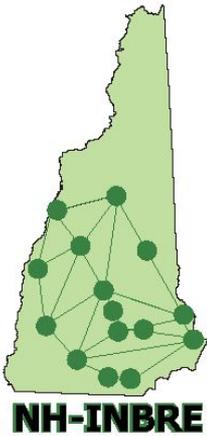


Medical School Mentoring



Session 2: Personal Statements

Presented by: The NH-INBRE Alumni Network
February 28th, 2023

About Us - NH INBRE Alumni Network & Mentoring Programs

New Hampshire INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) is a program funded by the National Institutes of Health to develop a coordinated network of biomedical research and research training in New Hampshire.

In 2021, the NH INBRE Director of Biomedical Workforce Development implemented a [one-on-one mentoring program for INBRE students](#) to be paired with INBRE alumni.

Alumni mentoring provides career and academic guidance to current students on a volunteer basis.

In 2022, following the INBRE annual conference, two INBRE alumni recognized an urgent need to provide mentorship support for the numerous pre-med majors at the partner schools.

In 2023, the Medical School Mentoring program was launched for all pre-med students at the partner schools.

Medical School Mentors are current medical students that are either INBRE alumni or volunteers from the lead partner schools.

Lead Partners:

Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
University of New Hampshire at Durham

Partner Institutions:

Colby-Sawyer College
Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH)
Franklin Pierce University
Keene State College
New England College
Plymouth State University
Saint Anselm College
University of New Hampshire at Manchester

Associated Members:

Rivier University



Program Directors



Haley Zanga

MS1 Loyola University of Chicago
Stritch School of Medicine '26
Keene State College '18



Somer Matar

PhD Candidate in Molecular Biology
Dartmouth College
Keene State College '15

Medical School Mentoring Program: Goals

- Provide resources, information, and support to students who are on their journey to become physicians.
- To **supplement** the pre-med advising at the NH INBRE partner schools.
- Establish more networking relationships within the INBRE community and beyond.



Mentor Introductions



Katie Kiley

MS4 Medical University of South
Carolina
Keene State College '17



Caitlyn McGhee

MS1 St George's University School
of Medicine '26
New England College '21



Tim Renier

GS2, Dartmouth Geisel School
of Medicine MD-PhD Program
St. Olaf College '19

What is a personal statement?

Personal Statement Prompt

“Why you want to go to medical school”

- **Intentionally vague**
- Gives you the opportunity to write about anything
- Discuss your most influential experiences that led you to medicine



It is the place to...

- Show your personality and your best traits
- Write about experiences NOT already on your application
- Thematically connect your experiences
- Tell your story, show where you derive your purpose
- Show expertise
- Comments on significant fluctuations in your academic record not explained elsewhere in your application (brief and to the point)

It is not the place to...

- Simply restate what is already on your application
- Be boring or just list facts
- Present potentially controversial opinions
- “Name drop” personal connections
- Dwell on “red flags” in your application
- Speak negatively about other healthcare field jobs

Why do Medical Schools care about the Personal Statement?



“Why is the personal statement important?
Because it’s the gateway between you and an interview.”

Podcast: <https://medicalschoollhq.net/adg-14-why-is-the-med-school-personal-statement-so-important/>

The Personal Statement is Important

- Many admissions committees place significant weight on the essay.
- Medical school is a long and hard road. They want to know why you are sure of your decision.
- To learn more about you as a person, not just your application.
- Learn what strengths and experiences you could bring to their institution.
- To learn more about the story behind different parts of your application/things you may need to address.
- **The personal statement can set you apart from other applicants!**

What should you write about?

What should you write about? Anything!

A good strategy is to write out events or experiences you believe have had the greatest impact on your life:

- Were there moments that transformed your outlook on your future?
- How have these events led you to medicine?
- Do you know when you started wanting to be a doctor?
- Were there challenges you overcame or difficult undertakings you attempted and grew from?
- Do you have other passions that impact the way you view a career in medicine?

Now you are ready to start an outline telling your story

Additional Questions to consider:

- Why have you selected the field of medicine?
- What motivates you to learn more about medicine?
- What do you want medical schools to know about you that has not been disclosed in other sections of the application?
- Why do you want to be a physician?

Desirable Qualities to Convey

Use the stories in your personal statement to show (not overtly tell) reviewers that you have qualities desirable for a medical student.

- You are **teachable** and learn/grow from mistakes, setbacks, or difficult things you attempt- you know you **do not have all the answers**
- You are **persistent**, through overcoming adversity and/or pushing your limits to achieve something difficult
- You have **passions** that connect the things you have done to prepare for medical school, as opposed to only seeking resume items
- You are **compassionate** and **empathetic** for others' challenges
- You are a **team player** and can collaborate successfully
- You take **responsibility for your own education**- if you encounter a lack of opportunity, you actively take steps to change it
- You understand that a career in medicine will be hard, **you are prepared for the challenge**, and have succeeded in difficult things before

Getting Started

Set Your Deadlines

Look at the time you would like to submit your complete application

Set a reasonable amount of time before that for review/edits

Give yourself **PLENTY** of time. You may have to work around your job, your coursework or any other obligations

This may include adding in a buffer of a few weeks before it actually needs to be submitted

You may want to break up the essay, depending on your writing style

Ideal timeline: Start in January the year you will be applying to give yourself plenty of time (the earlier the better)

If you aren't planning to apply to medical school for a couple years you can still prepare early!

Keep track and write down meaningful activities/experiences you might want to include in your PS



Outline Your Goals

What event will you write about?

The event or setting doesn't *need* to come from a clinical experience

What characteristics will you convey?

Create an outline of your essay and begin writing!

Remember this should be a mix of an application and creative writing.

SHOW your goals rather than telling about them.

Writing about an experience that shows your persistence rather than telling the application committee you are persistent

Addressing the “Aha” Moment Myth: That is the moment I decided to become a physician (most students won't have this). Instead show your journey (personal and professional) on your path to going into medicine

Steps to prepare when writing your PS



STEP 1: HIGHLIGHT YOUR QUALITIES

Pick 2-3 top qualities

Strong examples include leadership, compassion, and empathy

STEP 2: CENTRALIZE. DON'T GENERALIZE

Don't regurgitate your resume

Concentrate on how your qualities relate to your experiences

Explore each quality or experience thoroughly

STEP 3: USE EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

Paint a picture complete with beginning, middle, and end

Capture the reader's attention with engaging, descriptive information

Write in the first-person point of view, avoid cliches, make each experience relatable, and always be genuine



STEP 4: EXPLAIN WHY YOU WANT TO PURSUE MEDICINE

This is the main question your statement must answer

Discuss how your qualities and experiences led to your decision to apply to medical school

STEP 5: PREPARE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Research writing styles in advance

Begin with an outline for your statement

Adhere to word or character counts

Allow time for statement review, ideally with the help of a professional

From: <https://www.inspiraadvantage.com/blog/personal-statement-medical-school>

“Show not tell”

Describe your story as an event: Example

Routine:

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 nine 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.

Compelling:

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 nine 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 nine-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.

Taken from: <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-personal-statement-analysis>

Describe your story as an event continued

Many people may feel the routine example is pretty good. Upon closer look, however, it seems that:

The focus is as much on New Orleanians as the applicant

The story is not particularly relatable (unless the reader had also volunteered there)

There isn't much support for the writer actually being touched by the people there

On the other hand, the compelling example:

Keeps the spotlight on the applicant throughout (e.g., references being from Oregon, discusses her reflections, interacting with Jermaine)

Has a relatable plot (e.g., temporary discomfort, changing perspectives)

Is authentic (e.g., provides an example of how she lifted spirits)

Demonstrating certain qualities in your essay

Telling (from the routine story):

*...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.*

Showing (from the compelling story):

...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...

Notice how the second example demonstrates compassion without ever mentioning the word “compassion” (hence no bolded words)? Moreover, the same sentence demonstrates knowledge-seeking:

Format/Layout Suggestions

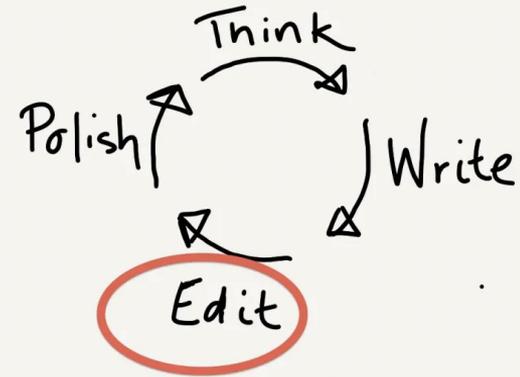
Format/Layout Suggestions

- 5,300 Character Limit (about a page)
- An opening paragraph
 - Start with a hook that draws the reader Ex. “The alarm resonated throughout the station...”
 - Closing sentence that helps transition to the next paragraph
- 2-3 body paragraphs
 - Transitional sentences at beginnings and ends
 - If you want to apply names to patients use fake names and put them in parentheses
 - Ex. On arrival, "Jon" was lying in the grass..
- Closing paragraph that should tie it all together
 - Last sentence or two should reiterate or tie together why you want to be a Physician

Refining your Personal Statement

Refining your Personal Statement

- Ask at least one or two other people to review your essay
- Consider a professional read over (grammarly has one that is cost effective)
- You should have already reviewed it for grammatical errors and spelling (or put it through grammarly)
- This is to make sure your essay makes sense, is cohesive and conveys your goals appropriately.
- Find your unique angle.



SAVE MULTIPLE COPIES IN MULTIPLE PLACES

Save multiple different draft versions! You may change something then wish you hadn't

Ex. PS_02272023_MD

Think about uploading them to your Google Drive

BIG TAKEAWAY

As you write your medical school personal statement include the most meaningful, impactful, and compelling experiences that has lead you on this journey to become a physician.

Each sentence should add to the admissions committee understanding of who you are, what your strengths are, and why you will be an amazing physician.



Example Paragraphs from our mentors PS

Caitlyn's

As terrified as my parents must have been for my future, all I could think about was that I was 5 and was finally supposed to go into the big girl ballet class, and I couldn't even feed myself Frosted Flakes. I needed physical therapy, brain scans and enough medications to fill a pharmacy. That is only 3 things, I told myself. But I was lost, like a ship out at sea, with no idea of anything going on around me. Until I met one doctor. "Dr. K," who sat at my bedside, gave me a skin marker, and let me draw on his arm because I was scared of being marked for surgery. Dr. K, who told me in words I could understand why I was hurting, why my brain wasn't working, why everything was so hard. Everyday I would question him, as little kids do, "why does the brain do that, what does this medicine do, how is that machine going to take a picture" and every day he would answer, and then say "Be a doctor and find out. But first, you have to get better and get back to school."

Haley's

My hometown of roughly 6,000 people is small, simple and feels a world away from the busy Boston area where I now live. In pursuing a career in medicine, I have had opportunities to shadow doctors outside my hometown that have enabled me to experience the many advantages of an urban healthcare system. This includes watching a team of elite doctors in the Massachusetts General Hospital burn unit skillfully manage a patient in critical condition. These experiences contrast those I had in my early years observing medicine in New Hampshire. I recall the time “Joe,” a young checker at our local grocery store, was rushed into the ER in excruciating pain. The ER doctor, nurses, and staff lept to attention at the sight of a familiar face in pain. It took hours and a series of doctors to determine he needed emergency surgery for a lacerated spleen. As he was fighting for his life, Joe was rushed to a larger hospital that had appropriate facilities to treat him. Despite our lack of resources, I was struck by how our hometown camaraderie fueled a unique kind of medical care, one reminiscent of the care my father received for his back injury years earlier. This is something I have not yet encountered in larger, urban healthcare environments. I want to become a physician to integrate the benefits of rural medical practices with the advantages provided by urban healthcare.

Katie's

The alarm resonated throughout the station, and I felt like my heart was going to explode out of my chest. It was only my second time on an ambulance. With sirens blaring, we rushed to the single-passenger crash. On arrival, "Jon" was lying in the grass with his vehicle inside the dense woods. Once we had placed him in the ambulance, we checked him for any apparent injuries while the lead paramedic spoke with him. Jon seemed fine. So fine, in fact, that he was beginning to convince me with his denial of something's being wrong. He said he fell asleep at the wheel, but the lead paramedic looked skeptical. Captivated by the story unfolding before my eyes, I hooked him up to a four-lead EKG. The paramedic took one look at the printout, and one thing was clear: Jon was having a heart attack, and we needed to start a STEMI alert. On arrival at the hospital, the doctors came to take over the case. I was absorbed, watching them pour over the patient and **thread together the story** that would become the patient's care. Their presence affected both the patient and myself as they began explaining their plan and leading the case. The limited amount of knowledge that I received in my EMT class, although informative and purposeful, **was not enough for me**. When I began the course, I thought it would calm my desire for more clinical experience and knowledge, but it didn't. My need to learn and advance in a clinical career was only deepened. **Surprisingly, what previously ignited this passion for a career in healthcare was environmental research.**

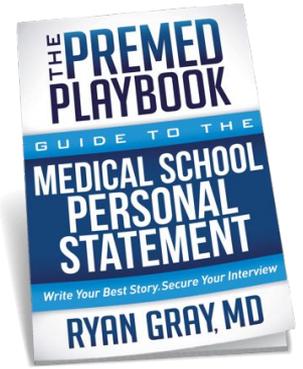
Tim's

My journey toward a career as a physician scientist began on May 2nd, 2013. At the youngest eligible age, I was one of ninety-six students nationwide selected to speak in competition at the National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS). As I walked up to present my research on the Health Belief Model as a method of intervening on hand hygiene behavior before the panel of uniformed, highly decorated military medical scientists, I was a bundle of nerves climbing a roller coaster in anticipation of the drop. Instead of succumbing to the fear of this pressure situation, I found my voice and was hooked. Research has shaped my outlook on life, an outlook well stated by 2014 Intel ISEF keynote speaker Mick Ebeling; “Everything that is now possible was once impossible.” I am unwilling to accept “impossible” as an excuse to avoid daunting tasks; I am willing to tackle them head-on to ascertain solutions.

Resources

- Pre-med years podcast Episodes 38, 88, 272 & more
- Schools writing office
- Pre-Med Advisor
- English professor (to help edit)
- Grammarly
- Ryan Gray Personal statement writing courses/workshops
- Premed Playbook
- **Us!** (NH INBRE Alumni mentors)
- AAMC:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/advisor-corner-crafting-your-personal-statement>



Examples (to get the creative juices flowing)

- https://www.healthdiversity.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/SNMAPersonalStatementsvol2_2_.pdf
- <https://bemoacademicconsulting.com/blog/personal-statement-medical-school-example>
- <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/top-medical-schools/articles/2017-06-12/2-medical-school-essays-that-admissions-officers-loved>
- <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-personal-statement-analysis>

A graphic consisting of two overlapping speech bubbles. The front bubble is pink and contains the text 'Q & A' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The back bubble is yellow and is partially obscured by the pink one.

Q & A

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SAVE THE DATE!

Session 3: Primary Application

March 28th, 2023 at 7pm EST

Feedback Poll

Past Examples of Accepted Students

This shows you just how varied your statement could be:

- Being a refugee from Sudan and living in a UNICEF medical tent
- Having an adverse childhood/college experience
- Having a chronic illness, or a family member with a chronic illness
- Witnessing or experiencing large healthcare inequalities
- A challenging long-term research project relating to one's passions in medicine
- Preparing for and attempting/completing a difficult athletic achievement