**The statement of purpose is your opportunity to state your specific interests concerning the program to which you are applying. Your intended area of specialization, career objectives, research interests, and experience are of interest. (max 500 words)**

For the last year and a half, I have worked as a Clinical Research Assisatant for Dr. Michael Benatar in the ALS Research Collaboration at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine studying ALS and related diseases (ALSRD). While working in the lab, I have focused on advanced MRI and biological fluid-based biomarker development using neurocognitive and clinical measures of disease progression. One biomarker that is being validated by my research is a protein in the urine of individuals diagnosed with ALS, but it is mostly absent in healthy controls. I earned the role of lead coordinator on two international multi-site trials investigating neuroimaging, genetics, neurocognitive, and clinical measures of disease including respiratory and speech testing. I have learned how to look at data critically and standardize study procedures. This research has affirmed my interest in cognitive aging and neurological diseases using neuroimaging and neurocognitive testing.

Prior to working with Dr. Benatar, I was an Undergraduate Research Assistant for Dr. Michelle Voss in the Health, Brain, and Cognition Lab at the University of Iowa studying healthy cognitive aging, neuroimaging, and aerobic exercise. I primarily investigated the effect of an interventional brain-training program on cognitively normal older adults where we hypothesized that the program would have a positive effect on cognition. I have continued to work with Dr. Voss writing a literary review examining moderators of cognitive functioning in randomized controlled aerobic exercise trials which was to be presented at the Conference on Cognitive Aging in Atlanta (2020). From this experience I learned about moderators of randomized controlled exercise trials, their impact on results, and how gold-standard testing measures aid in scientific development.

As a graduate student, I am interested in the Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience specialization working with Dr. Ilana Bennett who studies cognitive aging. I am intrigued by Dr. Bennett’s recent research on the relationship between recognition memory dysfunction and hippocampal volume as it relates closely to my work in Dr. Voss’ lab. I was drawn to the Health and Well-Being sub-track that combines my interest in health and neurological diseases with psychology. The program offers the opportunity to collaborate with scientists and students of the highest caliber which develops skills as a mentor. I am confident in my abilities as an independent scientist and believe the challenges I overcame as a woman in science illustrate my drive. I plan to become a professor where I will investigate cognitive aging and neuroimaging in healthy and cognitively impaired populations. Working in academia would combine my passion for the scientific process with mentorship and create an environment where students are able to realize their potential.