

# **WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT**

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# WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

AND WHY DOES IT MATTER...

# YOUR APPLICATION, YOUR VOICE

- ❖ A Personal Statement is, at its core, a piece of writing that describes who you are, your reason for pursuing this application, and how CSUSB can help you in your educational and professional goals.
- ❖ The Personal Statement is your moment of freedom in the application to insert your own narrative as an accompaniment to your online application and transcripts and test scores. This is where you get to present yourself on your own terms and tell your story.
- ❖ A Personal Statement can often fall into categories, depending on the program you are applying to:
  - The general, comprehensive Personal Statement
  - A response to specific prompts given by the department you are applying to.



# HOW TO FORMAT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

IT'S AS EASY AS 1,2,3

# YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT IN THREE STEPS

## Step One: The Introduction

- ❖ Many students find it difficult to simply start writing their Personal Statement. A good way to kick things off, is to simply introduce yourself.
  - My name is Megan Kinnally, and I am applying to the graduate program for English Literature at California State University, San Bernardino.
- ❖ This is a good space to talk about your educational background, relevant professional experience, philanthropic work, and begin the narrative that will frame your story (contextualization, anecdotes, etc.).
- ❖ Contextualize any application shortcomings.
  - Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain? Perhaps your GPA showed a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning, or a great GPA but average GRE scores and/or a strong professional experience?

# YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT IN THREE STEPS

## Step Two: Why CSUSB?

- ❖ With various educational opportunities available, why does this program specifically call to you?
- ❖ What resources, faculty, and student support does this program offer that you feel will encourage success in your education?
- ❖ How do you plan to be involved with your department in regards to events, programming, research, employment, etc.?
- ❖ This is the time to show that you have really done your homework in researching this program, and how you can see how it would be a great fit for you and vice versa.
- ❖ Good places to find this information will be the department website, faculty bios, the university web calendar, student engagement, and so forth.

# YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT IN THREE STEPS

## Step Three: Defining Your Future

- ❖ As a nice endcap to the Personal Statement, it is advised that you give some kind of illumination on what your plan to do with this particular degree once obtained, or how it lends itself to your educational journey.
- ❖ It need not be ironclad, as graduate school is often a time where student focuses will become more specialized and finite as you take classes and participate in mentorship and research, but some kind of loosely defined plan will show the program that you have a vision for how this degree will work in your overall path.
- ❖ Showing the department that you have tangible goals for this degree will also assure them you are motivated to complete this degree, as well as to make accommodations for any necessary life-changes (grad school can definitely be taxing on your time and energy)



# TIPS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

THE DO'S AND DON'TS

# TIPS AND ADVICE

- ❖ Answer the questions that are asked

Make sure to check the department website and Cal State Apply for any questions or prompts to be addressed in the Personal Statement

- ❖ Show familiarity when speaking about the program you are applying to

It is imperative to show the program that you have researched their department thoroughly, as well as to be as specific as you can in your Personal Statement, especially if you are applying to multiple schools.

- ❖ Use graduate-level writing

All programs will be requiring their students to use graduate-level writing, so be sure to take your time writing your Personal Statement and to proofread for grammatical and syntax errors.

# TIPS AND ADVICE CONTINUED...

## ❖ Include only relevant content

Remember, even if the program application doesn't specifically state a maximum for the amount of pages your Personal Statement can be, 1-2 pages is standard. Make sure you only including the most relevant information so your statement reads as clean, coherent, and concise.

## ❖ Avoid clichés

Make sure to include writing that feels personal to you. The application committees will be reading dozens of these Personal Statements and you do not want your to feel carbon-copied from the rest.

## ❖ Stay away from repeated or tired statements

Repeated information can make the statement read as choppy, or monotonous. Keep their attention consistent with information that is stated strongly and clearly one time, rather than repeating it throughout the statement.



# RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

APPOINTMENTS AND CONTACTS

# SOME EXTRA HELP

## ❖ One-on-One Appointments with Megan Kinnally.

While I cannot assist you in *writing* the Personal Statement, I can assist in *reviewing* completed Personal Statements for content, grammatical errors, and formatting issues. Please note, these appointments are limited and must be made at least five business days in advance and ideally about ten days prior to the application submission deadline. Appointments can be made via email at [Megan.Kinnally@csusb.edu](mailto:Megan.Kinnally@csusb.edu)

## ❖ Graduate Writing Center

The Graduate Writing Center has agreed to assist applicants in reviewing their Personal Statements, but please note this does not apply during the summer term. They are open Mon-Thurs: 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM and Friday: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM and can be reached at [WritingCenter@csusb.edu](mailto:WritingCenter@csusb.edu)

## ❖ Graduate Programs

If you have questions regarding your Personal Statement, please feel free to contact the program you are applying to, and ask for assistance in clarifying any questions or concerns you may have. You can view a list of [Department Contacts](#) on the Graduate Studies webpage.



**QUESTIONS?**