ClearThread Studios

Your story, at its clearest.

Application Package Review

Representative sample: this is exactly what an Application Package ($349) client receives - the scoring rubric, per-essay scorecards, activities review, a check on how it all fits together, and priority fixes.

Part 1: How we score your application

Every essay is scored on the same six measures, 1 to 5 each, for 30 points total. The measures come from the evaluation framework admissions interviewers are actually trained on, translated into plain language.

#	MEASURE	WHAT IT MEANS
1	Does it sound like you?	Does the essay sound like a real 17-year-old thinking on the page?
2	Show, don't just tell	Is every claim anchored in concrete scenes and details?
3	Does it hold together?	Does one clear idea carry the whole essay?
4	Did you actually do something?	Does it show initiative and impact, or just showing up?
5	Could anyone else have written this?	Will the reader remember it two days later?
6	Did you earn the ending?	Does the story give you something real to think about, not just narrate?

Activities list: each entry is reviewed for impact, initiative, specificity, and honest wording - does the description sell the work that was actually done, no more and no less?

How the pieces fit together: for the Application Package we also score the file as a whole - five questions, 1 to 5 each, 25 points total. See Part 3.

Scores measure the draft, not the writer. Every weakness in this review is fixable, and the fixes are listed in priority order at the end.

Part 2: The review

Supplemental 1 - Why Olin

23 / 30 - Strong. One paragraph is holding it back.

MEASURE	SCORE
Does it sound like you?	**4 / 5**
Show, don't just tell	**4 / 5**
Does it hold together?	**4 / 5**
Did you actually do something?	**4 / 5**
Could anyone else have written this?	**3 / 5**
Did you earn the ending?	**4 / 5**

What's working

The opening and closing are excellent. "The Prusa on the left has opinions" is a voice-driven hook no other applicant could write, and the ending - "I want to be somewhere the left Prusa's opinions count as data" - earns its place. The curriculum-redesign detail (students trusted with real decisions about how they learn) is exactly the kind of school-specific observation that makes a "why us" essay credible. The through-line is clear: you learn by doing, and the people closest to the work should have a say.

The problem

Paragraph 3 ("renowned faculty and state-of-the-art facilities... personalized attention... collaborative environment... best version of myself") could be pasted into an essay for any engineering school in the country. It is brochure language, and it sits between two paragraphs of sharp, specific writing, which makes it stand out more, not less. This is the entire reason "Could anyone else have written this?" is a 3.

The fix

Delete paragraph 3 and replace it with a second Olin-specific. You already know the material: first-semester project teams (the exact loop you lived in the makerspace), the small-team culture, or what student-shaped curriculum would let you build that you could not build alone. One concrete Olin thing, in your voice, and this essay is a 26.

Supplemental 2 - Community

26 / 30 - Strong. The ending undersells the essay.

MEASURE	SCORE
Does it sound like you?	**5 / 5**
Show, don't just tell	**5 / 5**
Does it hold together?	**4 / 5**
Did you actually do something?	**5 / 5**
Could anyone else have written this?	**4 / 5**
Did you earn the ending?	**3 / 5**

What's working

This is the best-written essay in the set. The pit scene is vivid and specific (hot plastic and energy drinks, the borrowed hex set, the borrowed soldering iron). The semifinal repair - four minutes, a flashlight, a spare printed "just in case," a recalibration around slightly-off geometry - is the kind of concrete story admissions readers remember. "Go ask the fix-it kid" is a reputation rendered in dialogue, which is always stronger than summary.

The problem

The last line ("In the end, I learned that community means showing up for each other, especially when something breaks") restates the essay's moral instead of landing it. The reader already knows this - you just showed it. A summary ending on an essay this good reads as a lack of trust in your own material.

The fix

End on an image, not a lesson. The strongest candidate is already in your draft: the freshmen packing their own spare brackets. Something like: "This fall, our freshmen started packing their own spare brackets." That is the whole essay's point, shown instead of told, and it points forward into college. This one change moves "Did you earn the ending?" to a 5 and the essay to a 28.

Supplemental 3 - Intellectual curiosity

24 / 30 - Strong. The ending steps outside the essay's own metaphor.

MEASURE	SCORE

Does it sound like you?	**4 / 5**
Show, don't just tell	**5 / 5**
Does it hold together?	**4 / 5**
Did you actually do something?	**4 / 5**
Could anyone else have written this?	**4 / 5**
Did you earn the ending?	**3 / 5**

What's working

The forensic voice here is distinctive - "a failed print is a flight recorder" is a genuinely original frame, and the shelf of labeled failures ("the most honest textbook in the room") is memorable and specific. The chain-of-cause-and-effect passage (bed tilt to curled corner to part that does not fit) shows real analytical thinking, not just enthusiasm.

The problem

The closing line ("This taught me that failure is the best teacher, and I want to keep learning from it for the rest of my life") moralizes. It steps outside the metaphor to hand the reader a lesson, which undercuts the confident, forensic tone of everything before it. One smaller note: "retraction settings" is dropped without a beat of explanation - a non-technical reader trips there for a half-second.

The fix

Close inside the metaphor instead of outside it. End on the shelf, or on the translation image: the pile of cooled plastic, the two languages that almost agree. And give "retraction settings" half a clause of context ("the retraction settings - how fast the printer pulls the filament back between moves - were too low"). Both are small changes; together they move the essay to a 26.

Activities list review

Eight of nine entries are solid - specific verbs, real scale, no padding. One entry is underselling the applicant:

Repair Cafe Club - needs a rewrite. "Helped fix broken things at school events" is passive, hides that the applicant founded the club, and gives no sense of scale or leadership. Suggested rewrite: "Founded monthly repair pop-up; student volunteers fix classmates' broken items alongside them; 40+ items repaired." Founder role, active verbs, scale - same facts, honestly presented.

Part 3: How the pieces fit together

Strong essays are only half the job. The other half is whether the whole file holds together: one voice, no redundancy, every claim backed. We score five questions, 1 to 5 each, for 25 points total.

21 / 25 - Strong. The file holds together; the remaining work is polish.

QUESTION	SCORE	FINDING
Does it all sound like you?	**4 / 5**	One voice throughout; the Why Olin brochure paragraph is the one stiff outlier
Does every piece earn its place?	**4 / 5**	The same theme in three different lights; no anecdote told twice
Do we see more than one side of you?	**4 / 5**	Three distinct facets - builder, leader, thinker - but all inside the workshop; one glimpse outside would complete the picture
Do the essays and activities agree?	**4 / 5**	Every claim has backing, but the Repair Cafe entry hides the founder role the essays imply
What's the one-sentence impression?	**5 / 5**	"The fix-it kid with the shelf of labeled failures" - specific, memorable, picturable on campus

Read together, the three supplementals orbit a shared core - the gap between what someone wants and what the tool allows, and the instinct to teach others across it. The "why us" essay approaches it as school fit, the community essay as service under pressure, the curiosity essay as intellectual fascination. Each essay covers a genuinely different facet, with different scenes and different stakes. The set reads as one person from three angles, not one story told three times.

School fit for Olin specifically: strong. The applicant's actual history maps directly onto Olin's project-based first year and student-shaped curriculum. The fit is demonstrated, not claimed.

No structural fixes needed. The 4s on voice consistency and essays-activities agreement are addressed by fixes already listed below: replacing the brochure paragraph and rewriting the Repair Cafe entry. The 4 on range is an observation, not an action item - the file's workshop focus is its positioning strength, and nothing here should be diluted to chase breadth.

Priority fixes, in order

1. **Why Olin, paragraph 3** - replace the brochure paragraph with a second Olin-specific. Biggest single lift in the set (23 to 26).
2. **Community ending** - land on the freshmen packing their own spare brackets instead of the summary moral (26 to 28).
3. **Curiosity ending** - close inside the metaphor; gloss "retraction settings" (24 to 26).
4. **Activities: Repair Cafe** - rewrite to show the founder role and scale.

None of these requires new experiences or new material. The application is already strong; these four changes make it distinctive.

Your story, at its clearest. - ClearThread Studios