Personal Statements

January 15, 2014
“The personal statement is a way the reader can get to know you as a person without having met you.”

-- I can’t quite remember
“The personal statement can only hurt you.”

-- Every Program Director I know
This is an opportunity to share more information.

But this is not about being a great writer.

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
Used to eliminate:

- Relatively illiterate
- Pompous or tactless
- Outside the mainstream of physicians in the specialty
They don’t call it personal for nothing.
BIRDWATCHING
You're doing it wrong
Safe and Sane

O Section 1: Why do you want to go into the specialty?

O Section 2: What do you intend to do during your career in the specialty?

O Section 3: Other interests.

What to do...

Be honest, but not shy

What to do...

- Start early and consider multiple drafts
- Stay on one page
- Use proper grammar
- Have someone proofread it
What NOT to do...

- Rehash your CV
- Start every sentence with “I” or “One”
- Go over one page
What NOT to do...

- Lie
- Use tired clichés
- Be negative
- Go over one page
There’s a fine line between creative and just...weird.
There's a fine line between creative and just…weird. And if you think you might be there, you probably are.
Use Stories

- Start with the story...
- ...continue about yourself, and...
- ...finish with the story.
What about humor?

“Another friend who was finishing her pediatrics residency had told me that she had considered doing a neurology fellowship, but thought that it was “too depressing”...so she went into oncology instead.”

Can be tricky or viewed as flippant
“Many people have told me how lucky I am to have found a field I am so enthusiastic about, that to fall so completely in love with something is what everybody hopes for. I knew that day that I went to Toys R Us (postcall) to buy a koosh ball to test visual fields and small plastic toys to test manual dexterity, and the night at 4 a.m. when I sat in a rocker to console a methadone baby in the nursery before going to bed for that all-important two hours’ sleep, that they were right.”
Consider what they want to know

- Why are you interested in this specialty?
- How does this specialty fit your career goals?
- What are you looking for in a residency program?

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
Stories that make the point

“I can distinctly remember my introduction to internal medicine. A family friend who was an attending at a local hospital invited me to observe rounds on his internal medicine teaching service during my ninth grade year. I recall feeling a sense of excitement as I watched how his team of residents interacted to manage critically ill patients. Everything that morning was foreign to me. I knew nothing of what it meant to be an internist. However, this introduction did have a profound impact on me and I believe it is where my interest in internal medicine began.”

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
Stories that illustrate your skills

- “Problem solving”
- “Intervening”
- “Completing”
- What convinces them of this?

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
“My research experience proved particularly helpful during my acting internship when my new patient, an elderly mother of four, was in cardiac arrest in the ER. While at home following a hospitalization for acute renal failure, she had become profoundly hypokalemic. Her family was frightened and angry - what had gone wrong? Thanks to the experience and knowledge I gained though my research on acute renal failure, I was able to explain what had happened in a way they understood, calming the family and diffusing their anger.”

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
Explanations of risk points

- Low academic or exam performance
- Course or exam failures
- Leaves of absence

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
“There are few people who can say that contracting *Giardia lamblia* was the best thing that ever happened to them. My struggles began with Anatomy in the fall and did not end until being sick with *Giardia* in the spring. I was devastated with having to repeat my first year. While doing pediatric research during my time off, I realized that working with children was just what I wanted to do with my life. I started the new school year with a newly found determination to reach my goal. Fighting my way back from failure was the hardest thing I have ever done and I now know that I have the strength to succeed not only in medicine but also to tackle life’s trials and tribulations.”

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
Personal Statement Checklist

- Check for grammar and spelling
- Don’t focus on being creative—focus on interesting or unique factors
- Link your statement to the specialty
- Don’t rehash your CV
- LIMIT to 1 page in 12 font

Credit: Lanita Carter, PhD
View Course Availability
Drop or Add a Course
Scheduling Lottery
Visiting Elective Request
Course Catalog

Records
Request Records
Transcripts, military reimbursement or form, name change

Enrollment Records (Must be actively taking classes)
- Automobile insurance discount
  - Verifies "B" average or higher
  - Must have UME Raw Score Average ≥ 80
- Enrollment Verification
- Letter of Good Standing
- Loan Deferment
  - Verifies enrollment, lists academic year dates, provides school code for lenders

Class Pages
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4

ReportIT
Report a concern or a commendation

Paper Forms
Drop/Add Request
Change of Graduation Date
Change of Clinical Campus Request
Special Topic (Scholar's Week) Course
New SOM Clinical Course

Financial
Check Balance/Pay Tuition
Apply for Institutional Scholarships:
  - Current Student
  - Accepted Applicant

Other
Update your Personal Information
Request Student ID Number
Request Perception User ID and password
Request DXR User ID and Password for Junior Clerkships
Year 4

You've made it to the final year of medical school. Some pretty exciting things will happen this year, including finding out where you'll be training for the next few years of your life!

Residency Application Checklist and Timeline

- Interview Workshop Echo
- Match Day
- Graduation Documents

Helpful Links
- ERAS
- NRMP
- USMLE
- NBME Login
- San Francisco Match
- American Urology Association
- Housing - sell / sublease
- Roadmap to Residency
- ACGME
## Residency Application Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Task Details</th>
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| February| • Draft Personal Statement  
|         | • Draft Curriculum Vitae  
|         | • Meet with Career Advisor and begin MS-4 course scheduling process  
|         | • Lottery entry opens for Fourth Year Scheduling (FYSH)  
|         | • Assess your Competitiveness  |
| March   | • Complete entry for FYSH  
|         | • FYSH entry closes  
|         | • On-line Drop/Add opens  
|         | • Plan and request Letters of Recommendation (LoR)  
|         | • Begin applications for Visiting Electives  
|         | • Military applicants:  
|         |   • Contact your medical officer  
|         |   • Meet with Dr. Kezar about scheduling  |
| April   | • Most Schools begin reviewing Visiting Student Applications.  |
| June    | • Obtain Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) token/login code from MSS. |
Personal Statement

Documents

Sample Personal Statement – Internal Medicine
Sample Personal Statement – Orthopedics
Personal Statement advice from CiM “Dear Advisor”
Personal Statement – Paragraph samples

ECHO

CV and Personal Statement – Dr. Carter

Links

Careers in Medicine – Login to see recommendations for personal statements
PERSONAL STATEMENT – Paragraph Samples
Updated February 2012

Opening Lines:

“I really don’t care if I live or die,” a 14-year-old patient said while I was interviewing her in clinic one day. She was being seen due to the possibility of her having contracted an STD for a second time. NOTE: Who wouldn’t want to keep on reading this? You really want to know how the student responded to this particular patient.

Nearing high school graduation, a school counselor quizzed me about my plans for the next year of my life. I explained my 10-year plan that included a college 1900 miles away from home, a college major, a two year missionary experience, and completion of medical school. Since then my overall plan has not changed, but many of the smaller details have been rewritten due to unforeseen opportunities. In my mind, anesthesiology requires: the same basic foresight: a general plan of action with the finesse to adapt to changing situations. NOTE: Demonstrates how the student’s personality fits his career choice.

When I was in middle school, I fractured my radius in a fall and was taken to see an Orthopedic Surgeon. I remember feeling so much anxiety and fear prior to this visit. The surgeon was confident and took his time explaining my injury as well as how it was to be treated. He educated me using a skeleton model and my personal radiographs. I was completely enthralled with his explanation and reassured by his intellect, compassion, and confidence. That day I told my mother I wanted to be a surgeon. Of course, she was quite skeptical considering I had previously wanted to be a ballerina. NOTE: Humor in the last sentence is insight into student’s personality.

My family emigrated from Taiwan when I was two years old. My mother tells the story of me stealing my older brother’s English tapes when we first moved to the United States so I could try to learn English on my own. Since then, I have been self-motivated to do my best at whatever I try and I have never been afraid to make my own way. NOTE: Gives a quick personal background and points out fundamental personality traits.

Non-traditional Students:

My path to medical school strongly characterized me as an “atypical applicant.” I went to college with the intention that I was going to “show ’em what I can do.” I had spent two years trying to work and go to college and quite frankly I didn’t have the discipline to pull it off. So, I left college and enlisted in the military. … I took very well to the military. I liked being part of a team; I liked contributing; I thrived in leadership roles. … I left the [military] with the goal to go to medical school. I graduated “summa” in less than 3 years … And by the grace of God, I was accepted into medical school. Since then, not one day has gone by that I didn’t feel at home treating patients. NOTE: Described traits important for the military that are also important for a career in medicine.

I left a lucrative career in a highly technical environment to enter medical school because I needed to feel as though my work was more meaningful. I felt there was no work as important as improving a person’s life by restoring health; I also knew from my previous work and educational experiences that I appreciated the possibilities at the confluence of engineering and the basic sciences. NOTE: Shows how knowledge gained in his previous profession supports his medical training.
Go Blazers!!!

Thursday January 16th
7:00 p.m.
vs. UTSA

There is a prize waiting for the first student to find me at the game!
Questions?