

Developing Your Personal Statement

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | CAREER SERVICES



Agenda

- Overview of UCS
- What is personal statement?
- Before you write
- Organizing your personal statement
- Resources

Facilitator:
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Career Development Counselor
Pre-Health, Education, Social Work



UCS Virtual Services

Get Help? (Live Chat)



- Virtual Chats: 15 minute Drop-In Hours
 - *Monday-Friday: 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm*
- 30 min ***Career Counseling Appointments*** are virtual all fall; Schedule on Cougar Pathway
- Workshops & Events are virtual all fall
 - RSVP is required to receive MS Teams access code

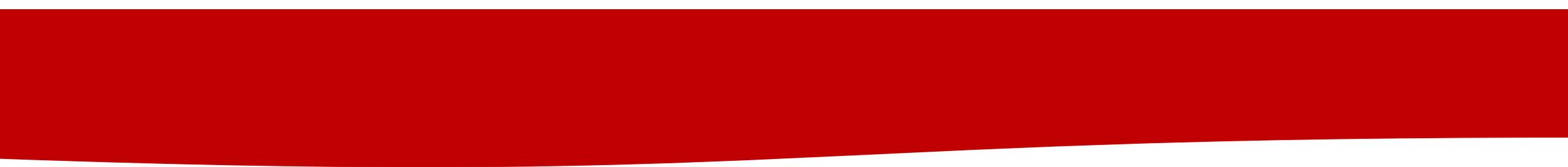
Cougar Pathway

Students can:

- Login to Cougar Pathway through AccessUH
- Schedule a career counseling appointment
- Search and apply for on-campus jobs, internships, and full-time jobs
- Upload and get resume, CV or cover letter virtually reviewed
- Schedule on-campus interviews
- RSVP or sign up for workshops, employer meet and greets and career fairs



What is a Personal Statement?



PERSONAL STATEMENT

- At the end of the day many candidates will have similar GPA's and test scores...
- The personal statement is **YOUR** opportunity to show your
 - **Skills**
 - **Qualities**
 - **Attitude**
 - **Strengths**
 - **Personality**
 - **Interest in the Field**

PERSONAL STATEMENT

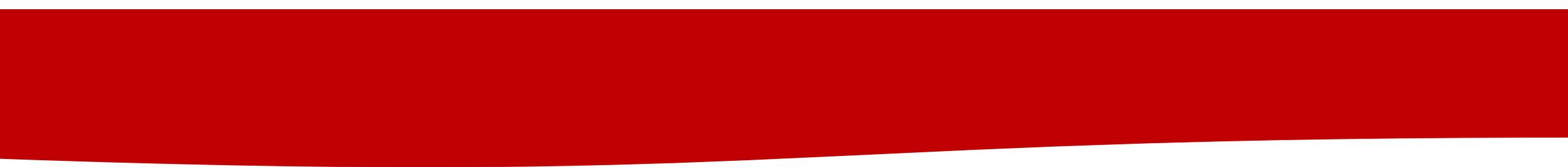
Do

- Picture of who you are as a person
- Invitation to get to know you
- Story of your self-reflection
- Indication of your priorities/choices

Don'ts

- Academic paper about your life
- Resume in narrative form
- Journal entry
- Plea or justification for admission

Before You Write



BRAINSTORM

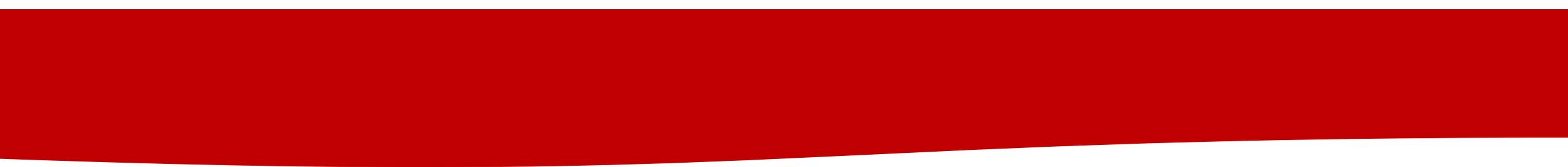
- **Read application instructions carefully**
 - Is there a prompt?
 - Word count
 - Additional essays or short answers to write
- Ask yourself what is your overall personal or professional aspiration?
- Why do you want to attend this program in particular?
- **What makes you qualified applicant/ asset to the program?**



ALSO REMEMBER

1. Focus the narrative on you!
2. Do not write words you typically do not use: **Be your professional self**
3. Be careful with grammar and punctuation
4. Write multiple drafts of your personal statement
5. Read your personal statement out loud
6. Get feedback from University Career Services, the Writing Center, or a professor/ recommender

Organizing Your Personal Statement



STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1 paragraph: 3-5 sentences
 - **Capture your reader's attention**
- Ideas
 - Event, Story, or Quote
- Provide a quick, meaningful snapshot of who you are as a person.
- What sets you apart from other applicants?

INTRODUCTION 1

One of my most eye-opening experiences came when I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans during the summer months of 2014. Up to that point, I had only heard about the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina 9 years earlier. Although pictures and stories of the aftermath compelled me to volunteer, it was not until I observed the emotional pounding the people of New Orleans had experienced that I developed a greater sense of compassion for their plight.

INTRODUCTION 2

New Orleans was hot and humid during the summer months of 2014—no surprise there. However, for a native Oregonian like me, waking up to 90-degree and 85%-humidity days initially seemed like too much to bear. That was until I reflected on the fact that my temporary discomfort was minute in contrast to the destruction of communities and emotional pounding experienced by the people of New Orleans during and after Hurricane Katrina 9 years earlier. Although pictures and stories of the aftermath compelled me to understand its effects on the community and volunteer, actually building homes and interacting with the locals, like 9 year-old Jermaine, who cried as I held his hand while we unveiled his rebuilt home, taught me that caring for people was as much about lifting spirits as making physical improvements.

STEP 2: BODY

- 2-3 paragraphs:4-6 sentences
- Discuss your academic and experience background in terms of the **skills** you have learned and your major achievements.
- Then, explain how this will **impact** your **graduate career and future endeavors.**

WHAT TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT?

- ✓ Shadowing
- ✓ Challenges Overcome
- ✓ Leadership Experience
- ✓ Research Experience
- ✓ Work Experience
- ✓ Internship/Volunteer Experience
- ✓ Missions Trips

SHOW DON'T TELL

- Discuss **why** you pursued the experience
- Mention **how you felt** during the experience
- Describe what you **accomplished and learned**
- Discuss how your experience **affected you** and the world around you
- Describe how the experience **influenced** your decision to pursue medicine

WHICH ONE STANDS OUT?

- **Example 1:** Shadowing the neurosurgeons at Massachusetts General Hospital and witnessing their unwavering dedication to their patients and patients' families helped me realize that I wanted to make a similar impact on people's lives.
- **Example 2:** I was initially frustrated while shadowing neurosurgeons and caring for patients (e.g., conversing with them during downtime and providing anything in my power to make them comfortable, such as extra pillows, water, or snacks) at Massachusetts General Hospital because many patients recovered very slowly—and sometimes not at all. I wondered whether these experiences would deter me from pursuing medicine. Therefore, I was surprised when the opposite occurred. The physicians' unwavering dedication to their patients and families' expressed gratitude—even in their saddest days—provided more than enough confirmation that medicine was the path I should pursue to make a similar physical and emotional impact on people's lives.

STEP 3: CONCLUSION

- 1 paragraph: 3-5 Sentences
- Close with some **specifics** about the target program.
- Show why it is a **good fit for you** based on your interests and experiences

TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT

- Why are you **interested** in this program/university?
 - clinical sites, mentors, research, career/academic support?
- Are there **professors/ researchers/ clinicians** in the program you want to work with? Why?
- Where do you **see yourself** after you get your professional degree?
- **Summary** of your skills/qualities/ interests in health

CONCLUSION EXAMPLE

The consistent theme throughout my extracurricular work is that, whereas I initially pursue experiences—clinical, volunteer, or otherwise—to learn, what sticks with me even more than newfound knowledge is the compassion I develop for the people I serve. Furthermore, I have realized that there is a multitude of ways to serve, such as treating people’s physical ailments, offering empathy for anxious family members, or leaving my comfort zone to help a struggling community. These perspectives, coupled with my lifelong fascination with the human body’s complexities, leave no doubt that medicine is the path through which I want to use my abilities to make a positive holistic impact on people’s lives. I hope 9-year-old Jermaine knows that I was equally touched by his gratitude for a rebuilt home, and how his reaction was partly responsible for me devoting my career to help others feel the way he did on that hot and muggy summer day.

RESOURCES

- <https://www.gograd.org/resources/grad-school-personal-statement/>
- <https://www.grammarly.com/>
- <https://www.sgu.edu/blog/medical/what-the-best-medical-school-personal-statements-have/>
- <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-personal-statement-analysis>

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