Personal Statement

What is a personal statement?

- It may be called a letter of intent, personal statement, or personal narrative
- It is a writing sample describing you at your best, your reasons for choosing the field you have chosen, your research, your objectives, and the unique ways you can contribute to the program to which you are applying
- This is your opportunity to stand out as unique even among a large group of similarly qualified applicants.

What is the purpose?

1. Writing abilities- grammar, punctuation, organization, creativity, expression etc.
2. Connections between your past education/experiences and your future goals
3. Your philosophy of the field and why you are pursuing further education in that area
4. What makes you UNIQUE and how you can add to the diversity of the program
5. How you can be an ASSEST to the organization or the school, now and in the future

Content

- Set a timetable for yourself. Expect to work on this statement for about a month.
- Start by reading the prompt. Usually it is fairly generic questions about your qualifications and why you want to go to graduate school
- Common length is 2 pages
- Do not overly focus on your accomplishments. Focus on specific ideas, experiences or themes
- Highlight examples in your academic/extracurricular life that highlight your commitment for your field of study

General Outline

1. Your preparation and background in the field of study
2. Your specific area of interest in the field: you should explain what area of the profession you see yourself getting into, and how you see the degree helping you to get there.
3. Your research ambitions in the field
4. Why this Program/School?
Before you apply to graduate or professional schools you should have given a lot of thought to why you are seeking a particular degree, and why the specific institutions to which you are applying. You should explain to the schools or departments why you are a good fit with them. This means saying something about the school that could not be said about most other schools. For example, instead of writing "you have a very strong faculty," mention some examples of faculty research that interest you.

5. Future career goals

6. Positively Addressing Inconsistencies

- If you know there is some striking weakness in your application (perhaps a GPA or score that is glaringly low or some long gap in your resume) you will want to account for it in your statement. If, as a result of suddenly needing to work a 40-hour week to support yourself, your grades slipped significantly, that might well be something to address. You should make sure to explain it in terms as positive as possible.
- For any personal struggles that you have worked through, express that it is safely in the past and will not recur in graduate school. If you struggled at first in school, but your grades have improved every year, or your grades in your major are particularly outstanding, these are things you could point out. Some people suggest including such explanations only in a separate addendum, in order that the tone of your essay is uniformly.

Tips for Writing

- Start by creating a list of your goals, achievements, strengths and weaknesses, interesting experiences you have had, and how you plan to continue your academic or professional development
- Begin creating a general structure for your essay without committing to sentence structure and grammar
- Begin writing your first draft
- Make sure your tone is enthusiastic and positive
- Be sure to display all of the reasons why you are an excellent candidate; this is not the place for excessive modesty
- Open with a bold, declarative statement, or an interesting detail or anecdote
- Conclude with a statement that connects back to your introduction or the theme of your essay

Drafts

- Expect to complete a minimum of 3 drafts (revise, revise, revise!)
- Pre-Grad advising is committed to editing your first and final draft
- Utilize the Writing Center (THH 216), a peer, or faculty member to review your statement in between the pre-graduate team drafts
- Include an editor working in your field of interest & Be sure to give a draft to your recommenders