PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Graduate & Professional School

Lazarus Center for Career Development

585-2582 -- M-F -- 8:30am - 4:30pm
the Personal Statement

• An interview on paper
  Gain understanding of applicant

• Accomplishments in and out of the classroom
  How applicant might contribute to program and/or profession

• Completes your application
  Applicant’s choice of topic / theme -- and is it written well

• Answers the institution’s question
  Motivation for study and interest level in the particular program
Your Goal

• Make a positive impression
  Your opportunity to describe who you are, why you are uniquely qualified, and why you want to continue your study

• Communicate effectively, clearly and concisely

• Connect with the institution and their philosophy

• Discuss your:
  • Passion
  • Accomplishments
  • Ability to think across the disciplines
Before Writing the Statement

• Research the institution, program, facilities, and faculty.
• Understand your audience (will they know “Smithisms”?).
• Coordinate your statement with your application. Does it compliment your resume and other materials?
• Reflect upon who you are and your motivation (values, interests, strengths and goals).
• Talk with the people who know you.
• Be strategic / what do you convey.
• Remember: it is your personal statement.
When Writing the Statement...

- Write 2 or 3 “core” statements to fully develop you.
- Support statements with examples.
- Write with action verbs...researched, managed, etc.
- Be positive; be sincere and be succinct.
- Plan to edit, refine, revise, repeat.
- Show the statement to others....
- Put the statement “away” and come back to it later.
Strunk & White’s *The Element Of Style* (or any writing style guide you choose)

- Simplicity & Precision  
  write so others will understand
- **Show** who you are, rather than **tell**
- Choose your words carefully –  
  be articulate and accurate
- Use one style/tone (1st person is a good choice)
- Alter sentences for variety –  
  keep the reader interested in reading more
Common Mistakes

- Length of statement (too long, or, too short)
- Too colloquial (uninteresting), or, Too creative
- Generic statements (one statement doesn’t fit all)
- Misspellings / grammatical errors
- Referencing the wrong institution
- Using quotes
- Telling them *what is success* in the graduate program
- Using *general conclusions* of oneself
- Offering a value judgment that the reviewer may not share or that may offend the reviewer
Examples of Personal Statement “Don’ts”
(not from Smith)

(Don’t use all “I” statements...or write in one night...
Vary your sentence structure and give yourself time to write,
edit, revise, edit, and refine...)

“I am sorry I have no personal statement. I am no longer able to say anything interesting about my life or law school applications. I am a good student who would appreciate the opportunity to attend your institution.”
(Don’t simply tell... instead show what you mean)

“I was born with the gift of superior intelligence. The key to superior academic performance is superior mental and physical fitness. That is why I take pride in the fact that I do not use tobacco, drink alcohol, or consume illegal narcotics. In my spare time I work mental puzzles and perform aerobic exercises.”
(Don’t be negative... Be positive in your story)

“I slouched into my advisor’s chair. Professor _______ stood over my first term report. I sank into the cracks of the leather chair. Nauseous, I muttered through soggy lips, “I am a disgusting blob of wasted potential.”
The Lazarus Center

• Drew Hall  (mustard brick house beside Campus Center)
• Make an Appointment:  **Call:**  585-2582 or **Stop** by the front desk
• Office Hours:  Mon-Fri – 8:30am–4:30pm
• Services:  **Meet** with an advisor or peer advisor;
  **Attend** workshops and programs;
  **Use** the website, resource center, handouts, and alumnae;
  **Make** business cards; **Borrow** an interview suit,

  and much much more.....