The Graduate / Professional School Application Process Demystified

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

The Basics

Suggested Outline

- Paragraph 1 Motivation for Graduate / Professional Program
 - Consider an attention grabber / thought provoking first sentence
 - **×** Be creative
 - Why do you want to pursue this discipline?
 - Give a clear sense of your current interests and your goals for developing them
 - Career goals can be mentioned here this is the reason for apply in the end
- Paragraph 2 Academic Interests and Personal Achievements
 - * This is evidence to support your claim in your opening paragraph
 - What are your pertinent academic accomplishments / skills?
 - What have you done that is relevant to this program choice?
 - Research experiences, class projects, internships, externships, etc.?
 - Have your achievements solidified your interests?
 - Mow have you gone above and beyond to gain knowledge in this subject?

The Basics

Suggested Outline Continued

- Paragraph 3 Important Background Experience
 - ➤ What experiences have contributed to your personality
 - Highlight experiences that have taught you something (e.g. communication skills, team leader / player, problem solving, responsibility)
 - ▼ Ideally you should demonstrate how the experience translates to your likelihood of being a successful graduate / professional student
- Paragraph 4 Why Should You Be Accepted
 - ▼ Why would you make an ideal graduate / professional student in XYZ Program?
 - Why is XYZ Program the ideal program for you?
 - Briefly explain any inconsistencies in your transcript, test scores, path

The Basics

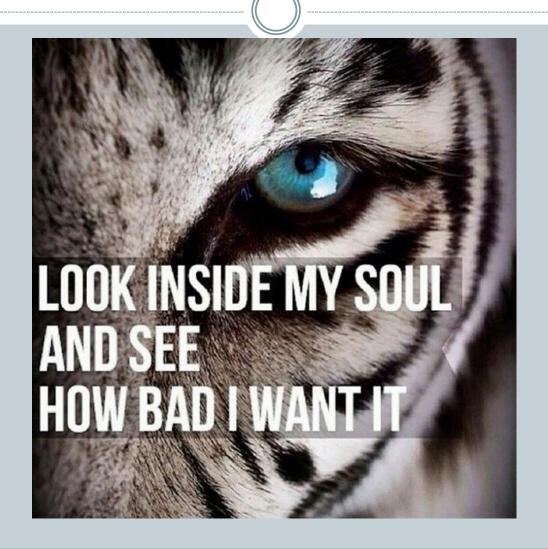
Suggested Outline Continued

- Paragraph 5 Closing Statement
 - **▼** Briefly restate why you want to pursue this path in this program
 - x Restate key points (e.g. relevant experiences, accomplishments)
 - **▼** End on a positive note

IMPORTANT TIP

- Use Transitions and Resolutions!
 - Transitions start a paragraph with a statement that presents the theme of the paragraph AND connects it to the previous paragraph
 - Resolutions end a paragraph that allows you to transition to the next paragraph

THEY WON'T DO THIS! YOU MUST TELL THEM!



DO

- o Research the program, school, university
- Follow the Program Guidelines for the Personal Statement
- Self Reflect and Start Writing!
 - **▼** Why are you choosing this path?
 - ➤ What have you done to prepare for graduate school?
 - ■ Why are you applying to THIS program?
 - ▼ Why are you a good FIT for THIS program?



- Paint a picture by telling your story
- Be confident and show your passion
- Demonstrate your knowledge in the field
 - ▼ Include details of research projects, shadowing experiences, etc.
- Explain inconsistencies in your academics / path
 - ➤ Or include as an addendum (ask the admissions office what they prefer)
 - **★** Ask your letter writers to address your inconsistencies if appropriate
- Explain your career goals and path
- Read, revise, repeat
 - Send to your letter writers!
 - **➤ And utilize your university Writing Center!**
 - ▼ Edit over and over again!

The Do's And Dont's of Writing an Effective Personal Statement

Don't

- Write a narrative of your resume Tell them something new
- Use the same statement for multiple applications
- o Dear Diary... TMI!
- Use clichés or overuse your thesaurus
- Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
- Speak of money... unless..
- Plead and beg
- Complain stay confident, accept responsibility for speed bumps along the way, and be positive



• The Caveats!

- Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
 - The topic of religion or politics is relevant to the program you are applying to.
 - x State facts, not opinion
- Speak of money... unless..
 - **▼** You are applying to an MBA or MPA program / Finance program, or similar program where the topic is relevant.
 - State facts, not opinion

Resources

- http://personalstatement.blogspot.com/2005/09/outline-for-personal-statement.html
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/2/

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Any Questions?

