To live is to learn. When we stop learning, we stop living. Sure, I am still a confused teenager, still searching for the person I am to become. But I never want to stop learning. And learning does not only occur in classrooms and lecture halls, although immersing oneself in the knowledge only professors can provide is essential to building the foundations of the future. Learning happens when I rub the weariness from my eyes on Saturday mornings to help tutor children from our community. Learning happens when I ride the jittery elevator to the sixth floor of SGM and absorb every detail of performing ethical research with human subjects, and learning happens when I am able to truly ascertain the dedication and focus necessary to gather valuable data. Learning happens when I lug heavy boxes crammed with giveaways for the event I am helping to host for my job as a student ambassador for Sony, and it happens when I am able to share real, genuine conversation with everyday people – from club leaders to students just learning to navigate the rough waters of college – through my job. Because learning happens through experiences and interactions with other people who help facilitate your growth and your desire to be better, and I am so grateful to be able to experience all of it in my time here as a student in Dornsife College.

Wherever I turn my head in Dornsife, students are rushing to catch a meeting for a club or scrambling to class, and it inspires me to want to be better, because Dornsife students always devote their time to causes bigger than themselves. And any time I find myself sitting idly at my desk, tapping a
pen against the wooden façade, I always happen to glance over the family photos that sit scattered around the shelves. They are pictures of my father, whose trek through an emergency surgery and eventual recovery with the help of doctors planted the seed of wanting to always help others in my head. They are pictures of my mother, who is the most rational and caring person I know and the person I hope most to be like and embody. They are pictures of my grandmother, a woman who lost her husband by 35 and was forced to raise five children on a fourth grade education – a woman who always encourages me to drench my brain in learning and put my education first, because she understands the importance of dedication and drive in accomplishing goals. All of this reminds me and motivates me to be better, something I believe all students at USC Dornsife aspire to do.