Statement of Purpose Guidelines

The Statement of Purpose is possibly the most important component of your graduate school application packet. This is your opportunity to inform and convince the admissions committee that you are the right candidate for the program and you have what it takes to succeed.

Before You Begin:

Visit the graduate program Web site for information about faculty and their research, courses offered, graduate student profiles, and student support and professional development activities. This will help you get a sense of the culture and priorities of the program, what they may be looking for in a potential student, and if it is a good fit for you. For example, your research interests, professional development needs and career goals. You can then address these topics in your Statement of Purpose.

Items to Consider:

Be specific about your interest and knowledge particular to this program: Have you read an article by one or more faculty member? Has your advisor specifically directed you to this program? Do you have other ties to this program and /or school?

Pick out the pertinent facts about your academic and professional interests that make you a good fit with the program and institution to which you are applying. (A statement of purpose is not a place to list everything you have done.)

Mention extra-curricular achievements to illustrate additional dimensions of your personality.

Demonstrate curiosity, creativity, enthusiasm for learning, a capacity for teamwork, ability to think independently, and pride in your work. Using brief anecdotes is a good way to make your points.

Explain (briefly) any incongruity in your application material; GRE scores or a low semester grade.

Stay within the page limit specified by the graduate program. If there are no specifications, limit yourself to two pages.

Be succinct and clear.

Before You Submit:

Let at least two people read your statement, preferably a faculty member and an academic advisor, and ask them to provide feedback.

Revise accordingly; you want to submit a well balanced statement that helps you make a strong case for your candidacy.

Proofread, proofread, proofread to ensure there are no grammatical or spelling errors. Do not depend on your word processor to do this for you.

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