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Writing Guidelines

Statements of Purpose

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Writing Guidelines for Statements of Purpose

Contents

Writing Your Statement of Purpose.....	1
I. Audience and Institutions	1
II. Content	2
III. Organization and Development	4
IV. Language, Tone, and Voice	5
Sample Statements of Purpose.....	8
I. Social Sciences	8
Education: Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL)—non-native English Speaker.....	8
Environmental Studies	9
Geography.....	11
History.....	12
Psychology (Clinical--research).....	14
Psychology (cross-cultural)	16
Psychology (School)	18
Social Work	20
Sociology	21
II. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering.....	22
Life Sciences.....	22
Mathematics	24
Engineering (Structural).....	26
Geology.....	28
Paleontology	29
Chemistry	30
III. Humanities and Literature.....	31
African Studies.....	31
Literature (American)	33
Literature (English and American)	35
Literature (Medieval)	36

IV. Arts (Fine Arts, Music, Film, Theatre, and Dance)	38
Music.....	38
Music (Acoustic).....	39
Film.....	41
Sample Prompts	44
Works Cited	46

Writing Guidelines for Statements of Purpose

(Developed by the Writing Center, Ohio Wesleyan University, 2010-2011)

A **statement of purpose** focuses on your academic interests and accomplishments, though you may use “I” and include a personal anecdote or two, while a **personal statement** includes more autobiographical material and may be written as a personal narrative. A quality statement of purpose will distinguish you from the other 150 to 400 applicants competing for the 10 to 20 spots in an average- to large-sized graduate program (“Preparing Your Statement of Purpose & Personal Statement”). You can achieve your goal by

- Convincing readers you researched and selected the appropriate school and graduate program based on research interests that match those of one or more professors
- Explaining your academic experiences and research interests and goals
- Demonstrating your knowledge of the discipline or field
- Revealing the qualities and skills that will help you succeed in a **specific** academic discipline
- Demonstrating your communication skills
- Persuading readers you have the discipline to complete a dissertation after several years—often grueling years—of reading, writing papers, conducting research, and working as a teaching assistant

Writing Your Statement of Purpose

I. Audience and Institutions

Several readers within a specific academic discipline or an even more specifically defined research group will read your statement of purpose and review other parts of your application package. Tailor your material to this audience. Knowing your audience and familiarizing yourself with each graduate program will help you write a more effective statement of purpose. Consider the following comments and suggestions:

- Determine the weight your readers give to the personal statement relative to test scores and GPA. In one study conducted at a large university, 90% of science and technology respondents felt more objective measures—test scores and grades—were most important

and used the statement of purpose for borderline decisions. However, of liberal arts faculty who responded, approximately half valued the essays as much as other parts of the application package.

- Determine the importance of the mentor system. The importance of the statement of purpose increases, as Robert M. Brown notes, at institutions with strong mentoring programs “because it is the only place where an applicant can elaborate a research interest to the extent that faculty members can judge how well that interest dovetails with their own” (245).
- Identify graduate programs that specialize in your area or areas of interest. Remember, your statement should mention a specific program and perhaps even target a subdivision or an area within that program—not American literature but the 19th century American novel with an emphasis in American Realism and Naturalism.
- Learn about the professors in the program and familiarize yourself with their research; in other words, read some of their scholarly works—reviews, articles, monographs, and books. Learn about campus and program resources, such as research facilities.
- Familiarize yourself with the disciplinary culture by identifying the ethos—the values, beliefs, discourse practices, and epistemological assumptions—of a department, program, or college (liberal arts or science and technology). What does it mean to think and write like a member of a specific intellectual community? For example, members of the science community embrace an epistemology—a way of knowing—“consistent with the traditional objective orientation of scientific inquiry” (Brown 245).
- Contact professors at your prospective universities and discuss your research interests, and ask them about the importance of the statement of purpose relative to other application materials.

II. Content

Compared to personal statements, statements of purpose require a more programmatic approach that includes, to a greater or lesser degree, the topics numbered below. Always follow, of course, the prompt provided by the school. Some schools may ask you to devote more or less space to one or more of these topics. For example, the prompt for students applying to the Zoology and Botany graduate programs at the University of Florida asks—tells—applicants that the statement of purpose is very important and they should focus on future experiences, not on past experiences. As you develop topics one through six, also consider the bulleted list of additional suggestions below.

- 1. Illustrate and explain how and when you became interested in the field:** Applicants often include an anecdotal and personal example from their formative years that illustrates a long-term interest in the field and personalizes, to a degree, an essay that focuses primarily on academic achievements and intellectual development. Though you may have a long-term interest in a subject area, you should not state or imply that you

knew by third grade you were destined to become an art historian or a chemical engineer. In other words, omit statements like this one: “I have always wanted to be an entomologist.”

- 2. Summarize your academic background, focusing on your undergraduate experience:** Note specific classes, important class projects (e.g., seminar papers and research projects), and skills you have learned, stressing what might be most important for graduate school. Identify specific areas of interest and note one or two research topics that interest you the most. Demonstrate your understanding of “theory” and your knowledge of disciplinary-specific methodologies.
- 3. Discuss work, internship, and research experiences relevant to your field or course of study:** Identify and briefly describe these experiences, and, of course, note all relevant information, including, but not limited to, any of the following: your duties or responsibilities, your research project, your mentors, your writing experience, your skill sets, and your leadership qualities. Show professional growth or development by linking these experiences to what you learned as an undergraduate—and without “lecturing” to a reader who knows more than you.
- 4. Include special achievements:** You might include literary or research awards, academic honors, grant proposals, and fellowships or internships, poster sessions, and published research.
- 5. Explain why you have selected a specific program:** Note why you would be a good fit for the university and the specific program. Explain your research interests and link them with one or two professors in the program. As I note above, this means learning about the program and familiarizing yourself with the research of one or more faculty members. And refrain from defining your interests too broadly unless you have interdisciplinary interests that match the integrative philosophy of the programs. Limit your research interest to one area, possibly two, depending on the discipline and program, if you want to be considered a serious candidate.
- 6. Discuss your future goals:** Explain why you want to get a Ph.D. and how the degree will help you reach your future goals. Note that you plan a future career as a college professor, consultant, or researcher, or something else. Be honest about your interest and aware of any unintended messages you may communicate. Certain programs, for example, may expect all applicants to pursue a specific career track—e.g., professor and researcher. One Ph.D. program in research psychology turns down applicants if they express any interest in working as a counselor or therapist.

Note: The best statements of purpose include the above ingredients, along with an explanation of why you want to attend graduate school. If possible—and always be sincere—link your interest to a genuine purpose, cause, issue, or concern, which may be rooted in personal or familial experiences, and avoid intellectual solipsism—the pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself with no ulterior purpose other than satisfying your intellectual curiosity.

- As you focus on the topics numbered above, reveal the personal qualities valued by the academic community, including intellectual curiosity, self-discipline, honesty, integrity, and, among other things, independence—that is, the ability to work independently. Remember, however, readers assume applicants have these qualities, so personal characteristics should not be the focus of your essays; reveal them indirectly as you discuss academic, research, and other relevant experiences.
- As indicated above, you may include a personal anecdote, typically in the opening paragraph, but refrain from developing an autobiographical narrative, which does not reveal to readers what they need to know about you. Follow the advice of the quote that follows: “Applicants can 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.” (“Preparing Your Statement of Purpose & Personal Statement”).

Note: According to Robert M. Brown, writers of successful psychology personal statements—and this probably holds true for science essays as well—include an autobiographical reference early in the essay and then reframe the experiential anecdote in terms of a scientific question and plan of academic inquiry (250).

- You might address any inconsistencies in your grades or test scores and discuss, if not addressed in other parts of your application, any extenuating circumstances or special conditions, such as taking a full load of classes and working twenty-five hours a week. If you do make reference to an inconsistency or blemish, keep these ideas in mind: **a)** address it head on; **b)** take responsibility for your actions; **c)** make it a positive; **d)** integrate it into your discussion; **e)** indicate or suggest that it won’t happen again.
- You might also reference teaching or tutoring experiences, which might serve as important information for making decisions about teaching assistantships.

III. Organization and Development

- Statements of purpose vary in length from one single-spaced page to three or four single-spaced pages. Some applicants write a one- or two-page statement of purpose that includes five or so paragraphs focusing on the numbered topics above. Others write three- or four-paged essays that include one or more paragraphs for the items listed above. As always, follow word- or character-count guidelines noted in the prompt.
- As the list of content items suggests, organize your paragraphs chronologically and trace the development of your interest in an academic field or subject area, thus developing cohesiveness within and between paragraphs and identifying yourself as a goal-oriented person. In other words, discuss your academic, internship, research, and work experiences so they reveal a pattern of thinking and intellectual growth or development.

- Pay attention to patterns of organization that may be practiced and privileged in one discipline more than another. For example, members of the scientific community may prefer expository essays while liberal arts faculty—historians, for example—may appreciate essays with narrative-like features. In disciplines with more structured discourse patterns (e.g., the laboratory report or the business proposal), readers may prefer paragraphs with a deductive—general to specific—pattern of organization.
- Begin with an “attention-getter”: an anecdote, an example, a vivid description, a startling—and meaningful—statement, a thoughtful question, or some other “technique” that captures readers’ attention and reveals the focus and main point of your essay. Be “concrete,” specific, detailed; nothing is more boring—ask any admissions officer—than an introduction replete with generalizations, abstract statements, or trite observations.

Remember This: If the opening is weak, readers may call it quits after the first paragraph. Some evidence suggests, moreover, that a memorable opening paragraph may be the most important section of the statement because it creates a positive first impression and influences readers to evaluate the rest of the essay more positively than they would if the beginning sentences were less engaging.

- Conclude with a paragraph that focuses on a specific graduate program. Note, too, how your course and research interests relate to future plans and goals. Identify professors in the program and explain how your research interests dovetail with their work.

Note: Your “conclusion” should add to your discussion and bring it to a close. The best advice? Stop when you’re finished; don’t tack on a needless summary or add a paragraph of generalizations and empty statements.

IV. Language, Tone, and Voice

Think of yourself as an apprentice (scientist, historian, sociologist, etc.) applying to a specific discourse community. Construct a “professional” identity and voice appropriate to your audience, recognizing that you should simultaneously—and perhaps paradoxically—“sound” like a future member of an academic community without losing your personal voice.

- Use discipline-specific language, concepts, and terms when appropriate and within reason, but don’t present yourself, inadvertently or otherwise, as overly scholarly, pedantic, or intellectual. You can cultivate that persona once you receive your Ph.D.
- Avoid overstatements and omit unnecessary words and phrases that go without saying and/or identify you as an amateur or a dilettante without the necessary academic skills or credentials. This includes, but not limited to, the following list of words: appealing, interesting, fascinating, challenging, stimulating, fantastic, incredible, and invaluable, wonderful, gratifying, significant, and meaningful.

Example: I’m **really excited** about the possibility of studying American literature at Duke University. It will be an **incredible** experience.

Comment: The example above **a)** is an overstatement; **b)** goes without saying—you would not apply to Duke or any other university unless you were excited; and **c)** is a personal or affective response; readers would rather focus on your qualifications than on your emotions—how pleased, excited, or enthusiastic you feel.

- Your tone should be genuine and convey sincerity and honesty. If you “sound” inauthentic or insincere, readers may make more general assumptions about your character and integrity.
- Avoid language and comments that inadvertently identify your readers as equals or subordinates. These comments appear in final or penultimate paragraphs when students talk about how “impressed” they are with a program or a professor’s research: “I am very impressed by your research facilities,” or “I am very impressed by your work in evolutionary theory.” They also occur when students discuss disciplinary knowledge and use it as an occasion, usually unintentionally, to “lecture” a more informed reader.
- Use neutral language and a positive attitude when describing an inconsistency, blemish, or problem. Omit unintentional negative words. For example, if you choose to address an inconsistency in your record—such as lower grades one semester—avoid saying the following: “My second semester grades were horrible (or awful, bad, poor, low, sub-par, etc.) because . . .”; instead, say the following (or some variation): “My grades were not as strong as usual because . . .”
- Minimize the use of “I” and, more specifically, omit unnecessary “I believe,” “I think,” and “I feel” phrases. Note, too, that the use of “I” may be more or less acceptable depending on the discipline and may reveal implicit epistemological assumptions about methods of inquiry and the value of objectivity.
- Write concisely. Because of page limitations, every word counts, so work with an experienced editor to eliminate superfluous words, phrases, and sentences. Follow these suggestions:
 1. **Condense phrases by using a single word**—“Obviously” instead of “It is obvious that”; “Because” instead of “On the grounds that”
 2. **Eliminate nominalizations** (verbs and adjective used as nouns)—“Victimize” instead of “Victimization”
 3. **Condense verb phrases by using a single word**—“Consider” instead of “Give consideration to”; “Understand” instead of “Have a great understanding of”
 4. **Edit unnecessary adverbs used as intensifiers**—“Finished” instead of “Completely finished”
 5. **Eliminate unnecessary relative pronouns** (that, which, who, whom)—“The book I quoted was missing” instead of “The book that I had quoted was missing”
 6. **Eliminate redundant words**—“Ready” instead of “Ready and able”; “Willing” instead of “Willing and eager”

- Determine if you should use either active or passive voice (or whether it matters):
Active— “The attorney won the court case”; **Passive**: “The court case was won by the attorney.” Generally speaking, use the active voice because it is more direct and concise. However, consider the discipline and the writing context to determine which may be more appropriate. Two examples of when you might use the passive voice:

Example: Biologists and other scientists often use the passive voice when they report the results of their research. **Active:** “I introduced the solution through a glass tube”;
Passive: “The solution was introduced through a glass tube.” Note that active voice focuses on the writer, while the passive voice focuses more on the methods.

Example: In the business community, writers often use the passive voice for at least two reasons: **1)** In customer relationships you create goodwill by focusing on the customer, which means using the passive voice: “Your book order was shipped on May 3” rather than “I shipped your book order on May 3”; **2)** Use the passive voice to avoid placing blame: “The order was damaged during packaging,” rather than “You damaged the order during packaging.”

- Think about how sentences function rhetorically within the context of a document. For a statement of purpose, use **declarative sentences**, which make a direct claim or assertion, to explain academic, research, and other experiences. Some applicants use a series of thoughtful **interrogative sentences**—sentences that ask questions—to emphasize their intellectual curiosity and identify research interests they plan to pursue. Avoid using **imperative sentences**, which give a command or make a request and, thereby, treat the reader, usually unintentionally, as a subordinate. Avoid **exclamatory sentences** as well, for they express emotions and may undermine your goal of constructing a more academic and logical self who embraces the tenets of objectivity and rational inquiry.

Sample Statements of Purpose

Below we offer examples of statements of purpose in a variety of disciplines from several sources. These samples may have a few flaws, but for the most part they follow many of the guidelines we recommend. You might read these statements and critique them in light of what you have read: In what ways are these statements effective? In what ways might they be improved? What similar effective strategies can you adopt in writing your own statements? (Note: Some of the examples have been edited for length and clarity, but the content and structure have not been altered.)

I. Social Sciences

Education: Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL)— non-native English Speaker

Like many non-English speakers, I have begun studying English quite late in seventh grade. To most non-English speakers, learning a new language, English, is both novel and challenging. Many students may explore English with the curiosity toward a new language and culture; however, they may lose their interest because of inappropriate and rigid teaching approaches, or an unfamiliar/ insecure sense towards a new language or culture. Learning a new language is not an easy job especially for teenagers or adults who have passed their critical period of language acquisition. Language learning always takes patience; moreover, it needs good strategies, motivation, and a good instructor to help students to overcome the sense of alienation toward a new language or culture.

My teachers started our English education by teaching the alphabets and phonetic symbols. Interesting games, colorful visual aids, or strategies were used to help raise our interest in learning English and the new culture. Some activities worked and indeed helped us a lot in training the so-called “four skills” of a language; however, others failed. Frankly speaking, though I was really patient in learning English and learn it well, I was not a prominent student of English in junior high and senior high schools. And as an English-major, it happens all the time that my relatives and neighbors would ask me questions such as: “what do we do to learn English well? What are your strategies?” “I got good grades in English, but I have difficulties communicating with foreigners!” and so on. My answer is always: “oh, English learning takes only patience and practice.” Though it’s true that English learning takes great patience and hard working, I wish I could offer them more effective ways and share my experiences with them. But I can’t. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) said, “If no one asks me, I know what it is; if I wish to explain what it is to him who asks me, I do not know.” I know how to learn English, but I can’t tell people the principles and the reasons why we learn English by using certain strategies or approaches.

When I came to college and majored in English at National Central University, the linguistic courses helped me a lot in understanding my early language learning experiences. Inspired by the strong inner call of self-exploration and the will to help my friends, I started to take relevant courses about language learning theories and linguistics, including Phonetics, Linguistics, Syntax, Language Acquisition and Teaching, and English teaching. I also take

courses from the teacher training program in N.C.U., which gave me an overview of teaching methodologies, learning psychologies, and practical training. In class, some teachers will share with us their teaching experiences, their viewpoints towards the current education system and trends, whereas other teachers shared with us their philosophies of life. Thanks to their efforts, I have come to realize that teaching is not only the delivery of knowledge, but also the effort to share with, to affect, or to help people.

I have browsed through your website and noticed that your TESOL program has a strong focus on intercultural communication and on the interaction of social behavior and language use. I have always had great interest in learning new languages and cultures. Besides English and my mother tongue, Chinese, I've studied Japanese and Japanese culture for two years. I also noticed that several professors of your program master in bilingual language acquisition and teaching. I hope my experiences in learning English and Japanese may help me move further along this line of research if I have the opportunity to enter your program.

Six months ago, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to help my teacher to do some research on course planning and evaluation. During this period of time, I realized that a sound evaluation system will help a lot with continuous course improvement and ensure the quality of teaching. I also learned some innovative evaluation tools and got positive feedbacks from the students that I tutored for two years. Teaching is an art and several factors should be taken into consideration, including the students' state of mind, classroom atmosphere, the teachers' attitude, the teaching approaches, evaluation methods, cultural factors, and so on. While teaching English to speakers of other languages, cultural factors and student attitudes towards a new culture should be first taken into consideration. Besides, course planning should be adjusted or innovated in order to make courses more accessible to non-English students. In Taiwan, English language learning has become more and more important for the trend of internationalization. However, because of some inappropriate teaching approaches, students may learn English in an ineffective way or even encounter obstacles in learning English.

Your program provides sound courses that cover methods of teaching, evaluation, and materials development, as well as engage in fieldwork both as tutors and practice teachers. I believe the program offered will help me acquire the versatility needed to reach my full potential as an English teacher. It would be a privilege to be able to secure admission to pursue graduate studies with you. I am confident that I will match the high standards set by your university.

(“Sample—Statement of Purpose 3.” *English for Practical Purposes, Fall 2002*. 2002. Web.)
http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/members/Ho/study/2002fall_practicalenglish/st2002f_practicalenglish_1025j.htm

Environmental Studies

Two scenes stand out in my mind from my visit to Brazil's Wetland: Forests burning before seed planting and trees as hedgerows. Before the planting season, I could see the leafless remnants of burnt trees still standing. The burning of pristine forests destroys both the habitats and countless species which depend on and thrive in these habitats. The few remaining bare, scarred trees silently convey the cost to our natural resources of pursuing our economic interests.

Some forests are preserved by government edict issued in response to international pressure. But most of this preservation occurs alongside major roads — not to protect the ecosystem, but to prevent disturbance to ranches and farms along the highways. The clash between economic and environmental concerns that I witnessed in Brazil fascinates me and attracts me to the Environmental Studies Program.

Two courses in my geography department increased my interest in the connection between the environment and economics: Conservation of Underdeveloped Countries and Environmental Impact Analysis. In the former, we studied the problems of natural resource management in developing countries. The balance is always tilted toward economic growth at the expense of environmental preservation. For example, because the Pantanal Wetland could become a highly productive agricultural system once it's drained, it is drained regardless of the destruction that drainage causes to the ecosystem. Only portions of the wetland are preserved for tourist purposes.

The other course that piqued my interest is an interdisciplinary course called Environmental Impact Analysis in which we, as a group, created matrix and flow diagrams discussing the economic and environmental impact of logging and preservation of old growth forests. I was able to use tools that I acquired in my economics and environmental studies classes. In general, logging creates economic benefits at the local level. It increases employment in the timber industry and subsequently in related non-timber industries; it also benefits local government. Yet, it has great deleterious environmental effects: soil erosion, watershed destruction, and a decrease in species diversity due to loss of habitat. The logging industry represents the classic clash between economic and environmental interests.

I also took two sequential classes in the economics department that are related to Resource Management — Theories of Growth & Development and Policies for Economic Development. Because the courses were taught by a professor who is concerned chiefly with economic growth, I learned the standard economic rationalizations for development unrestrained by environmental concerns.

In addition to my interest in resource management policies, I have a specific interest in Geographical Information System (GIS), a powerful tool for natural resource management. After taking several related classes in GIS, I began interning for the National Park Service (NPS). After I learn how to use ARC/INFO, a leading GIS package, I will assist the NPS in constructing projects. Some of my duties include spatial and non-spatial data analysis, digitizing themes such as fire locations, vegetation, wildlife habitats, etc., and tabular and graphical presentation of results. I hope to use the tools I acquire during this internship in my continuing study of our environment.

I would like to study the social and economic factors that influence environmental policy formation. For example, because people worry more about pollution than endangered species, laws and regulations concerning environmental pollution are more numerous and stricter than for bio-diversity. Within the School of Environmental Studies, I have a particular interest in the emphasis: Economics, Policy, and Management. This emphasis deals with how economic factors can create negative externalities, such as pollution, and need to be regulated. This emphasis also

tries to consider non-economic values, such as aesthetic pleasure and specie diversity. It also discusses tools like GIS and system analysis that apply to environmental management. Because of my interest in GIS, economics, and environmental studies, this emphasis suits me perfectly. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach of the School of Environmental Studies attracts me since it combines social science's strengths with a knowledge of the natural sciences necessary to protect and preserve the environment.

After completing my masters program, I would like to continue my education and obtain a Ph.D. in natural resource management. This degree would enable me to combine a teaching career with advising business and government on natural resource management issues. Teaching college students is more than a one-way channel; I would also learn from their questions like my professors have from mine. In advising business and government, I can help them strike a balance between economic and environmental concerns. GIS will be a useful tool in helping me give them crucial information.

I have enjoyed an interdisciplinary approach in my environmental studies major and become fascinated by the clash between social interests, especially economics, and environmental needs. I pursued an additional major in economics to better understand this conflict. Furthermore, my work for the NPS will train me in the latest techniques in natural resource management. I would like to continue exploring this clash and resource management in the School of Environmental Studies. Ultimately, I would like to teach and work in natural resource management. Ideally, I would like to find ways for allowing development while preventing the burning of beautiful and valuable eco-systems like the Pantanal Wetland.

("Sample Essay 1: The Environmental Studies Student." <http://www.accepted.com/grad/sampEssay01.aspx>)

Geography

Prior to coming to Mythic College, I had a very skewed view of what geography was. When I thought about geography, visions of memorizing all fifty state capitals and exercises of filling in the world map came to mind. Freshman year, I enrolled in Geography 20 (human geography) simply because it was the only honors class that fit in my schedule. Instead of being bored, I was stimulated to think of the world through a different focus, through the lens of a geographer: to view people and places and examine how each relates to the other. Suddenly, I was thinking of everything in this fashion. When walking to class, I would ponder why the paths were designed the way they were and how this affected the different flows of traffic. I found that geography addresses my varied academic interests well. It offers me a balance of physical, social, and cultural studies. Therefore, it was a natural progression for me to pursue geography as a major.

Throughout my geography experience at Mythic College, I have gained skill in Geographic Information Sciences, which has given me great insight in many fields. For one, I obtained a greater understanding of how the US Census is calculated and this enabled me to be a more informed enumerator. Now, I find myself completely captivated by the various elements of geography and how they all are interwoven in a nexus of relations with historical, economic,

physical, social, and cultural nodes. For my Honors Thesis next year, I will be exploring the Rothschild family to see how they fit within these various geographic realms. I am fascinated by how this family began as foreigners and within a few years was able to build a banking empire and become leaders in the economic world. As part of my thesis research, I intend to travel to the various cities where they lived and make observations on both economic and social grounds.

After I complete my undergraduate education in geography, I hope to work for an organization that incorporates geographical education and exploration. I hope to be able to write articles and essays that would be used to increase geographical awareness as well as educate people about lesser-known cultures in the world. I also intend on participating in the Peace Corps and speculate about earning a law degree.

I wish to participate in the Geography Intern Program with the National Geographic Society because, in short, it would be the fulfillment of my dream. It would enable me to work in an environment with people who share similar interests, providing me with an opportunity to contribute to a product that reaches a broad audience of people who subscribe to the magazine, visit Explorer's Hall, or glance through a National Geographic book. It would provide me with the practical experience that would aid me tremendously in pursuing my future goals, and reveal paths I might otherwise never discover.

("Short Personal Statement: Geography." Schall 68)

History

"Luscious fare is the jewel of inordinate desires," cautions the author of *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1673), one of many early modern conduct books I surveyed this past year for an honors thesis entitled "'Chaste, Silent, and Hungry': The Problem of Female Appetite in Early Modern England, 1550-1700." As indicated by the title, this project explores a provocative but as of yet scarcely studied facet of early modern gender constructions: female food desire. I use the word "desire" here rather deliberately, as early modern definitions of appetite extended well beyond the physiological drive to eat to encompass all those physical (and shameful) longings associated with the body. And, in a culture where women were by definition immoderate and sensual, female food appetite, I argue, constituted an unruly desire that demanded both social and moral discipline. In brief, my research concerns the patriarchal control of women's bodies in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England vis-a-vis a cultural idea about food desire and satiation as suggestive and immodest.

....

Continuing along these avenues of research in graduate school, I would like to use my thesis as the basis for a future dissertation. Though I remain wary about committing myself prematurely to a specific topic of research, I am also eager to elaborate, modify, and complicate my original assertions about the nature of the "problem" of female appetite in early modern England. Indeed, many of the conclusions reached in the thesis, such as my claim that the cultural eroticization of feminine appetite in early modern England betrayed a deep-seated masculine mistrust of female sexuality and sexual power, serve as starting points for future research and study.

On a more basic level, writing a thesis gave me the chance to become better acquainted with the essentials of historical research. Suspecting that normative discourses in early modern England participated aggressively in the monitoring of women's appetites, I navigated the sea of early English printed sources in pursuit of the slightest mention of food and diet. Those sources I encountered during my research, which ranged from the popular conduct book, *The Education of a Christian Woman* by Juan Luis Vives, to the anonymous sex manual, *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, challenged my basic understanding of history and the original premise of my thesis in ways not anticipated. From deciphering esoteric type-fonts to developing an awareness of the importance of time and funds, I experienced the mundane realities of research that inevitably stunt the historian's aspirations. Even more important was my gradual acceptance of the fact that early modern sources, no matter how we read them, do not always accommodate modern biases and expectations.

Though I cannot predict the course this project might take in graduate school, I expect that it will address the following themes and issues. First is the overarching issue of distinguishing the phenomena I observe from other forms of food restriction and obsession, namely the modern ritual of dieting and its most extreme manifestation, an eating disorder. Though not willing to evade those complicated (and controversial) parallels between modern and early modern usages of food and food symbolism to control the lives of women, I also wish to offer as an historian a nuanced portrayal of how early modern conceptualizations of female appetite were infused with contemporary, historically contingent notions of sexuality and gender.

Furthermore, the question of female agency in a project devoted almost exclusively to male prescriptions for diet and behavior demands further discussion. Admittedly, on more than one occasion, my own extensive use and analysis of conduct books and various obstetric manuals, works composed primarily by educated men, caused me to pause and wonder whether it was best to relate a history about women's actions or the patriarchal apparatus under which those actions were oppressed. While I refuse to see women as simply passive receptacles of masculine command, I neither wish nor aspire to focus solely on their achievements; for, in my mind, the history of women and the history of patriarchy are inextricably related. My goal, then, will not be to detail just another example of how women in history were dominated by men, but, rather, to interrogate the means, in this case food, or, better yet, the cultural meaning of appetite, by which women's desires were suppressed or denied.

....

[At] the heart of my specific research concentration lies a more general interest in early modern European history, cultural and women's history to be more exact. To date, my knowledge of the early modern period has been informed and my imagination sustained by an array of courses on early modern history and literature (I was a joint history and English major), including a graduate seminar on Renaissance urban culture taught jointly by Professors Margaret Ferguson and Deborah Harkness. My personal penchant for cultural history stems largely, I believe, from my training in literature and literary criticism, where sensitivity to the importance of language and metaphor is a necessary skill. Also of crucial importance to a professional career in history are my growing skills in Latin and French, and my fluency in Spanish.

This year I find myself in that difficult and frustrating transitional period between undergraduate and graduate studies. Though I would have preferred to directly continue graduate school after graduation, I opted to take a year off. A year away from school, I reasoned, would afford me the time needed to recuperate from an exhaustive undergraduate education, gain some perspective, and work on fulfilling the language requirement for a doctorate in European history. In fact, I am currently enrolled in a French course at a nearby university and plan to take a subsequent course during the upcoming spring semester. This academic hiatus, moreover, has imposed some much-needed distance between myself and my thesis, which I can now reread from a more critical, less invested stance. And, finally, a break from school has given me sufficient time to search . . . for graduate programs that best suit my needs.

UC Berkeley's history program looms large in my mind, largely because of its outstanding faculty and interdisciplinary approach to history. In my own quest for a suitable graduate program, I was thrilled to learn that Professors Thomas Laqueur and Carla Hesse both taught at Berkeley. Professor Laqueur's book, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, stands out among the many books I read during my undergraduate education; and I credit his book with introducing me to the nascent but fascinating field of the history of sexuality and the body. Together, Professor Laqueur's cutting edge research and Professor Hesse's knowledge of early modern women's history would make my experience at Berkeley a challenging and enjoyable one.

In addition, Berkeley provides an ideal climate for me to develop my cross-disciplinary interests. In particular, I am interested in pursuing a designated emphasis in women, gender, and sexuality, a unique option that distinguishes Berkeley's history program from that of other institutions. The cross-disciplinary nature of Berkeley's graduate program would foster, I hope, fruitful discussions with other departments, notably the department of English and Women's Studies, thus broadening and enriching my research as well as my general understanding early modern culture and history.

("Sample Statement of Purpose," <http://ls.berkeley.edu/soc/diversity/apply/personalstatement1.html>)

Psychology (Clinical--research)

Having enjoyed psychology-related activities in both the academic and community settings, it is with enthusiasm that I pursue a career in clinical psychology. An important part of this pursuit is attending graduate school. In order to obtain the necessary knowledge and to define my areas of interest, I wish to enroll in a doctoral program in clinical psychology.

Throughout my undergraduate work I have engaged in a variety of activities to help prepare me for graduate study. One such activity is my involvement in research. This past summer I participated in a research project with a UNI professor, Dr. Augustine Osman. Our research involved the examination of the psychometric properties of the Pain Anxiety Symptoms Scale (PASS) in a community sample. I performed basic data entry and ran SPSS-X programs for manova, correlation, and reliability. For two to three hours a day, over an eight week period, my research experience involved discussions on issues of psychometrics as well as learning how

to transcribe and run several programs used in factor analysis. Through this experience I have also become familiar with the process of research revision and publication. In fact, I will be listed as a co-author upon publication of this work.

Currently, I am involved in an independent research project investigating sex-role stereotyping in college classrooms. My advisor, Dr. Jane Wong, has been supervising by progress. After completing background reading on this issue, I have decided to investigate the relationship between students' sex-typed characteristics. I have developed six scenarios in which I manipulated the sex-typed characteristics of the instructor. Students will be asked to complete the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the Traditional Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESR) prior to reading a scenario. After reading the scenarios they will be asked to rate the instructor using a rating form developed by Leventhal, Perry, and Abrami (1977). I hope to present my findings at a regional psychology conference and, if possible, submit the work for consideration for publication.

Aside from conducting research, I also have had the opportunity to experience the teaching aspects of psychology while serving as a teaching assistant for a Research Methods course and an Introduction to Psychology course. As a TA for Research Methods my responsibilities included supervising five students' research work. Specifically, I assisted the students in the library while they worked on a bibliography, summary and synthesis, and proposal project. I also reviewed their projects and provided constructive feedback on their work, as well as graded each students' project. I was also responsible for leading course review sessions, developing course test questions, and grading semester tests during both of my semesters as a teaching assistant.

In addition, I have engaged in several community service activities closely related to my academic studies. As a Compeer volunteer through a local community mental health center, I befriended an individual who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. I am also an advocate for victims of sexual and physical assault at a Crisis Center. I assist victims immediately after they have experienced a crisis situation, consistently validating the feelings they experience and offering support if necessary. As a shelter assistant in a battered women shelter I act as a moderator between the women as well as work with them in exploring their options available both at the shelter and after their stay.

I have also interacted with a variety of clients while working for Section 8 rental assistance program and as an intern for a pre-trial officer at a correctional facility. Many of the clients I have come into contact with exhibit such psychological disorders as schizophrenia, depression, alcoholism, and mental retardation. These experiences have given me the opportunity to interact with a variety of people and to improve my communication skills. I have also become a more assertive and objective individual while working directly with these clients.

Throughout my graduate education and beyond receipt of my doctorate I hope to participate extensively in research. Fostered by previous work as a volunteer and research background, my current interests include intercultural relationships, child abuse, particularly the long-term effects of physical and sexual abuse on victims, as well as aspects contributing to domestic abuse. I am also interested in continuing my work with the psychometric analyses of

psychological assessment measures. I realize that these are areas that have developed from the work I have done thus far and that as I continue my education my interests will evolve. I feel that a graduate education will enable me to develop more specific research interests.

I believe that through my experiences I have become a well-rounded person while building a strong foundation for future graduate study. Not only do I feel confident about my preparation in psychology, I have also earned a minor in Spanish acquiring fluency in reading, writing, and speaking the language. In addition, I have become proficient with computer programs such as Windows, Word Perfect, data bases, Minitab for statistical analysis, and e-mail. Despite the numerous activities I am involved in, I have remained focused enough to graduate in three and a half years while maintaining a 3.9 GPA.

Having been involved in psychology through these various experiences has greatly enhanced my interest in becoming a clinical psychologist. I am particularly intrigued with psychological research and college instruction. Therefore, upon receiving my doctorate it is my goal to obtain a position that will allow me to serve my interests in both research and education. I believe that I will be most successful in obtaining such a position after completing a doctoral program that emphasizes research involvement and fosters the development of quality teaching and clinical communication skills.

(Psychology Club of University of Northern Iowa, "Statement #1: Personal Statement"
<http://www.psych.uni.edu/psychclub/statements.html>)

Psychology (cross-cultural)

My desire to study cross-cultural psychology initially came from my experience during the summer of my freshman year. After the traumatic earthquake in Wen Chuan, in southwest China, I volunteered at the Chinese Red-Cross Foundation for a month, helping to build online donation networks. During this time, I learned that two volunteer teams of psychologists went to Wen Chuan to intervene earthquake survivors who were at high risk for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite the great efforts of the psychologists, the interventions were not that successful. Few people were willing to open up and talk to the psychologists, and so the effects of the intervention remained minimal. Looking at those survivors' faces full of pain and sorrow, I kept asking myself why this was the case. Could it be that the interventions originated in western cultures do not fit the needs of Asians, particularly Chinese? If more research existed on people from Asian cultures, would the outcomes have been better? Realizing that the focus of most psychological studies has long been on North Americans and Europeans, I found an intense ambition to study people from other cultures, especially East Asian cultures. Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm that I want to pursue a career in social psychology by attending the PhD program at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

After my volunteer work during the summer, I came back to school and took more psychology courses. I have become more interested in how culture can shape identity, cognition, emotion and behavior, and have been trying to look for answers for those aforementioned questions. In Social Psychology and Abnormal Psychology, I learned how the independent self-

identity in western culture and the interdependent self-identity in East Asian culture can influence human behavior; and how some specific mental disorders could be derived from one's culture. I find these topics particularly thought-provoking, yet information about these topics is limited in lectures and textbooks.

In addition to psychology courses, I have also taken courses on East Asian cultures, with a focus on Japan, and will obtain a minor in East Asian Studies upon graduation. I am fluent in Chinese (Mandarin), and have obtained an intermediate level of Japanese in college. As one of the difficulties in cross-cultural psychology research is the language barrier, I believe my language skills will certainly fit the need of cross-cultural studies.

In my junior year I spent one semester studying in Japan, during which I have not only improved my Japanese language skill but also been able to closely experience another culture, other than the Chinese and American cultures. This eye-opening experience allowed me to delve deeper into the field of cross-cultural psychology. I took a course on Cross-Cultural Psychology, which broadened my knowledge of various psychological research and theories in this field. I also helped Dr. Norasakkunkit, at Kyoto University with his research comparing Hikikomori in Japan and Social Phobia in western cultures. I was intrigued by how similar symptoms (fear of social life and tendency to stay at home) can be derived from two distinct psychological mechanisms, as fear of offending others in Hikikomori and fear of embarrassing oneself in Social Phobia. Through these experiences, I became more aware of the importance of culture in the field of psychology.

Throughout my undergraduate work, I have gained research experience that will be valuable for graduate studies. Over the past two years I have worked in the Memory Lab at Ohio Wesleyan University, with Dr. Bahrack, Dr. Hall and Dr. Baker, on their studies on semantic memory process in relation to context and age. I was involved in various aspects of the research process, through which I have gained skills and knowledge on conducting literature searches, forming hypotheses, programming of computer tests, contacting and testing participants, collecting and analyzing data, and so on. With the generous help of my mentors, I have also investigated a study about effects of cueing and age on the instability of access in semantic memory, and was able to present the results at the school Summer Science Research Symposium.

I have also participated in various activities outside of the academic setting, including teaching and volunteering, which have helped me to become a more well-rounded person. I worked as a tutor to teach elementary school students in the Columbus Initiative Program, and as an assistant to help with preschool activities at the Early Childhood Center of Ohio Wesleyan University. The interaction I had with young children and my observations on how teachers brought child psychology theories into practice, broadened my knowledge of how psychology could apply to the real world. I also volunteered at a local consumer operated mental health service center—Annie's Outreach Center in Delaware, OH. Here, I have talked with and had activities together with people who are suffering from schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, mental retardation, etc. The experience offered me an opportunity to interact with a variety of people and to improve my communication skills. During this process, I also learned to be more objective when working directly with these clients.

This year I designed my departmental honors project under the supervision of Dr. Leavy the chairperson of the psychology department. I was interested in how anxiety is experienced by university students with a different culture background. Anxiety has been well studied cross-culturally, however, after much background literature reading, I found few studies focused on international students who are enrolled in universities in the United States. Since most of the studies were conducted in an English setting, the potential influence of language used on students' self-reported anxiety level also remains unmeasured. It is possible that cross-cultural differences in psychological traits, such as anxiety, may be due to the language in which the trait is measured, rather than the culture of the research participant. Therefore, with my Chinese language background, I am exploring the effect of language on self-reported anxiety of Chinese-English bilingual university students. I am using both the Chinese (Mandarin) version and English version of State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Social Avoidance and Distress (SAD) scale, to test whether participants will report their anxiety levels differently when being presented with the questionnaires in two different languages. I would also like to explore the language related anxiety experiences of the Chinese international students by asking them to fill out a survey. I am currently in the process of data collection for this study.

My long-term career goal is to teach at the university level and conduct research with an emphasis on East Asian cultures. For now, my current research interests include, but are not limited to, self-representation, anxiety and human cognition, with a cross-cultural focus. During my search for graduate programs, I found out that the psychology program at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor has a strong emphasis on culture and diversity, with well-established labs such as the Culture and Cognition Lab, and the Center of Culture, Mind, and Brain. I would especially like to work with Dr. Richard Nisbett, on his research on differences in East Asian and Western reasoning styles; Dr. Fiona Lee, on her research about how power, social identities, and cultural values affect individuals; or Dr. Twila Tardif, on her studies of care giving in Chinese families. With the shared interests, I am confident that I will be a good candidate who will fit well into the program. I think the social psychology PhD program at the University of Michigan would aid me in attaining my goal, and my devotion and undergraduate training will enable me to contribute into the social psychology program at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

(Dong, Yan. Used with permission of the author.)

Psychology (School)

I am interested in being a school psychologist for a variety of reasons. First, I believe that my background in working with children and families, and my B.A. in psychology are essential combinations that will be helpful in my pursuit of the degree. Second, I would like to work with children in a variety of educational situations, such as those in need of special education classes and those in talented and gifted programs. Third, I believe it is essential to work directly with the entire family system, not just the child. The child's progress depends on the home environment and the academic environment equally. This academic environment includes all professions (i.e., teachers, school counselors and psychologists, school administrators, and school nurses). Each professional must utilize his/her skills and training to determine the best course of action for the child and how it will interact with each and every other discipline. Unfortunately, many times,

there seems to be poor communication between these individuals. I would like to be involved in helping to facilitate this necessary interaction between disciplines. Finally, my areas of interest are in brain injury rehabilitation; psychosocial development of children, especially self-esteem; and learning disabilities. I believe that becoming a school psychologist would be the best way to continue my work with children and their families while having an impact on the educational system.

The school psychology program at XXX would allow me to utilize both my knowledge in psychology and my affinity toward children simultaneously. I have always had a strong interest in working with children. I began babysitting in late elementary school and continued through college. These children were of a variety of ages and from different family compositions (e.g., single-parent households, two-parent households, and stepfamilies). The summer before my junior year in college and for the next three years, I was a part-time nanny for a 10-year-old girl who was diagnosed with ADHD. I did this on a full-time basis during the summers. This job gave me an understanding of the effects of medication (Ritalin) on behavior. These experiences gave me a strong background in working with a diverse group of children.

I also have an extensive training in working with local agencies. The spring semester of my sophomore year, I began volunteering at the Cedar Valley Hospice for approximately 20 hours a month. I was trained in the following areas: Patient/Family, Grief, and Cedar AIDS Support System (CASS) services. Through my work at the CASS, I was responsible for making contacts with a variety of other agencies on the behalf of my clients, such as the Black Hawk County Health Department, Operation Threshold, and the Cedar Valley NAMES Project. In this capacity, I did office work, I was a buddy to an HIV positive individual, and I did face-to-face education panels in local school and community settings. I was also extensively involved in training future buddies. It was during this time period that I completed the American Red Cross course work for certification as an HIV/AIDS educator. In this capacity, I have been a guest speaker in several elementary school and college courses about HIV/AIDS. The following year, I completed an internship for my Practicum in Psychology course at the Cedar Valley Hospice. The course work required only 4 hours a week; however, Hospice required 20 hours a week.

Because I really wanted to continue my valuable education in this area, I was willing to dedicate more time than was required by the course to fulfill this responsibility. During this internship, I worked with the Grief Support Services, primarily working on the cases which dealt with HIV/AIDS and dysfunctional families. During this time period, I also assisted in the Youth Support Services when needed. I was also involved in the transition of the structure of the Youth Support Services from Amanda the Panda to Katie and Quincy Koala. Currently, I am still a volunteer at Hospice. As per federal requirements, all volunteers must undergo an annual review. At my recent review, my supervisor only had positive things to say about my abilities.

I am presently employed full-time at Exceptional Persons, Inc. as part of their Support Living Staff. This job has given me valuable experience in working with a diverse population of adults and children and their families. I work primarily with traumatically brain injured adults. However, I do occasionally work at the Porter Group Home for children. I have also worked with individuals who are mentally retarded, mentally ill, or dual diagnosed. One of the many facets of my job is advocating for the consumers and their rights. Most of my work focuses on assisting these individuals in daily living skills to become more independent. I believe that my

background has given me a solid foundation on which to build a successful career as a school psychologist. My objectives as a school psychologist would be: (a) to work with a variety of children and their families in an education setting; (b) to work as part of an interdisciplinary team in helping to determine the best course of action for children in need; and (c) to help children build their self-esteem. This is particularly important for children in need of special assistance.

(Psychology Club of University of Northern Iowa, "Statement # 13"
<http://www.psych.uni.edu/psychclub/statements.html>)

Social Work

Having spent the last four years working in the social care field, I have come to realise that my passion lies in helping people who are less advantaged. I am currently taking an access to higher education course to further my ambition to become a social worker.

Until recently I was working in a residential home with adults with learning disabilities ranging from mild to severe. I worked with individuals who also have bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, and challenging behaviour. This gave me great insight into the role of a social worker as I was attending multi-disciplinary care reviews helping service users to determine their present needs and wishes and identify future goals and desired outcomes, on an ongoing basis, whilst promoting empowerment, individuality, rights, responsibilities, identity and self-esteem. I was putting care plans into action by helping individuals with life skills e.g. developing basic budgeting and money managing skills, providing information or helping service users to access information relevant to their needs and wishes, assisting them to develop a higher level of independence and improve their communication and social skills.

I was also providing continuous emotional support on a daily basis and during stressful life changes. I learnt how to communicate with clients about sensitive issues in an appropriate manner, understanding and being prepared for their reactions to the information. This job significantly improved my communication skills, my patience, and my initiative. As a result, I became more aware of my own values and beliefs whilst showing respect for all persons and their values, beliefs, cultures, goals, needs and preferences.

I completed the NVQ3 in Health and Social care, which enabled me to develop my practice. I learnt about the laws, legislations and different government policies involved in social care, about abuse and the different forms it can take and how to help individuals take control of their lives.

Although I have no experience working with children and families, I have raised my daughter single handed and feel that I can relate to families who are having troubles. I hope with my positive attitude and determination to improve my own quality of life I can reflect this into my practice when helping others.

At present I am studying Sociology, Psychology, Law and Politics on the access course. I am learning about the impacts of the industrial revolution and how society is seen from a Marxist and functionalist point of view, about different types of mental disorders, the structure of the

government and how the criminal justice system works. I am finding it very interesting and am really enjoying being back in education.

I also read the Community Care magazine each week to keep up to date with social issues. I find the topics on current social issues very interesting and enjoy reading about the experiences of qualified social workers I also find the articles on topics such as advocacy helpful. I hope that studying the degree in social work will give me a greater understanding of social problems, their causes, their solutions and the impacts these have while allowing me to obtain the skills I require to be successful in my chosen career path.

(Keira, <http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=1356&view=subject>)

Sociology

There is probably no better feeling than the realisation that, through your own hard work and determination, you have done something that truly made a positive change to the lives of others. When the news broke in August that the leadership of the City of Edinburgh Council intended to close 22 schools and nurseries, including my own, myself and others immediately launched an intense campaign to voice our opposition and attempt to change the precariously balanced Council's decision. We wrote press releases, gave interviews for TV, radio, and newspapers, and spoke at rallies. Three weeks later, the decision to close schools was overturned. This gave me a valuable insight into the way politics affect everyone's lives, and I realised that I was particularly interested in the human aspects of political theories and practices. As human needs combined with political ideals dictate policy, sociology seems the natural starting point for looking at politics so as to understand why the world is as it is today.

This is one of the reasons why I have chosen to study Sociology at University. Cultural beliefs, interrelationships, inequalities, and the nature of society interest me greatly. I have been active in politics for over a year, and am a member of a political party and its youth wing. This has given me experience in political processes and working with people at a more personal level in community campaigns. I am currently the Regional Organiser for the Lothians branch of our youth wing, a task I have found enjoyable yet taxing. This has given me invaluable experience in motivating others and leading a team. It has been particularly fulfilling to work with real people with real needs - such as those whose houses face demolition in the Save Our Old Town campaign, people who lost thousands of pounds in savings in the Unfairpak campaign and striking postal workers, amongst others - as sometimes it can be disillusioning for young people to see political parties out of touch with their voters and their needs. I have recently taken on a position on the Executive Committee of my party, and for me, there has never been a problem with integrating myself into 'adult' politics, but for a number of my friends and peers this is not something they find interesting or easy. The relationship between young people and politics is something I would like to understand and look at ways of improving.

Having studied Modern Studies for 5 years and achieved an 'A' grade at Higher level, I have continued this subject to Advanced Higher, which focuses on Law and Order and methods of sociological research. History is also something that interests me, mostly because I am

intrigued by the conditions in societies that have allowed certain events to occur. Throughout my time at school I have involved myself as fully as possible in school life and feel I have done my best to make school a better place for my peers, something I would like to continue at University. At both primary and secondary school I was a member of the student council, and at secondary I have been involved in a variety of tasks, including being active in prom and yearbook committees, fundraising for charities, and teaching younger students about equality and respect in Equality Days. I am a paired reader for a first year student with reading difficulties. My experiences with helping others have led me to consider social work as a possible future career.

In my spare time I play guitar, sing, read and work part time in a clothes shop, which I love doing and has prepared me for living life more independently. Whilst I enjoy learning, I also take time to relax and see friends. I feel that I am enthusiastic, friendly and hard working, and that I would find studying Sociology both enjoyable and useful.

(Somethingbiblical, <http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=937&view=subject>)

II. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering

Life Sciences

The working of the brain (like most of nature) is all about synchrony. My interest in the brain and biology of behavior gained fresh impetus during my undergraduate studies at St. Paul's. As a volunteer at the Social Involvement Program in my college, I helped with children who had cerebral palsy, attention deficit and learning disorders and were autistic. Each of them had special needs. Their individual personalities complete with likes and dislikes shone through their disorders. However it soon became clear that in spite of all their differences, what lay at the crux of their problems was asynchrony. They lacked the correct interplay of physical and chemical signals between their brains and their bodies.

I want to know why these "crossed" signals make their learning and memory processes different from mine. Is it possible for us to remedy the altered perspective they have of life? My brain communicates in synch with my body. But who is waving the baton that conducts this perfect symphony? How would it be any different if I had a glass of champagne, a snort of cocaine or was 60 years older?

As my undergraduate studies at St. Paul's progressed, I was introduced to many more players that eventually chisel out a unique brain. Aging and neuro degenerative disorders raised a few questions in my mind. In what way are the two related to each other? What effect do they have on our brain and behavior? How do the same molecules (whether hormones, alcohol, drugs or neurotransmitters) elicit a confluence of physical and emotional experiences in us?

While reading about the research being done in the Behavioral Neuroscience program at Binghamton, I have come across work that can provide answers to my questions about the brain and its link with behavior. When I graduated, I knew how the brain looked and worked. I want to

continue my education with a study that will help me gain a deeper understanding of communication within the brain.

I am looking forward to being a part of the work being done in the labs of Dr. Paul Silver and Linda Steele. Like most of us, I started out with the same sheet of epithelial cells that developed into a perfect little brain. However, I think the power of this brain lies in the way it has changed with experiences, environment and me to become a structure that is uniquely mine. Aging, chemicals and disease are just a few of the many tools that chisel out an individual brain. Their mechanisms of action have been a source of interest to me ever since my first encounter with them. I hope to turn this interest into a learning experience at Binghamton.

The highlight of my undergraduate years was the Honors Program, which taught me to apply the knowledge I had gained, to achieve a particular aim. One of my projects was as a teacher at the Open Ended Experiments (OEE). I helped my juniors understand vital theories, which they could apply to perform simple experiments. Sometimes one of the best ways to learn is by teaching someone else and thanks to the OEE I have gained new insight into many aspects of my subject. I enjoyed watching the way my questions made someone think and finally learn. I see teaching as an important part of my future.

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Once out of college, I was thirsting to put into practice all my undergraduate education. Interning at Wellcome Institute of Fundamental Research (WIFR) under Dr. Ray has given me the perfect opportunity to glimpse at the career I am entering. As my education has progressed, my resolve to have a career in research has strengthened.

At WIFR I saw first hand the effect that improper communication between the brain and body had on behavior. A defect in a transporter for cholineacetyltransferase results in a lack of acetylcholine at the synapses, which among other things gives rise to an uncoordinated fly. Besides opening up the world of scientific research to me, my experiences here have taught me that mistakes do not always have to hold you back, and often take you closer to your goal. Things often look easy to do at first glance, but a lot of hard work is involved in making them seem that way. After standardizing some protocols myself, I now understand the kind of effort that goes into developing the techniques that make my work so much easier. I have expanded on my work and my motivation to join WIFR in an attachment to this essay.

I am interested in the study of behavioral and cognitive processes because they play an important role in defining us as a species. The study of organisms as diverse as humans, birds, mice and flies brings us closer everyday to the answers we seek. Perhaps there will come a time when research about the brain will eventually culminate in an understanding so profound that it will allow us to tell just from a simple MRI, the kind of life an individual has led. Right from the substances he has abused to the molecules that make him the person he is.

My life experiences have moulded me in to a hardworking and what I would call an "unflappable" person. I have learnt that in science (and life) it doesn't hurt to have a healthy sense of humor. My future goals include establishing a career in research and educating people about science. Scientific research has its origins in a very fundamental human character -- curiosity. It is very important though, to ask the right question. Research in Behavioral

Neuroscience at Binghamton has raised many relevant questions and I would like to be one of the people working towards the answers.

(“Life Sciences [Bio/Medical],” http://www.statementofpurpose.com/essay_samples.html)

Mathematics

“Go face the force of the wind, and fight the slash of the rain, the palm of your hands will thicken, the skin of your cheeks will [burn]. But you will walk like a man.” This is the motto that has always endowed me with important inspirations, whether on the occasion when I led my departmental basketball team to win the all-university championship by scoring the winning goal minutes before the referee blew his whistle at the end of the match, or on hundreds of occasions when I compiled computer programs to realize my mathematical conceptualizations. This remark has become a constant source of motivating force that has infused into me the energy to forge ahead relentlessly. This determination is reinforced by the words uttered by Maximus, the protagonist in the Hollywood movie *Gladiator*, on his horse before the battle: “What we accomplish today will resound with rotundity in the eternal future.”

I cultivated an intense interest in mathematics as early as my elementary school. Sometimes termed as the “gymnastics of logical thinking,” mathematics . . . became my central focus of study At middle school, I represented my school . . . in the national Mathematics Olympics Competition [where we went on] to win a second-class award. As soon as I had access to computer in the senior middle school, I became enchanted with the computer programs that possessed equal logical beauty as the mathematics vocabulary and language. Consequently, when I entered Nanjing University where I studied at the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, I felt as if plunging into a vast reservoir of knowledge that allowed me to absorb precious learning to my heart’s content. Not satiated by the theories of mathematics taught in class, I attended many courses in computer theories and application as my subsidiary program, courses that included Data Structure, Operation Systems, Assembler Language like Programming with C Language, Multimedia & Internet Technology, and Mathematical Analysis. Those courses helped to develop my enthrallment with abstract symbols, figures, vocabulary and language.

Although mathematics as a specialized subject is a purely theoretical discipline, I paid much attention to the improvement of my ability to apply mathematics to the solution of practical problems. In my spare time, I liked to study mathematical models and algorithms, trying my hands at their realization by compiling some computer programs. Two classmates and I formed a mathematical model construction team and we researched on the subject of Economic Growth Model, which focused on the modeling of economic growth by applying differential equations of mathematics. . . . My involvement in this undertaking not only deepened my understanding of mathematics, but also perfected my computer techniques. This project was awarded second-class prize of Mathematical Modeling Competition among the colleges and universities in Jiangsu Province.

Another thing that I like to do in my spare time is learning both the hardware and the

software computer skills. So far, I have passed the Grade III Computer Test and Intermediate Level Programmer Test, achieving qualification certificates from large internationally-established software and hardware companies such as MICROSOFT, CISCO, SUN, and GIGABYTE. . . . During the two years in which I acted as chairman of the Computer Association of our university's Students Union, . . . I launched computer training programs to students of non-computer majors. Within a short period of time, the association developed into the largest student organization on campus and under my leadership more than 400 members devoted themselves to honing their computer skills. Besides enhancing my organizational capability and my leadership, I was awarded the honor of the Outstanding Student Organization Leader

In order to test the validity of my knowledge, I attended many off-campus seminars and press conferences at product and technology promotions. In addition, I have published approximately 20 papers featuring my research findings in professional computer journals including Microcomputer, Computer Journal, Computer Lovers, etc. During holidays, I have worked at a number of major computer companies. At HP China, I was responsible for providing clients with solutions to the information platform and for post-sale services. At the User's Software, China's largest financial software company, I was in charge of offering solutions in the field of e-commerce and office digitalization to government organizations, hotels and other institutions. I also conducted extensive internship at the Software Lab of Landsoft Company. Those activities all contributed to strengthening my ability to study solutions. So far, I have acquired successful experiences in more than 10 cases. Last but not least, I am now working part-time at Nanjing Milkway Network Transaction Center offering training courses in MCSE.

Nevertheless, I am painfully aware of the fact that in China one has very limited chances to apply practical mathematics skills and to experience advanced computer knowledge. Although I have received high-level professional training in China, I still face the predicament resulting from the break between theory and practice when I come to tackle practical problems. I have been made sharply aware that my systematic and formal trainings are far from sufficient. Hence, my determination to go abroad to seek further studies at some prestigious universities with mature theoretical research and advanced technologies.

When I studied multimedia and Internet technologies, I discovered that almost all the most advanced multimedia communication technologies and the most mature information platform solutions are derived from Europe. It is frustrating to find that in present-day China in-depth research in these areas is virtually non-existent. Under such circumstances, as an aspiring young student, I have no choice but to pursue advanced trainings in England to study the most updated information technology. Among many prestigious European universities, the University of ----- comes on top of my priorities. My penchant for English universities is not only related to the fact that their long-standing academic tradition, which is universally acknowledged, and nurturing academic environment can satisfy my longing for a quality education. It is also because I, as a person who started learning English in the second grade of my elementary school, have always cherished a special love for English culture. Nothing can delight me more than going to the country where great authors of such ever-lasting literary works as Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, and David Copperfield were born to directly observe, to experience to learn, and above all, to understand.

It is beyond doubt that Europe plays a leading role in the world in the field of communication technology. The communication media in the future will completely incorporate the visualized, multi-platform and highly efficient technology. The problem of bandwidth in data transmission has always been the major obstacle in the development of this technology. I am interested in the field of data compression and de-compression by means of optimized algorithms, a field of research in which lies the ultimate solution to the obstacle in data transmission. I am soberly aware that I am bound to encounter a series of challenges and difficulties in my future academic pursuit abroad. I have to learn a great variety of theories and knowledge in my chosen field on one hand and to face fierce competitions on the other. It is conceivable that I will come under significant psychological pressure. But I am equally convinced that, by availing myself of the excellent intellectual environment and lab facilities of your esteemed university and closely following and grasping the most sophisticated computer technology, I will be able to achieve constant improvement of my abilities on both the theoretical and practical levels. Like Maximus, I have the implicit faith that the efforts that I undertake today will “resound” with lasting echoes in my future.

(“Sample Statement of Purpose for Mathematics,” <http://www.eduers.com/personalstatement/Mathematics1.html>)

Engineering (Structural)

A simple bridge truss was the first structure I ever analyzed. The simple combination of beams that could hold cars, trains, and trucks over long spans of water fascinated me. Having the tools to analyze the loads on the truss further increased my interest in structures. I encountered the bridge in a textbook for my first engineering class.

Knowing that the professor, Mr. John Doe, was a tough teacher, I asked him for the textbook so I could study and get ready for the class over the summer. Just arrived from Belize, I was determined to succeed. In class we learned about forces on simple members and then we put the members together to form a simple truss. At this point I had almost decided that structural engineering was the career for me. From there the class just took off: We went on to frames, distributed loads, considered friction; basically we were incorporating real world considerations into structural members. I loved the practical, problem solving aspects of the field.

At UC my classes were even more advanced. In my analysis and design classes, I especially enjoyed studying steel design because we not only learned the use of the load resistance factor design but also applied that knowledge — I designed a four-story building. The professor was a practicing engineer, and he always related the subject to real life steel structures he had engineered, for example, the SB Medical Center, an all steel building with a base isolated campus. This is the kind of project on which I would like to work, designing the structure and considering how the building will respond to ground motion. After two quarters of structural analysis, I had come as close as possible to analyzing real world structures. Looking back I realize, I had learned great tools for structural analysis, but my “tool box” was still inadequate. I lacked a very important tool: finite element analysis. According to my professor, finite element analysis has revolutionized structural analysis.

Although I liked my classes, my internship experiences really confirmed my interest in structural engineering. While working at Caltrans as a student volunteer, I reviewed computer grading output for streets under construction. The computer suggested numbers for the road grading, and I had to plot the numbers and make sure there were no abrupt grade changes so the water can drain off easily to the sides of the road. It was exciting to know that I was the last checkpoint before the whole project went for approval. It was enjoyable working on something real — Main Street — but I was somewhat disappointed I did not have the chance to work on any structures.

At UC I volunteered through the Student Research Program to work in the geotechnical library. I worked directly with a doctoral student and helped him to develop a geotechnical data base for the local area. I interpreted the data Caltrans had collected and recorded it in a form accessible to the computer and easy to read. It took hours to finish the job, but I enjoyed the precision involved so I did not mind putting in the time. My supervisor liked my work so much, he hired me to continue the project during the summer. Working on this project also showed me the importance of soils in determining buildings' responses to earthquakes and awakened my interest in the response of skyscrapers to seismic stress and movement.

At First Choice U, I plan to enroll in the structural engineering and geomechanics program. In this program I hope to draw on my structural analysis and geotechnical research background as a foundation for studying more advanced concepts. I am particularly interested in researching the ties between the structural engineering, geomechanics, and applied mechanics. I believe research is necessary to acquire data and formulate theories, but it is just as important to know how to apply those theories and use that data in the real world. I hope to be involved in some structurally related research at First Choice U. I am particularly interested in two research facilities: The Structures and Composites Laboratory and the Earthquake Engineering Center.

After completing my degree in engineering and working on engineering projects, I know I want to design structures. That is what has fascinated me since I took Mr. Doe's class. I also know, however, that designing structures of a complexity that appeals to me requires "more tools in my toolbox." Those I can acquire only by continuing my education. To be competent and competitive I will need a masters degree. After completing my degree, I would like to work for an American engineering consulting firm and engineer complex structures and tall buildings, perhaps focusing on the problems surrounding designing for earthquakes. My long-term goals are to return to Belize and found my own engineering consulting firm there.

Structural engineering will allow me to pursue a career where I can be creatively involved in problem solving and design functional structures, like the simple truss bridge that initially captivated me in Mr. Doe's class. My classes, work at Caltrans, and internship in geotechnical engineering have increased my knowledge of and interest in structural engineering since I first looked at the textbook shortly after my arrival in the U.S. A masters degree will give me the up-to-date tools and knowledge to be competitive and competent.

("Sample Essay 2: The Engineering Student," <http://www.accepted.com/grad/sampEssay02.aspx>)

Geology

Growing up in Canada with a life-long fascination for Canadian geography, I have always been interested in returning to the country. Although my family moved to the US before I entered high school, I have always kept my eyes turned north, especially in recent years as I began to read journal articles about research conducted on John Evans Glacier, located about 50°N latitude. Graduating next semester with a B.S. in computer science and engineering and a minor in geographic information systems, I am interested in attending the University of Alberta for graduate study.

Geographic information systems (GIS) is a field especially suited to investigating spatial patterns, modeling diverse scenarios, and overlaying spatial data. This semester, in my advanced GIS course, Spatial Data Structures and Algorithms, I am part of a team developing a temporal database and program for tracing historical trading data. My computer science skills have also been put to use in two summer internship projects, where I acquired proficiency with using LIDAR (light detection and ranging) technology, now favored by NASA in its current 10-year study of Greenland and changes in the ice cap extent. Through my coursework and project experience, I have also accrued skills in using Arc/Info, Arc View, Microstation, and RDBMS software packages, and I am equally comfortable programming in Visual Basic, C++, and Java.

For my graduate research project, I would like to investigate methods for improving current GIS data models to better incorporate time as a variable in studying climate change. Changes in glaciers and polar environments occur rapidly, and these changes become important indicators of broader, potentially catastrophic, global changes. By developing and applying temporal GIS methods to glaciology, I can contribute to improved spatio-temporal analysis techniques for studying the polar environment and glaciers. Also, I can discern which temporal methods serve as the best predictors and provide benefits to the GIS research community that apply to areas other than glaciology.

My long-term goals are to enter the GIS field as a consultant or to extend my research and earn my Ph.D. at a program of international reputation. Having advanced experience with temporal GIS technology would make me a valuable consultant to a company, especially in the twin burgeoning fields of computer science and GIS.

In applying to the University of Alberta, I recognize your strengths in both computer science and glaciology, and the recent application of these areas to field research at Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada, is especially appealing to me. With my deep-rooted interest in Canadian geology and recognition of the quality of your university programs, I hope you will give my application every consideration.

("Short Personal Statement: Geology." Schall, 66)

Paleontology

From an early age I was fascinated with fossils. My respect for ancient life has always included an admitted partiality for the study of vertebrates. Upon taking my first college-level paleontology class I knew without a doubt that I had chosen the right path. The study of fossils has never felt like unwarranted labor, but an opportunity to learn about these creatures that lived so long before our time. Throughout my geology coursework my ears have always pricked up at the mention of the word fossil. My college education has been a means to entering the study of vertebrate paleontology.

Naturally when the time to choose a thesis project came, I made sure that I would do mine in the field of paleontology, working directly with fossil specimens. My project involves the taphonomy, stratigraphy, and identification of a middle-Ordovician coral bioherm as well as its bryozoan constituents. The research is now well under way, involving many aspects of a sound paleontological study: sampling, analysis, identification, and finalization into a report. Fossiliferous rock samples were acquired from the field, cut at proper orientations, polished, and peel section slides produced from them. My analysis of these slides led to identification of the specimens utilizing the established literature. Fossil specimen photography will soon follow. The abstract from this research project has been submitted in time for the Northeastern Section Meeting of the Geological Society of America in March. From this project I will take away an understanding of how to conduct a proper paleontological study and I will write a thesis.

My aspirations for study in vertebrate paleontology are primarily in understanding what fossil specimens can tell us about how ancient vertebrates lived, interacted with their environment, and evolved through time. More specifically, my research interests within the field include employing morphology in the phylogenetic analysis of major evolutionary bifurcations such as that involving theropods and birds, exploiting biogeography to better understand vertebrate expansion and speciation, and the use of functional morphology and biomechanics to understand vertebrate movement. My long-term goals are to educate others and spur interest in vertebrate paleontology while conducting research. The position of professor would encompass these goals as well as allow me to publish and maintain a successful presence in the field.

The program at the University of Chicago would prepare me extremely well for what I ultimately intend to do in life. The works of professors within the Division of Biological Sciences, the Department of Geophysical Sciences, as well as the Field Museum are impressive. I appreciated meeting Dr. Paul C. Sereno during his visit at Mythic University in December 2004, and I find his approach toward exploration and his application of cladistics in phylogenetic studies indispensable to the field of vertebrate paleontological study. From this correspondence I feel the research that I would conduct at the university would not only be interesting and rewarding, but give me experience in the field to then apply toward my ultimate goal of becoming an academic professor.

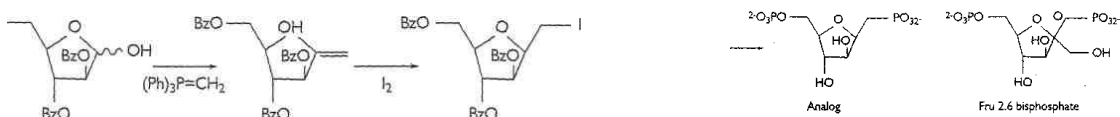
("Short Personal Statement: Paleontology." Schall 67)

Chemistry

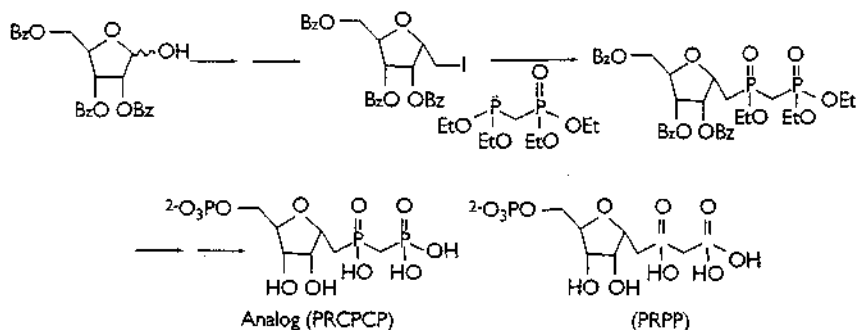
My first research project involved determining whether the enzyme Uridylate Synthase "channels" the intermediate Orotidine 5'-mono-phosphate. This is a multifunctional enzyme and explanations for the evolution of this multifunctionality have been somewhat widespread throughout the literature. This project then questioned the basis of these explanations and offered new hypotheses as to why such multifunctional proteins have evolved. I wrote the computer modeling programs, which integrated, through recursion, all of the relevant Michaelis-Menton rate equations. This analysis proved that a channeling argument was unnecessary to explain the available experimental evidence. I also performed some related enzyme assays in order to check several related hypotheses developed by Dr. McClard and myself.

Last summer I worked on an organic synthesis project which involved synthesis of one interesting analogue of a potent, possibly the most potent, regulator of the gluconeogenesis glycolysis pathways fructose 2, J-bisphosphate. The key to the synthesis of the analogue shown below is control of the stereochemistry of the previously anomeric carbon. My work was involved in the reactions with I₂ and Br₂ and creation of the "halogenonium" ion of the Wittig product from the starting protected arabinofructoside sugar, also shown below.

BzO



My current research project, my senior thesis, is related to the one I was involved in during the summer. In this case I am attempting to synthesize an analogue of phosphoribosylpyrophosphate (PRPP) which is the molecule that provides the sugar portion in the de novo pathway of pyrimidine biosynthesis. This work utilizes the same synthetic scheme as shown above with the exception of starting with the ribose sugar and several changes in the phosphorous portion of the molecule. The synthetic scheme below shows the route I hope to exploit in synthesizing the target molecule. These projects were all carried out with Prof. McClard at Reed College.



("Essay #40: 'Multifunctional Enzymes.'" Asher 247-248.)

III. Humanities and Literature

African Studies

It was February again and I could feel that familiar uneasiness returning to me. My fourth grade classmates' stares seemed to chain me to my seat with unbearable weight. I slumped in my chair, head lowered, eyes downcast staring at my open textbook. My nine-year-old body looked the physical portrayal of the effects of racism— degradation, self-consciousness, and embarrassment. My teacher's voice still rang in my mind, "Raina, would you like to read to the class the chapter on slavery?"

At the time, all I knew about my cultural background as an African-American was what the textbooks had made sure I understood—my history in this country began as a slave. This was among the only roles in the history books in which I was shown a reflection of myself—an image painted by someone else, an outsider looking in. I too felt as an outsider when my fourth grade teacher picked me out because of my color, asking me to read for my race to the rest of the class. It was not what the textbooks told me about my African-American heritage that had the greatest impact on me as a young person developing a worldview and a self-perspective. Rather, it was what the writers had strategically left out that stunted my knowledge, pride, and self-worth as a human being contributing to the achievements of the world.

African history before its transplanting, or "before its beginning again" in the New World, has been repeatedly and systematically written out of human history. This is one of the greatest oppressions affecting the African Diaspora. This failure to acknowledge and appreciate African contributions to human civilization creates a void in the self-development and self-perspective of the New World African individual. In turn, its ramifications ripple outward to contort how the rest of the world perceives us. As a developing African-American thinker, I was unable to connect myself to a cultural context greater than what my education had spoon-fed me: redundant images of slave auctions and sardine-packed cargo trains of which the textbooks seemed to never tire. Since that fourth grade experience my parents have taught me that in order to learn anything about myself I must take my own initiatives. It is imperative that I choose my own sources and find accounts of my people's experiences written from their own minds. This is my passion—actively investigating sources of knowledge from which I can draw my own conclusions. The systematic suppression of African history in conventional education has only added fuel to my curiosity to learn about a history in which a reflection of myself emanates from the center. I want to share my passion and my research findings with others, especially reaching children at an early age so that they may have firm foundations on which to build knowledgeable minds and healthy self-esteem.

As a double major at Beloit College in anthropology and classical civilizations I have a strong background from which I can develop a successful future doing my passion—researching and teaching. I want to concentrate on the sociocultural traditions of West Africa, as well as studying her great achievements and contributions of antiquity. I want to research how traditional social pat-terns have been transplanted among the Diaspora in the New World, especially among African-Americans. I want to investigate this through a historical-archaeological approach as

well as from a modern perspective through cultural anthropology. In order to achieve this goal I must interact between a web of disciplines: African and African-American studies; archaeology; and cultural anthropology. Ultimately my goal is to actively engage the public. I plan to do this through volunteer and professional training pro-grams that focus primarily but not only on African-Americans, targeting our youth and immersing them in the rediscovery of African history and contribution through education, in archaeology.

My vision works from my mindset that African history is world history. It belongs to all of us as a part of our collective human history. I also believe in the educating of the peoples from the inside out—instilling a solid foundation of African knowledge in the black community and reaching out from there. My vision begins in the teaching of primarily African-Americans with emphasis on the education and hands-on involvement of our youth, but ultimately it is to equip them with the tools to be the educators of a wider, cross-cultural audience. A major part of my vision is in leading excavations, both in the New World and in Africa, where African-Americans will have the opportunity to dig, learn, and hopefully develop a deeply seeded respect and passion for their long-neglected histories. In addition, I want to set up an internship program where African-American students can be African archaeological research assistants, training them in excavation techniques and mentoring them in scholarly research methodology.

I want my brothers and sisters to experience the same excitement and inspiration that I feel through the empowerment of research and re-discovery of themselves and their history. I want them to share the feeling I had during a visit to Howard University when I laid my eyes on the bones of first-generation New World Africans whose remains had been salvaged from a black burial ground in New York. I was fascinated and moved to learn how they had kept their West African tradition alive even in their death through the details of their burial ritual. Archaeology is an eye-opening and mind-enriching avenue for the education of our youth. It is a field of ever-advancing scientific technology while simultaneously a science of human imagination through the employment of individual interpretation. After all, archaeology is the material evidence of human ritual. It is the byproduct of behavior, which is itself a manifestation of an ideology. This is what I want to re-discover and teach—African ideas that have been forgotten, mis-credited, or stealthily lost from the pages of history. It is time they were recognized and repatriated to and by their own people.

I have already made some progress toward my goal of becoming an Afrocentric archaeologist. As both a McNair Scholar and an Associated Colleges of the Midwest Minority Scholar, I designed an archaeological research project. This past summer I was the research assistant to archaeologist Dr. Robert Salzer. I spent 13 weeks at the internationally recognized southwest Wisconsin Gottschall rock shelter site doing intense excavations and conducting original research. As the assistant ceramics analyst at the site, my project was to research and record the style category and vertical distribution of each of the 2,000 pottery sherds unearthed over the past 14 years of excavations at this site. In addition to this, I had to format a computer program into which this data could be stored and re-opened as new sherds are uncovered over the following years. Ultimately, in addition to an in-depth research paper, I will speak about my project results at a professional archaeological conference in the spring. Also, my findings will culminate in a joint publication by my mentor and me in a professional journal—an article which will challenge the pre-established ceramics chronology for that region. This research and analyst

assistantship and publication has equipped me with the archaeological training and exposure that I will need in order to be successful in my further studies in Old and New World African Archaeology—a rare opportunity for an undergraduate.

In addition to this experience, by the time this essay is received, I will be in Senegal, West Africa, studying anthropology at the Universite de Cheikh Anta Diop—the father of and greatest mind of his time in Afrocentric anthropology. Finally, I will be doing what I am passionate about—experiencing firsthand West African culture. This trip will be the physical reconnection for which I have been mentally preparing myself. I see this experience as the launch pad toward a successful future as a student in the Ph.D. program in African studies at Temple University.

I am the first person on both sides of my family to attend college, let alone to continue my education into the graduate level. I have made it this far, but if I am to make my goals into achievements, I must find my future at Temple University. I see myself as a dedicated, serious, and passionate student and leader, and I am confident that I possess the drive and self-discipline to successfully complete my doctoral study at Temple University. I strongly feel I have found my *nia*, or purpose, and now I must take the next step toward making my vision a reality. I have researched African studies and anthropology programs at Temple University and am excited to find that they align perfectly with what I want to study and teach others. I am enthusiastic about my field of study and anticipate the day when I will be teaching. In my study of Professor Molefi Kete Asante's book *Afrocentricity*, in speaking of his writing and the transformation of one's worldview through Afrocentricity he states, "Formless becomes form; black spaces are filled with truth ... a new perspective, a new approach, a new consciousness invades our behavior" (pg. 6). I think of my own vision taking form, becoming reality. I will know the reward of the pursuit of my goal when I will see a young person sitting tall, head raised, and voice loud and confident as I ask her to read to the rest of the class about her ancestors and the mighty West African kingdom of Cayor.

("Essay #6: 'The Real History.'" Asher 128-132.)

Literature (American)

"The apparition of these faces in the crowds: /Petals on a wet, black bough." My first reaction on reading Ezra Pound's 1916 poem *In a Station of the Metro* was that of outrage. Is it a poem by any definition? If it is a poem, how is it to be interpreted and understood? And finally, what are the implications that this poem has produced for the twentieth-century American literature?

My initial bewilderment subsided as I realized that there must be a *raison d'être* behind this apparently bizarre literary phenomenon. What I should do is to put this poem into the context of the American literary evolution and literary history. At least, the poem raises an important challenge. It requires me to understand some of the crucial changes that must be happening around the turn of the last century.

My subsequent studies indicate that this poem represents part of the larger literary

movement known as Imagism, which included such theorists and practitioners as T. E. Hume, Hilda Doolittle, Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, etc. The movement was a direct reaction to the late Victorian poetry, which had become extremely artificial, emptily “rhetorical” and “ornamental”. To address such problems, it was necessary to loosen the metrical pattern and bring it back closer to the rhythms of ordinary speech. Consequently, the “imagist” movement had a great deal to do with promoting experiments with free verse, advocating among many creeds the need “to allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject” and “to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.” When Archibald MacLeish said in his *Ars Poetica* (1926) that “A poem should not mean / But be”, he had similar concerns in his mind. Imagism, minor as it is as a literary movement, triggered important changes in literary criticism, introducing the notion of internal studies as embodied by New Criticism to substitute the conventional critical practices.

The foregoing incident is but one instance that happened in my study of literature. For a Chinese student like me, it has at least two important implications. First, a literary work must not be treated in isolation. It interacts with what is written before it and after it and this historical perspective is one way in which we may add to our interpretation. Second, it is important to be acquainted with relevant literary theories when interpreting a given literary work.

. . . .

I started reading English novels as soon as I began my undergraduate program. But I primarily used it as a way to increase my vocabulary and to improve my reading comprehension. Since the second year in my undergraduate program, our curriculum included five major courses related to Anglo-American literature and culture: Selected Readings in English Literature, Selected Readings in American Literature, Introduction to European Culture, The History of English and American Literature, Selected Readings in English & American Fictions. Those courses provided me with a cultural and historical framework with which to understand Anglo-American literature and to know their interrelationships. I grew familiar with major authors and works in British and American literature and gained tentative knowledge of western critical approaches. Books like *Literary Theory—An Introduction* by Terry Eagleton and *20th Literary Criticism* edited by David Lodge proved somewhat esoteric to me, but they allowed me to realize that there are important critical approaches very different from those in Chinese literature and different from conventional ones in western literature itself.

My defining interest in British and American Literature led me to write about T. S. Eliot and his poetry in my thesis *Dull Roots Stirred by the Spring Rain—Meaning Through Imagery* in T. S. Eliot’s “Waste Land”(available upon request). In this thesis, I examined different groups of imagery that T. S. Eliot employed to externalize his central ideas and emotions. I also analyzed the theoretical justifications for his virtually excessive use of imagery by tracing it to his theory of “Objective Correlative” that he proposed in *Hamlet and His Problems*, a critical essay contained in *The Sacred Wood* (1920). . . .

In the last semester of my undergraduate program, I was recruited by my university to teach the course *Appreciation of American Literature* to . . . non-English major[s]. By applying my computer skills, I developed a series of courseware, covering different periods of American literature and illustrated by graphics and diagrams to make an otherwise difficult course interesting and easy to understand.

Nevertheless, I am fully aware that my knowledge of American literature is far from sufficient. I need to receive more advanced education for the sake of a better career development. Therefore, I plan to apply for a Graduate program in English at the University of XX, concentrating on modern and contemporary American literature. Your program is nationally recognized (listed as among the top 10 in XX according to XX) and it [attracts] me for its quality, small size and close mentorship. I am interested in your well-designed curriculum [in] Contemporary American Literature, American Literary History, Special Topics in American Literature, [and] American Literature 1865-1914, 1914-1960. . . . I believe I am well-prepared and genuinely motivated for your program, which will teach me the knowledge and expertise nowhere to be sought in my own country.

("Sample Statement of Purpose for 20th Century American Literature,"
<http://www.eduers.com/personalstatement/20th-Century-American-Literature1.html>)

Literature (English and American)

Having majored in literary studies (world literature) as an undergraduate, I would now like to concentrate on English and American literature.

I am especially interested in nineteenth-century literature, women's literature, Anglo-Saxon poetry, and folklore and folk literature. My personal literary projects have involved some combination of these subjects. For the oral section of my comprehensive exams, I specialized in nineteenth century novels by and about women. The relationship between "high" and folk literature became the subject for my honors essay, which examined Toni Morrison's use of classical, biblical, African, and Afro-American folk tradition in her novel. I plan to work further on this essay, treating Morrison's other novels and perhaps preparing a paper suitable for publication.

In my studies toward a doctoral degree, I hope to examine more closely the relationship between high and folk literature. My junior year and private studies of Anglo-Saxon language and literature have caused me to consider the question of where the divisions between folklore, folk literature, and high literature lie. Should I attend your school, I would like to resume my studies of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with special attention to its folk elements.

Writing poetry also figures prominently in my academic and professional goals. I have just begun submitting to the smaller journals with some success and am gradually building a working manuscript for a collection. The dominant theme of this collection relies on poems that draw from classical, biblical, and folk traditions, as well as everyday experience, in order to celebrate the process of giving and taking life, whether literal or figurative. My poetry draws from and influences my academic studies. Much of what I read and study finds a place in my creative work as subject. At the same time, I study the art of literature by taking part in the creative process, experimenting with the tools used by other authors in the past.

In terms of a career, I see myself teaching literature, writing criticism, and going into editing or publishing poetry. Doctoral studies would be valuable to me in several ways. First,

your teaching assistant ship program would provide me with the practical teaching experience I am eager to acquire. Further, earning a Ph.D. in English and American literature would advance my other two career goals by adding to my skills, both critical and creative, in working with language. Ultimately, however, I see the Ph.D. as an end in itself, as well as a professional stepping stone; I enjoy studying literature for its own sake and would like to continue my studies on the level demanded by the Ph.D. program.

(Stelzer 40-41, in Doran and Brizee, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/2/>)

Literature (Medieval)

Medieval literature is a passion that has enveloped me since I read Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot* during my freshman year. In this Arthurian romance, Chrétien represents Lancelot as conflicted—a chivalrous knight whom one expects to find only in myth, yet in violation of the code of honor, desirous of his lord's queen. I began thinking of the tales of the Arthurian knights as more than legendary—as potentially credible historical accounts. Soon, I wrote a paper on Gawain's rhetoric as a means to elicit specific responses in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Gawain's rhetorical strategies and their manipulations ultimately lead him to a deeper personal recognition and self-acceptance. This early exercise alerted me to the pleasures of working with languages of the Middle Ages.

My academic interest in Celtic Studies was piqued when I learned of Ogam stones in my Literature in the Natural World class. Ogam is not a spoken language, rather, a code of inscriptions that gave the Irish language an alphabet and supplied the Irish people with a means of writing on stone, wood, and other natural elements with relative ease. Ogam is also found in many manuscripts, where it is both written and read in a manner different from that employed when it is found on stones. As an aspiring academic in Medieval Literature, I recognize that knowledge of the literature of medieval cultures is vitally important. Irish literature, including Ogam inscriptions and manuscripts, is therefore essential to a medieval scholar. The Frenchman Gregory of Tours said of the humanities in medieval Europe, "Culture and education are dying out in every city in Gaul . . . People often complain 'Alas for our times, literacy is dying among us.'" While Gregory's testimony may have been true for much of Europe, where culture floundered in the midst of war, he neglected to speak of Ireland, the country where literature and language flourished during this era and later became known as the "Land of Saints and Scholars." Three of the most impressive medieval manuscripts were created in Ireland: *The Gospels of St. Willibrord*, which is on display in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, *The Book of Kells*, and *The Book of Durrow*, both of which are displayed in Trinity University's Library.

Last May I had the pleasure of meeting with Professor Damian McManus, head of Trinity University's School of Irish, who presented me with a copy of his book *A Guide to Ogam*. I met with him to discuss the graduate opportunities available in Old and Middle Irish Language and Literature at Trinity University. Dr. McManus has many research initiatives, although these are open only to students who have previously worked with Early Irish studies. During our meeting, he suggested that I first conduct my studies with Dr. Kim McCone at the National University of Ireland at Maynooth, and then return to Trinity where I can further pursue a research degree under his guidance. After obtaining the necessary fundamentals of Old and Middle Irish

language, I will be better equipped to study Ogam stones and to read the inscriptions, which would enable me to study another field of academia: epigraphy.

The National University of Ireland at Maynooth provides the opportunity to create one's own program. This would best prepare me for future graduate research in Ogam stones and would allow me to enhance my knowledge of medieval writings by including both Irish literature and the English, French, and Latin literature that compose much of the western medieval canon. Professor McCone, whom Dr. McManus regards as one of the "finest scholars in the field of Early Irish," is the head of NUI Maynooth's Department of Old and Middle Irish, and personally helps international students to construct a program to suit their needs during their study in Ireland.

In order to prepare myself for Ogam studies with Dr. McManus, I plan to complete a one year program of study leading to an M.A. in Old and Middle Irish Studies, which would consist of the standard canon of Medieval Irish Literature, Old and Middle Irish language, and a class devoted to the women of Medieval Ireland. This class specifically catches my interest because a study of medieval women is integral to a full understanding of the Middle Ages, as many Irish scholars were monks, living in monastic settlements such as Clonmacnois and Glendalough, where women were forbidden. That NUI Maynooth offers a class devoted to medieval women—often prohibited from studying at these monastic centers of education—exhibits the department's intent in providing students with a balanced history of Ireland's Middle Ages. There is no doubt that Ireland's wealth of medieval literature boasts women writers comparable to Marie de France, whose "Lanval" was the first piece of medieval literature written by a woman that I studied.

While attending university in Maynooth and learning the early Irish language, I would also have the invaluable opportunity of learning from my distant cousin, who resides in Maynooth. She has taught modern Irish in schools for years and would tutor me in modern Irish language while I study Old and Middle Irish with Dr. McCone. This unique prospect would allow me to study the development of Irish from its beginnings to its modern form, a development which I am currently studying in an Honors English seminar on the history of the English language. Because I am now tracing the development of English, I will already have many of the skills necessary to study the evolution of the Irish language.

Clearly the journey of a young scholar is more complete with an understanding of other cultures, specifically those relevant to the student's chosen field of study. I look forward, therefore, to studying the ancient, medieval, and modern ideas and languages of Ireland in situ. *Is d'Éirinn mé.*

("Short Personal Statement by a Student in Medieval Literature,"
<https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementonline/>)

IV. Arts (Fine Arts, Music, Film, Theatre, and Dance)

Music

There is no doubt that everyone has affection for music, whether it is a hobby or a part of their career. I soon realized that my interest went far beyond that of my friends. I would spend endless hours listening to music as I was fascinated by the passion and imagination put into it. The desire that began as a listener soon convinced me that I wanted to become more involved in the practice and creativity of music. By taking up piano lessons I wanted to be able to demonstrate what I enjoyed as a listener. Playing, learning theory, and continuing to listen and study the context of music has helped me to achieve a more intuitive understanding of the subject that I am driven by. It has been only 4 years since I started studying music and learning the piano. As a late starter, I have never felt disadvantaged; on the contrary, I took the opportunity to prove to myself that I was capable of reaching higher standards in music.

I have performed on a regular basis as a soloist in school and at other venues. Some of these performances have included Recital Evenings, O.A.P parties, a Leavers' Concert, and annual piano recitals with my various piano teachers. My ensemble experiences have included performing with a flautist and singer and accompanying soloists. I have enjoyed the ensemble work I have undertaken. I am always committed whenever I perform in public as I continually try to extend this ability. I made the decision to attend master classes regularly at the Royal Academy of Music and have taken notes in order to help me develop a more assured and authoritative interpretation. This also extended to the presentation of the music. Not only is it a delight seeing outstanding pianists demonstrating an artistic performance, but also, there is satisfaction seeing the outcome when applying the knowledge to my own work.

Another aspect of music that I am interested in is composing. I found the compositional processes that I learnt whilst completing A level music was stimulating and creative. I composed and recorded a piece for the BBC Young Composers' Competition as I felt that I was developing the aptitude and imagination to succeed. I have learnt and enjoyed the procedures of analysing music. I have used these techniques to compose in pastiche style music from the romantic period, echoing composers such as Chopin and Tchaikovsky. I was also able to notate my compositions which proved to be a useful skill as a musician.

I am currently in my gap year and have chosen to devote it entirely to music. I will be continuing performance projects in addition to giving individual piano tuition. I plan to assist music teachers in the classroom at my previous school. I took the initiative to gain an understanding about the music industry by applying for a placement at a leading artist management company (Askonas Holt). I am working towards my Diploma in piano performance (DipABRSM), which will be completed next summer.

Whilst studying A-level Music I found out that I greatly enjoyed analysing the harmonic, melodic, and structural language of music. I was specifically interested in Wagner's leitmotif concept, which was introduced to me in "Prelude" to *Tristan and Isolde*. When music analysis work is assigned to me, I not only use the resources given to me by my teachers, but I also make

use of extra material from libraries so that my research can be more thorough. I very much enjoyed analyzing and harmonizing Bach Chorales. . . .

Music has undoubtedly been the most rewarding experience of my education. My teachers have been a constant inspiration over the years and I look forward to the opportunity of extending my knowledge and experience in higher education.

(Bravinsan, <http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=857&view=subject>)

Music (Acoustic)

As a special musical genre, electro-acoustic music is obviously not for everyone to learn and to practice. A true practitioner of electro-acoustic music must be a talent both in music and in electronic technology. In the country where I come from—China, computer technology has been primarily applied to solve practical problems of immediate utility to people’s daily life. People have rarely interested themselves in using computer technology to give vent to your creative impulses, especially their creativity in music.

Another factor that might have contributed to the absence of computer music in China is the fact that people face a double-bind—those who excel in music are rarely proficiency in computer science and technology and those who are computer geni might be musically insensitive. Hence, computer music has failed to emerge as an academic discipline in any standard academic institutions in China, either in the department of computer science and technology or in the department of music. In a word, computer music is the a little-known subject.

With important backgrounds both in music and in computer science and technology, I believe that computer music is where my true talent and potential lie and a Master’s program in this area is the most appropriate choice for me at the stage of my intellectual development. Compared with my classmates at the School of Electronic Information Engineering, xx University, I am the first student ever to choose such a program and it is most exciting for me to be a precursor in a virgin area.

In applying for your program, my primary motivation is to fulfill my long-cherished wish to become a musician. I started practicing piano at the age of 5. . . . Although I had many classmates from elementary school to high school who were also exposed to the piano playing, only I . . . consistently served as accompanist of school choruses throughout. I would have entered a conservatory to practice music, but my exceedingly good performance in science subjects during the highly competitive national college entrance examinations convinced my parents that my talents [lay] that way. Therefore, under my parents’ insistence, I became a student of electronic and information engineering at xx University.

However, my musical aspirations have been kept alive through my own persevering endeavors. I was a mezzo-soprano at the chorus under the university’s art troupe from 1st to 5th semester and, concomitantly, its piano accompanist. Since the 6th semester and beyond my

graduation, I have been a cellist at the national music troupe, playing cello while teaching cello lessons to newcomers with basic skills. In addition, I was responsible for adapting the staff into numbered musical notations suitable for performance by Chinese traditional musical instruments. Throughout my undergraduate program, I was constantly involved in performance on and off campus, in major cities across the country, as well as in various intercollegiate competitions. For my contributions to our university's chorus and art troupe, I was awarded "Outstand[ing] Member Honor" in addition to scholarship.

While performing those important extracurricular responsibilities, I did not allow myself to be lax in my academic efforts. On the contrary, as I realized I was to concentrate on computer music, I did my coursework with greater initiative and passion. All the courses related to computer science and electronic engineering fascinated me, particularly courses like computer programming, electronic circuitry, digital signal processing and information theory that were highly relevant to computer music. After learning Information Theory and Coding as a senior, I applied it to my composition. The broad curriculum in my specialty allowed me to acquire knowledge and skills in computer, electronic engineering and communication. I can undertake programming skillfully with C++ and Java languages and attempt at complicated circuit design.

Two books played an important role in defining my interest in computer music. Reading *The Computer Music Tutorial* by Curtis Roads and *New Sounds: A Listener's Guide to New Music* by John Schaefer gave me the epiphany that by combining my electronic engineering expertise with my musical talents, I may become one of the emerging computer musicians in China. Yet I was also aware that, to become a well-trained computer musician, I need[ed] to improve my theoretic knowledge of musical composition. Therefore, I self-studied a number of books on musical composition and on MIDI in my spare time and, based on my skills of playing the piano, cello, and *erhu* (a two-stringed traditional Chinese instrument). I have succeeded in creating several pieces of my own small-scale independent compositions.

By undertaking my graduation project xx, I took a major step toward the creation of full-length computer music. In my project, I developed a DirectX9.0-based Win32 program that, through the synchronization of DirectDraw and DirectMusic, demonstrated the entire process of playing the MIDI in the form of "piano roll." At the same time, the DirectMusic component in the then latest edition of Microsoft DirectX 9.0 controlled the playing of the animation to realize the rhythmic synchronization between the flash and the music

With all the qualifications I have, I would like to apply for a Master's program in computer music at XX University, which will prepare me for advanced work in areas of music where technology occupies an essential role. Among the three tracks offered by your program—Composition, Performance/Concert Production, and Research/Music Technology, I am interested in the final track, which will allow me to develop new music technology. I will be able to work with practicing composers and performers in developing technology such as real-time performance systems. Being one of the best institutions in the field of computer music in the United States, with your small, friendly and intensive environment, your program will permit me to fully tap my potential in music and computer science in perfect fusion.

In my proposed study, I will focus on music theory and music technology. I will try to

develop in-depth knowledge of the technological requirements of the composers and performers so as to provide my full technical support to them. Meanwhile, I will do my own compositions to develop my creativity. In particular, I hope to create electro-acoustic compositions modeled on traditional Chinese national music. It is my conviction that your exciting program will be a major starting point for my professional development.

("Sample Personal Statement for Electro-Acoustic Music"
<http://www.eduers.com/personalstatement/Electro-Acoustic-Music.html>)

Film

Poetry

Steven Spielberg has said that he makes the movies he loved to watch as a child. Woody Allen has expressed the same approach. I can say no such thing.

I remember hating the cinema as a child—at least those films that were prescribed to my gender and age group. While my father studied cinema in college (and my mother theater, no less), the medium had no appeal to me. My three adopted siblings frequented the local Ritz Theater on Saturday afternoons. I chose not to go.

In the fall of my senior year of high school, everything changed—I fell in love. My father recommended *Annie Hall* to me, and I rented it on a whim, finding it stuffed into a rack in a dirty little corner of "Video Stars" and priced conveniently at forty-seven cents. I watched the film at 2 AM that night and did not get a wink of sleep. I had discovered the cinema. Jean-Luc Godard, who had original intentions of being a novelist but was "crushed by the spectre of the great writers," likens his discovery of the cinema to discovering a new poetry, perhaps a new voice. "I saw a film of Jean Vigo, a film of Renoir, and then I said to myself, I think that I could do that too, me too." For me, I had found a new poetry and a new poet in Woody Allen, and he revealed to me other poets, including Godard.

Plastics

One year later, a jump into the study of film was not an immediate decision. With a high school education grounded rigorously in math and science, I entered Mythic University on an academic scholarship with Polymer Science and Engineering as my intended major. I like to joke that, after seeing Mike Nichols' film *The Graduate* and hearing that terrific line, "plastics," delivered poolside to a wayward Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman), I was inadvertently led into the hands of the great polymer Satan. But, by sophomore year, I quickly escaped the plastic devil's clasp and found a new home in the film department.

Children

I remember being told once as an undergraduate (and the actual source of this like so many other pieces of great advice has slipped away into some crevice in my mind) that directing your own material is like parenting—you don't have to know what you're doing so much as have an idea, and try very hard, and listen, and be honest, and your children will still turn out all right, and you will likely even have some insight into and influence on them. To be honest, I really have no idea if this advice will prevent me from raising a serial killer one day, but I have found it

to be an accurate description of directing my own material as a student and usually a favorable approach to take with a cast and crew of peers. Despite this reassuring advice on directing and my degree in film production, I still feel that my writing abilities are far more developed and refined than my visual storytelling skills. This is a major reason for my interest in graduate-level study of directing.

The culmination of my student film work was a nineteen-minute child called *Burying Dvorak*—a coming-of-age comedy about a fourteen-year-old boy and his taxidermist-stuffed basset hound. The film, since its premiere at Mythic University's Annual Student Film Festival (which routinely sells out the 700+ seat Mythic University Auditorium), has now appeared in more than a score of festivals, including the Los Angeles International Short Film Festival and the New York Expo of Short Film and Video, and has won several awards. I dislike awards in art, however—as treasurer of Mythic University's Student Film Organization I strongly advocated the removal of awards from the student film festival—and am most happy through film festivals just to reach new people with the work and similarly meet other wonderful filmmakers. This was an opportunity only afforded to me because I took a year off after my undergraduate studies to save money, travel to arts and film festivals, and write.

Geography (Plastics Reprise)

I return to the subject of plastics because I never fully left them. Mythic University's Polymer Science Department is housed within the same college as the university's Department of Geography. On a suggestion from my first honors advisor, I took a few geography courses during my freshman year and was a Geography and Film double major since.

What do Geography and Film have to do with one another? My fellow students have spared no creativity in rearticulating this question. "So, do you wanna, um, make documentaries for National Geographic.. .or create chloropleth maps of celebrity sightings?"

Geography is not, despite what we may have garnered from our high school educations, simply state maps and capitals. It is the study of any phenomenon over space. In the Kantian sense, at least in terms of his a priori human categorizers of time and space, Geography is as essential as History—the study of any phenomenon over time. While most academic disciplines, including the cinema, thoroughly examine themselves in relation to time, they miss an opportunity to do so with space. For me then, Geography enables the intellectual development of one's capabilities to render and analyze space. After all, when a director blocks characters and camera, what is he or she doing but creating spatial relationships that reinforce the emotive content of a scene? Furthermore, the concept of place is intimately bound within multiform relations of power (conceived here in Foucaultian terms) that "direct" such geographical choices as where films are made, where films do or supposedly do take place (setting), and where the people come from who make the films (actors, writers, directors, producers, etc.).

Columbia University

My choosing Columbia University is not because I want to be a New York filmmaker or make films about New York City. How could I make a more meaningful film about New York than that person, Woody Allen, who allowed me to fall in love with the cinema in the first place? At the moment, I doubt that I will even want to stay in the city beyond graduate school. My

interest is elsewhere in a more rural aesthetic—not the imaginary/metaphorical rural of the western, but an authentic rural as told by such filmmakers as Terrence Malick and more recently David Gordon Green.

What I want from New York and Columbia is an opportunity to let my talents and personal vision marinate with those of other filmmakers and artists who are working at the highest level. I want to influence and be influenced, experiment and fail, and develop as a visual storyteller under the guidance and support of a faculty and program renowned for their narrative work—which is, despite my fondness for both my professors and friends, not Mythic University. Most importantly, I do not want to need each short film to make or break me like so many independent filmmakers I meet at festivals—most of whom do not get anything but a new audience at each festival to their disappointment, although this is really the most wonderful thing, to my lights. At Columbia, I want to work with the same zeal and spirit as when I was a high school senior making VHS movies after seeing *Annie Hall*. I want to create more of my own cinematic children, and, in doing so, continue to discover my own voice, my own poetry.

(“Extensive Personal Statement: Film.” Schall 98-100)

Sample Prompts

Below we offer examples of statements of purpose prompts from several universities in a variety of disciplines. Think about the ways you might respond to the different types of questions and instructions included in the prompts to help you prepare to write your own statements.

University of California—Davis

Please describe your motivation, academic preparation and aptitude for graduate study at UC Davis. You should describe your academic plans and research interests, your specialization within your academic field, your research experiences and your career goals.

Kellogg School of Science and Technology

Please submit a statement reflecting your purpose in applying to graduate school and specifically your reason for selecting The Scripps Research Institute's doctoral program. You may include your Laboratory Experience in you Statement of Purpose.

Princeton University

Please write a statement of your current academic and future career plans as they relate to the Princeton department to which you are applying. In doing so, please cite relevant academic, professional, and personal experiences that motivate you to apply for a graduate degree here. Your statement should not exceed 1,000 words and must be written in English. Be sure to include your full name, date of birth, and department on each page of your document. **(1,000 words)**

Watson's School of Biological Sciences

In approximately 250-500 words, explain why you wish to undertake graduate studies at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory's Watson School of Biological Sciences. Describe (i) why you want to pursue a career in the biological sciences, (ii) what your research interests are, and (iii) how the Watson School of Biological Sciences Ph.D. program is best suited to help you achieve your goals. Please include details of research experience, employment, extracurricular activities, and any other information (e.g., publications) you believe to be relevant to your application. Use one or more separate sheet of paper for this statement, and please indicate your name at the top of each page. **(250-500 words)**

George Washington University

In an essay of 250-500 words, please state your purpose in undertaking graduate study at The George Washington University. As part of your statement of Purpose, describe your academic objectives, research interests, and career plans. Also discuss your related qualifications, including collegiate, professional, and community activities, and any other substantial accomplishments not already mentioned on the application form.

Doctoral candidates are expected to write a more comprehensive essay (750-1,000 words). In addition to following these guidelines, you should clearly indicate your intended and primary and supporting fields of study and describe your research areas. **(250-500 words; 750-1,000 words)**

Hofstra University

In a statement of approximately 500 to 750 words (check individual program literature for essay length and content, describe your personal and educational history, past employment, volunteer work or related experiences in your intended field of study, plans for graduate study and plans for a professional career. Please describe all activities since your last enrollment in an academic program

University of Iowa—American Studies

This is the most challenging part of the application, because in it you need to condense into a few pages your prior training, your intellectual aspirations, and your reason for applying to Iowa. These topics invite breezy abstractions but the most effective statements are those that more thoughtfully combine specificity with generalities. What has made American Studies attractive to you? A particularly course, a book you've read, the conjunction of two or more courses, the advice of a mentor, the experience of a friend, the example of a teacher? What do you hope to accomplish in your graduate training? What are your intellectual passions, and how do you imagine they will be served by Iowa's program? Why is an interdisciplinary program more appropriate to these needs than a disciplinary one?

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