Alara’s UCAS essay … many UK acceptances (attended Yale instead)

The world of algorithms and the ability to solve problems through lines of code has amazed me ever since I began learning programming through Codecademy four years ago. I have grown up in an era where we fundamentally depend on technology to communicate, to eat, and to transport. It allows people to solve the most essential problems of our time and to improve the quality of others' lives. Therefore, I hope to pursue an education in computer science in the UK, where I would attain the academic and personal growth that will enable me to create solutions for humankind.

My fascination with programming led me to several school clubs from IOS Programming Club to Coder Dojo Club. I learned the basics of Swift and HTML. Later, during my junior year, I took introductory Java courses. In this course, I not only learned Java but also the key knowledge about how to code using the object-oriented programming principles. I was able to gain practical experience by coding dozens of projects during the year, which gave me the vision to think in terms of algorithms and the ability to solve problems in a systematic way. Also taking Calculus BC course at school has prepared me for the high level of mathematics involved in pursuing a CS degree. Currently, I continue to build upon this knowledge in my Advanced Programming course.

This past summer, I got accepted to the Microsoft Turkey's University Internship program, as a high school student. I acquired the basics of many programming languages as well as engines including C#, SQL, and Unity. I also had the chance to observe the workplace of a computer scientist and to learn about the technology sector and potential work opportunities through the seminars I attended from the technology leaders in Turkey. I was introduced to some of the latest technological developments and platforms. These have widened my horizons to see many of the most innovative global technologies, and more importantly their potential applications in our lives. I gained greater insight into the continuously developing side of the technology sector. The internship bolstered my desire to work in a sector where innovation is the main driver.
Having grown up aspiring to be a computer scientist, I wanted to inspire others to become engineers, scientists, and innovators of the future. I initiated and led a community service project with local children of a Turkish village in which I taught them the basic principles of programming and introduced them to resources like Codecademy with the hope of inspiring them about STEM. This included coding a labyrinth game on Scratch, experiencing Virtual Reality using Google Cardboard, and learning about conductivity via MakeyMakey. The project was a great success, with all the children enjoying the activities.

Moreover, being the outreach coordinator of my school's robotics team made me a part of a young community of technology lovers, changing the world with innovative ideas and bettering people's lives using technology. During our time at competitions, we worked in true coordination and were awarded several awards by the FIRST organisation. Recently, thanks to the community project I led, I was chosen as one of the 100 FIRST Robotics Competition Dean's List Award Finalists from all around the world in 2017. As part of this recognition, I was invited to the FRC World Championship in Houston.

Studying computer science in the UK would be the ideal opportunity for me, as there is an established and developing technology sector in the UK. Also the diverse environment of the UK embodies the potential to foster very promising ideas, projects, and solutions by bringing together

the ideas from all around the world. Throughout my academically challenging high school years, I have worked with perseverance and discipline, knowing that every step I take, every second I study, would benefit me in the end, which I believe has prepared me for the academically rigorous university education ahead.

My Notes:

1. Begins speaking generally, abstractly about her field in an effective way while already throwing in some experience she's had with coding. She ends the first paragraph by stating that she specifically wants to study computer science--and for the betterment of humankind. (So, she's also showing early that her aim isn't a selfish one.)

2. Next, she spends a paragraph giving us a more detailed background of her education and experience in computer programming. She explains the building blocks that she's stacked up to pursue her degree, including math and advanced programming.

3. Alara then gives some recent experience she had with programming during a competitive internship where she both learned more advanced programming and was also able to see what computer scientists do on a daily basis. She saw how technology is constantly advancing and how she will need to do the same. It didn't deter her, it motivated her. (Shows she can adapt.)

4. Next, she illustrates some leadership roles that she's had and how she imparted her wisdom to children of an underprivileged community. By the end of the paragraph, she's also letting the admissions committee know that she's quite skilled and has won many awards for those skills. (Perhaps she could have split this into two paragraphs, but not a big deal. The paragraph flows pretty well.)

5. Finally, because Alara is from outside the UK, she explains why she wanted to travel to the UK for her education. Maybe she could have been more specific about what UK universities offer--but in the end, she chose Yale, so probably her heart was more in the US than the UK anyway.

So, to sum up, she did a great job because she: 1) conveyed her intended subject/field early, 2) explained how she has prepared for years to study her subject in college, 3) conveyed that she's a great leader, has done much outside of school for her chosen field, and that she's community- and human-centered, 4) showed that she's skilled at her subject and has won awards, 5) and finally WHY she wants to study in the UK, important for those coming from outside the UK.