

Common App Essay

As I pushed the swinging kitchen door open and entered the magical world of Paul A. Young Fine Chocolates on Wardour Street in London, I was almost blinded by the fluorescent lighting, white marble countertops, and shiny walls used as dry erase boards. With one whiff, the thick, sweet, smell of Kenyan, Ecuadorian and Madagascan chocolate flooded my nose in an almost suffocating wind. In that moment, I knew I was going to love the next six weeks, and not just because I'd be spending eight hours a day in a room that smelled like my favorite indulgence. The bright white walls, clean edges and marble countertops were strangely comforting and inviting, almost like a lab. It was an unlikely place for me to find my favorite aspects of lab work- a perfect combination of precise actions and creative thinking.

Paul, the owner of the small shop, began explaining to me that making truffles was, in fact, a science. In order to achieve the perfect "snap" and shine of tempered dark chocolate, it must be heated to 46 degrees Celsius before being cooled on a marble slab. At precisely 29 degrees, the chocolate is taken off the marble and poured back in with the still hot chocolate. The moment of truth comes when a spatula is dipped into the chocolate and allowed to cool completely. If it doesn't cool to be shiny, the precision was off. It is as simple as that. Chocolate-work is based on precision, and that is why I love it so much. I love that it must be taken to a specific temperature because I think in precision. I love when there are small achievable steps on the road to a single correct outcome. It's like taking derivatives in calculus, where I experience the instant gratification that comes along with getting every part right of a math problem right.. There is an unbelievable wave of confidence and invincibility upon arriving at the one and only correct answer. . I've always liked to know whether something was right or wrong and I live for the unmatched joy that comes with following all of the steps and eventually achieving the right answer, or in this case, perfectly tempered chocolate.

While the crafting of the chocolate itself requires the precise steps I love so much, the creation of new flavor combinations adds a whole new creative dimension to chocolate work. . I'd mastered hand tempering and was getting a little bored of making the same flavors of truffles over and over again when Paul walked into the kitchen and told me it was time to create my own flavor. At first I went to flavors I had tried before: something with coconut, or raspberry. However, as I started writing possible flavor opportunities on the dry-erase board walls in a mess of arrows and circles, making multiple ganaches, adding drops of essential oils and fruit purees, I couldn't stop experimenting. I eventually landed on a unique combination: lavender with just a hint of lemon. It was thrilling to take an original idea, develop it and create a new product. The combination of using a systematic experimentation process and subjective taste came together to create a best selling chocolate truffle and an incredible sense of success in me. My sense of success stemmed from something echoed in my favorite aspects of learning. The ability to follow exact steps to arrive at a single answer coupled with the unrestricted ability for creativity within the world of experimentation is the perfect combination. No matter whether the project is designing a windmill in physics, or standing behind a marble slab perfecting truffles, I'm perfectly content when precision and creativity exist alongside one another.