

# Essay Writing for Application to Professional Health Schools: Getting It Right!

## Content Outline

- Do Quick Review of Info Contained within Handout

## General Opening Comments

- Least understood – yet one of the most important components
- Preparation an indication of you and your preparation
- Imagine essay ONLY part of application read
- Insight about you as future health care professional

## I. WHY am I writing a Personal Statement? In other words, WHY is it so important?

- Only chance to introduce yourself through the written word.
- Distinguish yourself (set apart) from other applicants
- Serves as memory aid to admission committee members
- Can strengthen my application – “tip the scale” if other aspects more marginal.
- Provide a context for various aspects of my application – e.g., GPA.

## II. How it comes into Play – All the following require Statements:

- A. Prehealth Committee: 5000 characters
- B. Allopathic Medicine (MD): 5300 characters (AMCAS)
- C. Osteopathic Medicine (DO): AACOMAS – 5300 characters
- D. Dentistry (DDS) – AADSAS: 4500 characters
- E. Podiatry – (DPM) AACPMCAS: 4500 characters
- F. Physician Assistant (PA): CASPA 5000 characters
- G. Veterinary – (DVM): VMCAS 3 essays now. First two are 1500 characters. The last is 2000 characters.

## III. What a personal statement is NOT: (SO IMPORTANT)

- NOT a repetition/reiteration of application
- NOT a list of all abstract personal qualities and activities.
  - Instead – cite a particular anecdote or story and illustrate the point through the story. SHOW, DON'T TELL.
- Watch the tone - it should not read as overly telling, chatty, casual, verbose.

- It should not read as overly formal or over sentimental.
  - Not like Shakespearean drama
- It is not boosting/bragging or arrogant – humility goes a long way.
- It should avoid expressions of overused verbiage
  - I want to cure cancer
  - Everyone in my family is a doctor
  - I played doctor at 6 years old.
- It should convey you as a mature, articulate, honest and compassionate person.
- Ask yourself – What impression does my essay convey? How do I know this? Have a number of people read it! Those that know you well and don't know you so well.

#### **IV. What a Personal Statement is/what it comprises:**

- Opportunity for admission committees to “meet you”.
- Serves as a “written interview” and “written introduction” to meeting you.
- Helps to demonstrate why you should be selected for interview/admission
- Highlights special or unique circumstances in your life, special training, and qualifications.
- Combines an autobiography with explanation/elaboration of your desire to pursue a particular health profession.
- Why? How do you know?
- Addressing circumstances that may need an explanation (eg., grades, resignations). KEY: Do it briefly and positively.
- It's an elaboration, illustration of a theme you pick related to your desired career path.
- It's your path, your road taken – to this point, toward your future goals.

#### **V. DOs and DON'Ts**

- Don't write about want to go to dental school but instead, the dental profession.
- Be honest. Don't venture into topics where you are not well informed
- Edit/filter what is in statement unless you are prepared to be very transparent in an interview if asked. How personal do you want to be?
- Don't criticize other health professions or express negativity about ANYTHING.
- Avoid political or religious references and topics, if possible.
- Don't tell them info they already know about healthcare.
- Don't get too creative.
- Be concise and succinct.
- Use active imagery.



- Keep it POSITIVE.
- Don't list out all the qualities it takes to be a good doctor and detail how you possess each or draw analogies to other things such as putting on a play, wiring a stereo, fixing a car... (actual examples) .
- Strive for specificity General essays and statements come across as weak.
- Aim to EXPRESS rather than IMPRESS
- Focus on post-secondary (i.e., college) experiences.
- Make sure it's PERFECT with organization structure, spelling grammar.

## **VI. Before You Begin**

- Focus your thoughts – be introspective.
- WHY do I want this career?
- Do I REALLY know what I am getting into? HOW do I know?
- Do I have the necessary qualities? HOW do I know this?
- What DO I have to offer?
- Why would anyone want me as their doctor, vet, dentist?
- What don't I like about this profession? Do I have a realistic assessment of it?

## **VII. How Do I Begin?**

- An anecdote
- Brief recap of your background
- An encounter with a health professional
- Tell how you plan to contribute
- Don't forget to mention science somewhere...

**Complete Exercises - DO EXERCISE #1 AS PRESENTED IN THE BOOKLET FOR 5 MINS**

**Typically, do not ask people to share**

**Detail where they can secure essay feedback**

- **EPAC (and process) (Need Appt – Please consult us last)**
- **Career Services (Need Appt)**
- **Center for Excellence in Writing (Need Appt)**

**CLOSE**