Writing Perfect Personal Statements

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Why are Personal Statements so Important?

- Show how you transcend the quantifiables
- Appeal to admission committees’ emotions
- Set you apart from the pack
- Allow you to address what committees want directly
• Why are you considering grad school?
• Why do you want only your field?
• What do you plan to do with your degree?
• What are your expectations of your chosen grad program and/or university?
• What specific skills do you bring to the table?
• What are you like as a person?
• Opportunity to tell your story
• Discuss why you want to pursue degree
• How can you benefit the field?
• How can this program help you grow?
• Keep it within guidelines
• Address deficiencies in application
The Writing Process

Pre-writing
  - Research
  - Brainstorming
  - Outlining

Drafting
  - Getting it out

Revising
  - Large, substantive edits

Refining
  - Sentence-level edits
  - Grammar, syntax, etc.

Get Feedback Throughout
The 5 Keys to Consider

- Audience – Who is Reading This
- Humility & Honesty – Be Sincere Without Bragging
- Focus – Stay on Target
- Narrative – Tell a Story, Show Your Personality
- Big Picture – Where Do You Fit
Who Will Read This & What Do They Want?

- Faculty are looking for people they will want to work with.
- They want to see clear, well-defined interests.
- They want to see deep caring about the discipline.
- They want to be wanted.
Humility and Honesty

- Don’t turn statement into list of accomplishments.
- Address any negatives in your application.
- Keep tone positive.
- Show your perseverance over obstacles.
- Discuss how/what you learned from a negative experience.
Focus

• Follow the Rules
• Carefully Read the Prompt
• Heed any Formatting/Submission Guidelines
• Keep Within Word Limit
• Answer the Question(s) Posed
• Edit, Wait, Edit Some More
UNL CIVE
Describe your long-term goals, how graduate studies in Civil Engineering at UNL will help you achieve your goals, and any additional information you think will help in evaluating your application.

UNL EDAD
The following three materials should also be submitted by December 1st:
1. Create a statement of interest. In addition to addressing why you are applying to this program, explicitly state three things you hope to gain from the program. (max 500 words or 3 minutes)
2. Please discuss how your experiences, social identities, and/or beliefs will contribute to a diverse cohort. (max 500 words or 3 minutes of audio or video)
3. Respond to one of the following questions (max 500 words or 3 minutes)
   * Tell us about at least one experience you have had interacting with people different from you, what you learned about yourself and others, and how if at all you changed through each experience. Include any information that reflects your commitment to social justice.
   * Describe one meaningful experience where what you knew previously was challenged. Share what you learned about yourself and others from that experience.

For the statement of interest and additional questions a written statement, video, or image can be provided as the method of response. If you chose to provide an image, you may want to include a 1-page statement or a 1-minute video explaining what it means to you.
• What Do You Want Them To See?

• Tell a story – your story
• Show (don’t tell) who you are using examples
• Don’t repeat your transcript/resume - expand
• Tone between formal and conversational
• How do you portray yourself?
  Self-motivated
  Competent
  Easy to work with
  Intellectually Curious
I have learned that my life is a way of serving others. My university in Colombia was focused on improving human quality of life. As a chemical engineer, my pursuit is to generate changes, not only on a scale of mass and energy, but also in my society. It is my passion to be a factor of change in order to improve the life quality of people by improving their health.
My name is **** and I am looking to apply to the *** PhD program at UNL. I am a senior at ***University majoring in biochemistry/molecular biology.
• **Build Through Details**

• Include experiences that reflect who you are
• Discuss activities that speak to your ability and suitability for graduate work
  - Teaching & Research
  - Course Design
  - Critical Thinking
  - Working in Groups
  - Interactions with Diverse Populations
I was a member of the Bioprospecting research group (GIBP) for 4 years; our purpose was looking for new molecules among our country’s natural resources useful for human beings and we focused on their pharmaceutical potential or medical applications. My research project sought to evaluate the biological activities of the specie Clusia multiflora through antioxidant, antibacterial, antifungal and cytotoxic tests.
• How Do You Uniquely Fit In?
  • Everyone has good grades and test scores
  • What gets you fired up about the field?
  • Talk about more than yourself

  What is the program’s mission?
  What are the program’s values?

  Carnegie Mellon CIVE
As an engineer, it is necessary to pursue these goals in a sustainable way, looking for an equilibrium between the health process, the economic field and also environmental factors. I would like to join this research program to pursue medicine accessible to everyone because I have seen many unfair situations where people died because of the impossibility of getting appropriate medicine for their health conditions due to its high price.
• Final Questions?