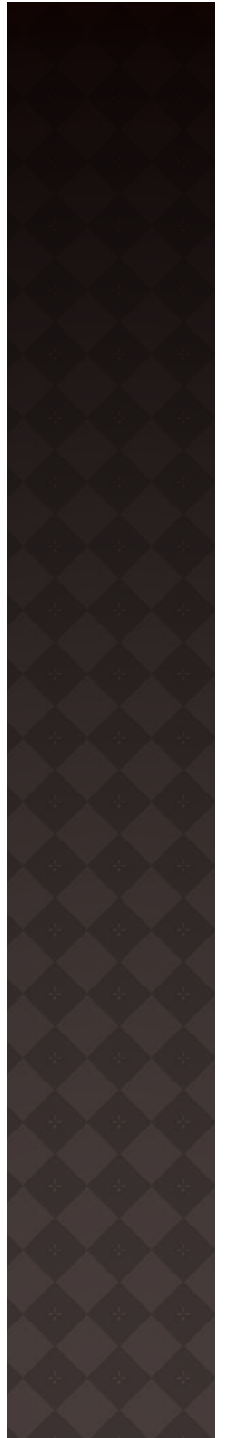


STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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OUTLINE

- ◉ Why
- ◉ Persuasive writing
- ◉ Purpose
- ◉ Content
- ◉ Issues
- ◉ Advise
- ◉ Exercise



WHY THE STATEMENT OF WORK

- ⦿ Most important part of your application.
- ⦿ Convince the admission committee in a very short time that you are the ideal candidate for the program you are applying to.
 - Competition.
 - Many applications.
 - Very few slots.
- ⦿ Convince them that you will succeed.
- ⦿ Persuasive writing.

PERSUASIVE WRITING

- ⦿ A writer takes a position FOR or AGAINST an issue and writes to convince the reader to believe or do something.
- ⦿ Parts
 - Introduction
 - Body
 - Conclusion

PERSUASIVE WRITING

⦿ Introduction

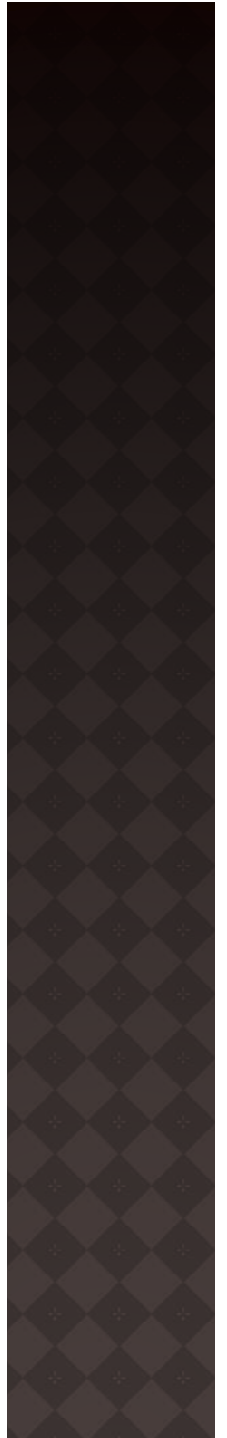
- Catch the attention
- Thesis or focus statement

⦿ Body

- Clarify a position
- Draw comparison
- Make analysis

⦿ Conclusion

- Summarize the most important details of the argument.

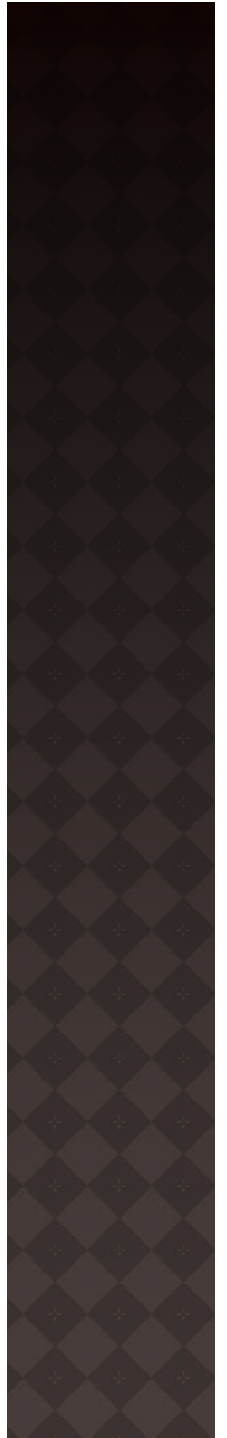


PURPOSE

- ⦿ Convince the graduate committee that you are the person they should admit.
- ⦿ You can succeed in your area of interest.
- ⦿ Show that you have the ability and motivation.
- ⦿ Your past experience shows that you have excelled in the past.
- ⦿ Who is your audience?
 - Faculty.
 - Experts in the field.

CONTENT

- ⦿ Read the application and follow the instructions
 - Guidance questions.
 - Answer all of them.
- ⦿ Example:
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses in setting and achieving goals and working through people?
 - strengths in setting goals
 - strengths in achieving goals
 - strengths in working through people
 - weaknesses in setting goals
 - weaknesses in achieving goals
 - weaknesses in working through people



SOME GUIDANCE QUESTIONS

- ⦿ Your purpose for going to graduate school.
 - Why do you want to get in?
- ⦿ The area of study in which you wish to specialize.
 - You must know enough in the field of study to make this decision.
 - Remember, they are experts.
 - Vocabulary.
- ⦿ Your future use of your graduate studies.
 - Career goals.
 - Show how graduate studies or completion of the program is merely a step towards a larger goal/ career/ calling

GUIDANCE QUESTIONS

- ◎ Your special preparation and fitness for study in the field.
 - Relate your academic background with your extracurricular experience to show how they unite to make you a special candidate.
 - Explain what you've done to Prepare for a Graduate Program
 - Classes
 - Internships
 - Work / Research Experiences
- ◎ *Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores such as a bad semester.*
 - Explain in a positive manner and justify the explanation.

GUIDANCE QUESTIONS

- ◎ Why do you want to attend this particular school?
 - Tailor the SOP to the particular school.
 - You must know where you want to go and why.
 - If there is nobody working in your area of interest, do not apply to this school.
- ◎ Contain information about you as a person.
 - Skills learned from experiences.
 - What makes you unique?
 - Can you connect a significant life event to your experiences or goals?

IMPORTANT

- ⦿ Offer evidence to support your claims.
- ⦿ Avoid a catalog of achievements
 - This is only a list of what you have done, and tells nothing about you as a person.
- ⦿ Avoid lecturing the reader.
 - For example, you should not write a statement such as "Communication skills are important in this field." Everybody knows that....
- ⦿ The SOP should be an example of careful persuasive writing.
- ⦿ It should get to the point early on and catch the attention of the reader.

IMPORTANT

- ⦿ The SOP should be limited in length, no more than two pages or less.
 - In some instances it may be longer, depending on the school's instructions.
- ⦿ The SOP should be specific.
 - Document your conclusions with specific instances, or draw your conclusions as the result of individual experience.
- ⦿ Spell check it.
 - Do not only rely on automated spell checking.
 - Proofread.

IMPORTANT

- ⦿ The story of your first computer when you were 10 years old and how it inspired you to devote your life to Computer Science does not make particularly interesting reading, nor does it tell the committee the things they want to know.
- ⦿ The statement of purpose is not about *character*. While honesty, sincerity, conscientiousness, etc. are important attributes, all students with good academic records applying to graduate school have these traits.

ADVISE

- ⦿ It's fine to mention professors who inspired your work and thought, and why.
- ⦿ Personal history is fine if it is relevant to your decision or what you intend to pursue in school.
- ⦿ Spend LOTS of time on your statement of purpose!
 - Revise.
- ⦿ Be honest.
- ⦿ Have current faculty members (especially those writing your letters of recommendation) read your statement.

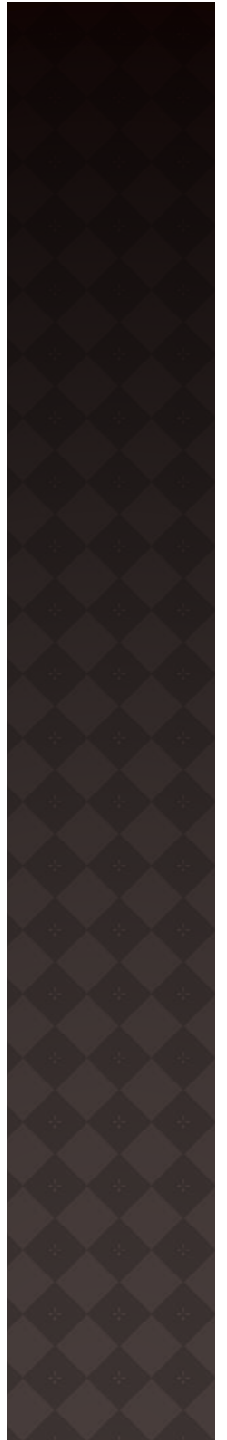
FROM RICHARD HELGERSON, GRADUATE CHAIR 2000-20002

- ◉ “I look for a sophisticated sense of what graduate study is all about and a good match between the student's goals and what our program has to offer. A well articulated expression of interest in some particular field can also be important, as can evidence of some serious engagement with that field. Applicants also benefit from letting us see something of themselves as people. Personal stories can sometimes be effective, particularly stories of hardships overcome or of an emerging sense of purpose. Stories of that sort can also help with certain kinds of fellowships, which are only available to students who come from a disadvantaged background. But stories of whatever sort must of course be made relevant to the hope of studying for a Ph.D. Good writing also counts for a lot.”

Taken from <http://www.english.ucsb.edu/undergrad/aftermajor/statement-of-purpose.asp>

QUOTE

- ⦿ **“You never get a second chance to make a first impression”**



EXERCISE

- ⦿ Answer the questions from the handout.
- ⦿ These are going to be your guidance questions.
- ⦿ Look at your old SOP.
- ⦿ Does your SOP answer those questions?

REFERENCES

- ⦿ Natalia Lukina's advise on grad school
 - <http://alumnus.caltech.edu/~natalia/studyinus/guide/statement/st1/outline.htm>
- ⦿ <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/gcallaghan/graduate/winningstatement.htm>
- ⦿ <http://www.english.ucsb.edu/undergrad/aftermajor/statement-of-purpose.asp>