Personal Statement:

"Oh, your name is Nouhad!" they say. "What does it mean?" I used to hate my name and frequently asked my mother why she did not select a French name for me like my sisters Vera and Vivian. Mom's answer was always "Nouhad is a nice name, and it reflects a love for helping others." I did not believe her until I switched careers from Chief Information Officer in a company to a teacher. In teaching I had found my passion and created a new meaning for my name: Nouhad is student success oriented, inventive, influential, tolerant, friendly, spiritual, creative, expressive, humanitarian, and helpful.

Being a woman, I find myself advocating for women's rights to be an influential and successful model in the field of computer science and STEM fields more broadly. I have faced many adversities throughout my lifetime, at one point being told by a colleague that women did not belong in computer science. From that moment on, I was a woman on a mission. I pursued another doctorate in the United Kingdom, just to be able to realize my dream of teaching at the college level at an American university. I am keenly aware that each student has a story that is likely filled with adversity. My purpose is to create opportunities for my students to pursue their passion like I did, despite opposition from naysayers.

My initiatives of Women Empowerment Booster, SHECODES, Women Coding for Success, and others helping to be successful college students. Another goal as a teacher is to reach more students that may not consider STEM fields as an attainable field of study. I specifically target students from underrepresented identities in computer science including women, students of color, first generation college students, LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with disabilities, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Being an underrepresented person myself, I know how important it is to feel welcome in a space where you are perceived as different from the norm.
I admire and value the variety of cultural backgrounds, learning styles and intellectual abilities in the classroom. I will keep working hard to ignite passion about STEM fields among diverse groups and to bring those benefits into the classroom for all to experience.

I was not blessed with children of my own, but in my students, I get to experience the pride a parent might feel in my students' accomplishments in life. Knowing that I played a part in shaping them into the people they will become is one of the greatest rewards in my life. I share in the joys of their success every time one of my students gets an amazing job or continues to graduate school. I feel especially proud when my female students call me to express gratitude for my dedication to her success and learning, and especially when they call me a role model. In brief, my life feels more complete as I help transform the concept of teaching to learning through collaboration through research, service learning, interventions across cultures and societies. My previous and future accomplishments in teaching, service, and research will always be dedicated to inspiring students, ensuring their success, and encouraging them to fulfill their potential. When I reflect on my name, I accept my mother's intention of "love for helping others" and combine it with my own definition that I have formed through my teaching experiences. My last name "Rizk" means "livelihood" but once again I defined my name through my actions and extended that meaning to my students' livelihood. My love for helping others drives me to be a student success oriented, inventive, influential, tolerant, friendly, spiritual, creative, expressive, a humanitarian all in the name of my student's livelihood.

That is what Nouhad Rizk means and that is who I am.