

## NSF Scholarship Essay

It's the age-old question; name someone who has impacted you in your life. If we were to survey a group of people, most would reply by saying they have encountered this question in their life at least once or twice. We would also notice the answers of these people to be very similar, either their parents, an older sibling, or an older mentor. My answer would not be much different than the norm as well. I have been fortunate enough to have had many influential figures in my lifetime thus far but if I had to choose the most influential, it would be my Islamic school teacher and mentor. He has been the one to help me through my struggles and has been a role model for me to look up to as well. I have come to realize I can count on him to always be there for me.

The definition of a role model is a person who is to be looked up to and someone to be imitated. We all carry a role model in our life even if we don't know it. Aspiring basketball players may look to Michael Jordan, aspiring writers may look up to J.K Rowling, and much more. I have looked up to many people in my lifetime as well, but my Islamic teacher, Hamzah, has always stood out from the rest. Many have come and gone from our community while he remained the entire time. When he was 16, he was working, going to school, and playing varsity basketball as well. He then went on to graduate with his masters in accountancy and now works for Chevron full-time while still continuously working as a youth director for our local mosque. I look to him and see a man that has worked incredibly hard throughout his lifetime and it only pushes me to work the same way as well. I recall a time when things were tough and my grades were lacking significantly. He pulled me to the side and just said a few words, "Everything will get better, just know to never quit and always give 110% no matter what." Those words have truly stuck by me and have always been a stepping stone for my success. I am the eldest of 4 in my family so Hamzah has become like an older brother to me. Another thing I admire about this man is his capability to not only do this for me, but I know many other people who would claim him as their mentor. That in it of itself shows the type of person he is.

My family moved to America from Pakistan when I was 6 years old and we lived in a small town called Arlington, Texas. Ever since we moved to America it has been a constant moving fest. I would start to get settled into a city and my family would have to move for financial reasons. Having moved so many times, I never felt as if I belonged anywhere until we finally come to Houston, Texas 10 years ago. Coincidentally, the mosque that I moved to would be the one that Hamzah had relocated to as well. Since we crossed paths, I felt a sense of belonging. He would always take me with him, introducing me to new people and new things as time went along. One of the biggest reasons I am where I am today is because of him and his teachings. He helped me make a lot of big decisions, the biggest being my choice major, and even then, unlike many others, he allowed me to make that decision. Being a person who, growing up didn't have many influential figures, having Hamzah showed me the true capabilities a role model possesses.

I am truly grateful to have someone like Hamzah in my life because of all that he can offer me, as an individual, student, and just a plain human being. Having someone like him in my corner has always and always will allow me to believe in myself and take risks which I probably couldn't take without him. His constant advice and friendship has paved the way for me to be where I am today. And I hope it will continue to allow me to succeed in the future. Finally, with the guidance and support of my role model, I've come to realize maybe one day I can aspire to be someone's "Hamzah".