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?
    ▸ How 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
    - 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
THE WON’T DO THIS!
YOU MUST TELL THEM!

LOOK INSIDE MY SOUL
AND SEE
HOW BAD I WANT IT
Writing an Effective Personal Statement

- **DO**
  - 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?
Writing an Effective Personal Statement

- 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 Don’ts of Writing an Effective Personal Statement
Writing an Effective Personal Statement

- Don’t
  - Write a narrative of your resume – Tell them something new
  - Use the same statement for multiple applications
  - 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
Writing an Effective Personal Statement

The Caveats!

- Broach controversial subjects.. unless...
  - The topic of religion or politics is relevant to the program you are applying to.
  - 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://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/2/
- http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/a/PersonStatement.htm
- http://gradschool.about.com/od/essaywriting/All_About_the_Graduate_Admissions_Essay.htm
Any Questions?