

Lehigh University
Career Services Center

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Purposes of the Personal Statement

- **Qualitative** dimension of your application
- Demonstration of your communication skills
- Important way for the Admissions Committee reader to get to know **“YOU”** apart from “your numbers”: your personality, your motivation, how your life experience has culminated in this application, your potential contributions
- Way to differentiate yourself from other applicants (even to “break a tie” between applicants with similar “numbers”)

Choosing a topic for your Personal Statement

- Self-reflect:
 - What is my vision---my purpose? What’s important to me? What do I hold dear, and why?
 - Why this field? How has this interest evolved? What was its impetus?
 - What are my goals? My most important accomplishments? Obstacles overcome? Challenges met? Leadership shown?
 - What’s different/special/unique about me? What should Admissions Committees know about me that doesn’t show up on my application?
 - Who/what experience has had the greatest influence on me? Why?

Strategies for writing your Personal Statement

Start early: Be ready to write several drafts to polish it (some recommend 8-12 drafts!). People write in different ways. Below are two potential ways to approach writing. Figure out which strategy (or combination of strategies) will work for you.

- **Strategy #1**
 - Brainstorm. Think about the questions posed above. Write your thoughts down---don’t worry about order or theme or even pertinence. Write everything down.
 - Take a look at all that you’ve written. Try to find one, two, even three common themes; group your ideas as much as possible. Try to write a complete sentence about each.
 - Write a paragraph or two about each sentence---stream-of-consciousness style. Don’t worry about it making sense or having grammatical precision. Get it written down.
 - Go back and read what you’ve written. Now, start to whittle and shape it. First, work on making each paragraph internally consistent and well

