
RESEARCH your prospective field

- **Talk with:** professors or other CSUSB staff
- **Meet with:** people working in that industry or studying in that field
- **Check out:** the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* online at www.bls.gov/oco
- **Identify:** prospective schools and seek information on their programs. Check out the *Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Professional Schools* online at www.petersons.com

EVALUATE the various graduate programs based on:

- **Department:** Certain institutions are known for particular programs. Check out the *Gourman Report* or *U.S. News Best Graduate Schools*
- **Faculty:** Research the reputation and areas of specialization of the faculty
- **Program:** Each school has a different curriculum and philosophy. Make sure they meet your educational goals
- **Facilities:** Find out about the libraries, laboratories, and research facilities. What is the depth of the library collection in your particular field of interest?
- **Size:** There are advantages and disadvantages to both small and large universities.
- **Placement:** Where do graduates go after completing the program?
- **Degree requirements:** List all requirements such as residency, clinical, unit requirements, language requirements, examinations, candidacy, dissertation, or thesis.

PREPARE for the admissions process

- **Complete your bachelor's degree**
- **Aim for a minimum of 3.5 GPA** – Some schools average your last 2 years of school, or the courses in your field of concentration.
- **2-3 letters of recommendation** – Choose individuals who know you academically and/or professionally and will give you the best recommendation. The job title or status of that person does not matter; however, at least one reference should be a professor. Before asking for a recommendation, meet with your reference to discuss your career goals and inform them about the program(s).
- **Statement of purpose** – State why you are most qualified to be in that particular program. This is a qualitative way to show your eligibility, not quantitative like GRE scores, transcripts, and grades.
- **Admissions tests** – Check with each school to identify the appropriate exam.

FINANCE your education

- **Fellowships:** Given to students with the expectation that they will maintain and achieve good standing.
 - **Loans:** Check with the financial aid department of the schools to which you are applying about loan possibilities.
 - **Assistantships:** You receive a stipend for which you perform services related to your field.
 - **Grants:** Like fellowships, these are gifts to graduate students that do not have to be repaid. They are often awarded based upon need and/or special qualifications.
 - **Work study:** This type of financial aid assists graduate students by providing job opportunities within the institution or in a public or non-profit agency for up to 20 hours per week.
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WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is your opportunity to sell yourself in the application process; it generally falls into one of two categories:

1. The general, comprehensive personal statement:
 - Allows you maximum freedom in terms of what you write.
 - Type of statement often prepared for standard medical or law school application forms.
2. The response to very specific questions:
 - Business and graduate school applications ask specific questions, and your statement should respond specifically to the question being asked.
 - Some school applications favor multiple essays, typically asking for responses to three or more questions.

Questions to Ask Yourself Before you Write

- What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

General Advice

Answer the Questions That are Asked

- You may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar. Don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications.
- Important to answer each question being asked, and if slightly different answers are needed, you should write separate statements.

Tell a Story

- Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is to bore the admissions committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack. If you distinguish yourself through your story, you will make yourself memorable.

Be Specific

- Don't, for example, state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up with specific reasons. Your desire to become a lawyer, engineer, or whatever should be logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement. Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your story.

Find an Angle

- If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the big challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Concentrate on Your Opening Paragraph:

- The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell What You Know:

- The middle section of your essay might detail your interest and experience in your particular field, as well as some of your knowledge of the field.
- Be as specific as you can in relating what you know about the field and use the language professionals' use in conveying this information. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're suited to it. Since you will have to select what you include in your statement, the choices you make are often an indication of your judgment.

What not to Talk About:

- There are certain things best left out of personal statements. For example, references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier is generally not a good idea. Don't mention potentially controversial subjects (for example, religious or political issues).

Do Your Research:

- If a school wants to know why you're applying to it rather than another school, do some research to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities and programs.

Write Well and Correctly:

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully. Many admissions officers say that good written skills and command of correct use of language are important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits.

Avoid Clichés:

- A medical school applicant who writes that he is good at science and wants to help other people is not exactly expressing an original thought. Stay away from often-repeated or tired statements.

PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHEET

Special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story:

Details of your life might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart:

What and how did you become interested in the medical field:

What have you learned through work, internship, and volunteer activities:

Academic/career goals:

Gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain:

Personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence):

Skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical):

Competencies for Professional School Acceptance

ABILITIES

- G.P.A. (science and overall)
- Test Scores (MCAT, VCAT, OAT, DAT, GRE)
- Writing Ability
- Speaking & Listening Skills
- Critical Thinking

INTERESTS

- Exposure to the field
 - Shadowing/internship/volunteer
 - Career knowledge/Current events
- Leadership and Team Work
 - School/Community Service
- Leisure Activities

VALUES

- Desire for Life Long Learning
- Ethical Standards
- Curiosity
- Maturity and Drive
- Time Management & Organization

INTERVIEW/RECOMMENDATIONS

- Interview:
 - Sincerity and Friendliness
 - Expression and Tics
- Recommendations:
 - Academic
 - Business and Other

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society.

Social Skills: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

Cultural Competence: Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity.

Teamwork: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

Oral Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for actions and performance.

Resilience and Adaptability: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

Capacity for Improvement: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

THINKING & REASONING COMPETENCIES

Critical Thinking: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches.

Quantitative Reasoning: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.

Scientific Inquiry: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; participates in the discourse of science.

Written Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.

SCIENCE COMPETENCIES

Living Systems: Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.

Human Behavior: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.