

McNair Scholars Program Central Michigan University

SRI HANDOUT PERSONAL STATEMENT OVERVIEW

Writing an effective personal statement is no small task and will require a significant portion of your time. Essentially it is your chance to communicate to a graduate admissions committee why you will be an asset to their program. *This statement is, by default, very personal and very much your own.* As you progress from draft to draft and receive feedback from different individuals, keep this in mind as you will ultimately decide its focus and content. Taking your time with the “thinking and reflecting” process will help you to build a strong basket of “content options” from which to draw when the time comes to actually begin its construction.

While in the process, try not to be too judgmental of yourself and let your thoughts and natural inclinations flow naturally – the goal is to create a statement that is substantive, engaging and authentic. You want to convince the committee that you will be a successful graduate student and that you hold the potential to make a significant contribution to the field. You might feel frustrated in the process, but stay positive, work hard at it consistently and you will end up with a fantastic statement that is “uniquely you.”

Main goals to consider

- Demonstrate your ability to become a contributing scholar in the field.
- Show how your life path has led to this point; that is, how going to graduate school is the right decision for you.
- Set yourself apart from others with your unique experiences, characteristics and life story, but don’t include too much personal “drama.”
- Be confident, but respectful.
- Show that you are “motivated from within.”
- Illustrate that you appreciate and capitalize on opportunity.

Things committee members look for

- motivation and commitment to a field of study
- writing ability
- major areas of interest
- research/work experience
- educational background
- short/long-term goals
- reasons for pursuing study at a particular school
- maturity
- personal uniqueness, meaning how you will add to the diversity of the entering class