



UMBC 2014



**How to Write a Successful Personal Statement;
The 5 Ws and 1H**

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With slides borrowed from W. Winchester, PhD, A. Q. Gates, PhD and CAHSI

 Graduate Research Fellowship Operations Center 


Workshop Outcomes



- **What** is a personal statement and...
- **Why** do you need it?
- **Who** does this apply to?
- **When** do you start?
- **How** do you start?
- **Where** do you go from here?

The Personal Statement



- **What** is it and **Why** do you need it?





Definition

- A personal statement is about who you are, what has influenced your career path, your professional interests, and your plans.
- Essential points
 - What makes you unique?
 - Why you are interested in particular opportunity?
 - Why you are interested in the organization to which you are applying?




Who?


- **Who?** It's about YOU!!!
- **Your story....**



When Do You Start?





NOW!!!





How do you start?

- Decide what and where are applying to
 - Graduate school
 - Fellowship
 - Scholarship
 - Internship
 - Job
- Find out specific **review criteria** for the application...

Example Criteria

- **Content**
 - Alignment of applicant's goals with opportunity
 - Distinguishing characteristics of applicant
 - Concrete experiences/examples that support skills and capabilities
 - Compelling reason why the applicant is seeking the opportunity
 - All required elements of the application addressed
- **Mechanics**
 - Clarity
 - Organization
 - Grammar
 - Appropriateness of detail






Constructing a Successful Application

Personal Statement (limit: 3 Pages)

- Describe personal, professional or educational experiences that have contributed to your preparation and desire to pursue graduate study
- Describe your leadership potential, and how you see yourself now or in the future contributing to research, education, and innovations in science and engineering
- Discuss your career aspirations and some goals you hope to achieve

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program
 More Info: www.nsf.gov/grfp or www.nsfgrfp.org
 Apply at: www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/

Find a partner to help you develop YOUR STORY

Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals Statement (3 Pages)

- Fascination with research area
- Examples of leadership and unique characteristics brought to chosen field
- Personal experiences and individual strengths
- How receiving the award contributes to career goals
- Incorporate Relevant Previous Research Experience
- Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria



5 minutes to fill in worksheet + 5 minute pair discussion

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Where do we go from here?

- **Before you write,**
 - Decide what key points you really want to get across
 - What relevant unique personal experiences do you have?
 - Why is *this* opportunity for you?
 - How is the opportunity important to your overall goals?
 - Create a checklist of all required elements of the application

Where do we go from here?

- **WRITE, WRITE, WRITE**
- **Review, review, review**
- **REWRITE, REWRITE, REWRITE**
- Find advisors, mentors, family members, friends, anyone you trust to give you good feedback on your writing.

Reflection

- With what you know now, how are you better prepared to create a successful personal statement?
- With what you know now, how are you better prepared to fund your graduate education?