



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
PRITZKER SCHOOL
OF MEDICINE

Personal Statement Workshop

July 21, 2020

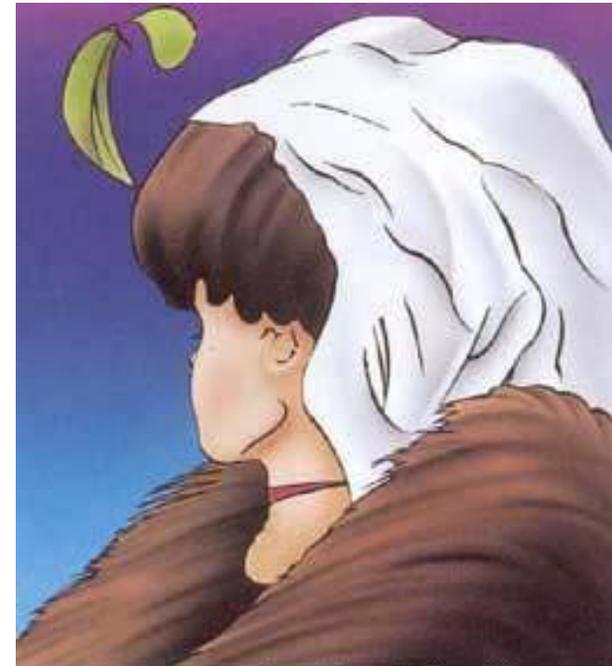
Jim Woodruff, MD

Workshop Objectives

- Participants will leave the workshop with a basic outline for their personal statement
- This will be accomplished through the use of two essential skills for professional and personal success : reflection and gaining perspective

Reflection and Perspective

Reflection	Perspective / Meaning
We reflect on information...	... in order to gain perspective or assign meaning
Patient's symptoms	Diagnosis
Friend's comments	What they are thinking
Clerkship experiences	Best fit specialty



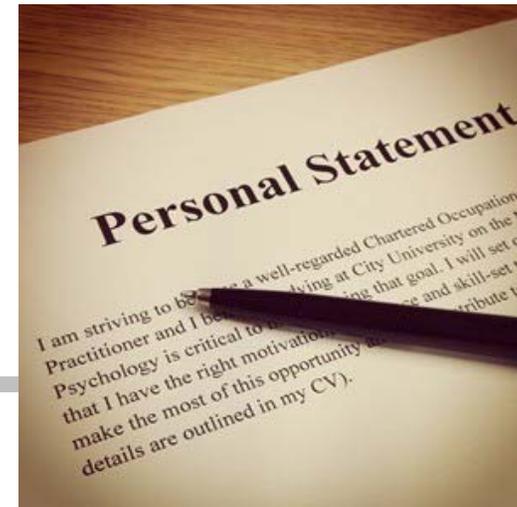
Reflection Exercise #1

- What is the purpose (meaning) of the personal statement?



Perspective: Programs

- Offers a sense of your organization, clarity of thought, enthusiasm for medicine and career aspirations (quality of candidate)
- May identify candidates with undesirable personality traits (fit for program)
- Provides “ice-breakers” for the interview
- Provides human dimension to an otherwise data laden application
- Makes it easier to recall candidates



Perspective: You

- May help you choose a specialty if you are still undecided
- Refines your ideas about why you have chosen a particular specialty
- Clarifies what you are looking for in a program
- Prepares you for your interview
- An opportunity, after a pivotal year in your life, to reflect on who you are and what you want

Reflection Exercise #2

Write your perspective on your worksheet.

- Who are you?
- Why are you interested in your chosen specialty?
- What are your goals for your career in this specialty?
- What will you need from a training program in order to prepare yourself to tackle those goals?



Perspective: A Personal Statement is NOT..

- A way to brag about or list your accomplishments
- An opportunity to demonstrate your creative writing skills
- The time to complain about other people, specialties or patients
- A document you can write in one weekend
- A way to get interviews or rank list rankings that you otherwise would not get

The image shows a form for a personal statement. At the top, it asks for the name and address of the applicant. Below that is a table for dates of work. The main section is titled 'PERSONAL STATEMENT (do NOT attach additional pages or write on additional sheets)'. The handwritten text is a poem or a letter that discusses the applicant's journey, mentioning 'the road to the hospital', 'the road to the hospital', and 'the road to the hospital'. At the bottom, there is a section for 'CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS' and a signature line.

Reflection Exercise #3

- Support your answers to these 4 questions:
 - Who are you?
 - Why that chosen specialty?
 - What your career goals?
 - What do you need to succeed?



"Metamorphosis of Narcissus"
Salvador Dali

Perspective: Who are you?

- What experiences brought you to medicine?
- What about these experiences/people made a difference?
- What does this say about who you are?
- How does this impact where you plan to go in the future?

Perspective: Why this specialty?

- What event(s) triggered your specialty decision?
- Are there powerful role models for you in your chosen specialty?
- Is there something about your specialty that draws you in?
 - Patient population?
 - Physiology?
 - Molecular biology / Genetics?
 - Procedures / Specific patient interactions?
 - Research, teaching, leadership opportunities?

Perspective: What are your goals?

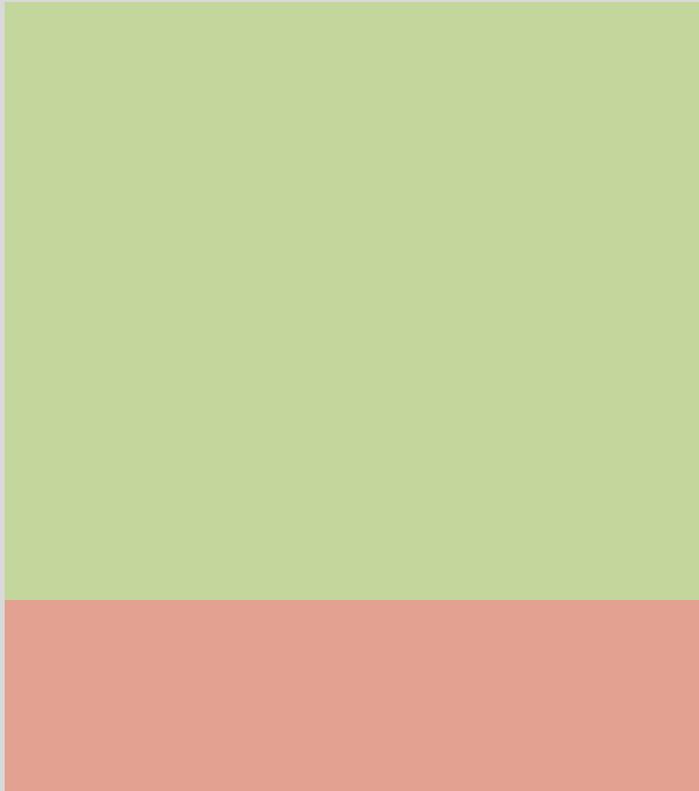
- In what venue do you plan to work?
- Are there specific clinical activities you'd like to pursue?
- Besides clinical activities, are there other activities?
 - Research?
 - Teaching?
 - Leadership?
 - Opportunities?
- Are there strong personal motives for these choices?

Perspective: What do you need to tackle these goals?

- What would maximize your learning?
- What would maximize your professional and personal happiness?
- What additional experiences besides clinical training would benefit your career?
 - Research opportunities?
 - Teaching opportunities?
 - Focus on quality?

Process Pointers

Typical Personal Statement



- ~One page
- ~Four paragraphs
- ~80 percent focused on:
 - Who are you?
 - Why your chosen specialty?
- ~20 percent on:
 - What are your career goals?
 - What do you need to succeed?

Process Pointers



START NOW!

ID Key Questions / Points

Bulleted responses

Flesh out responses

Start writing

Address grammar & punctuation

Refine tone

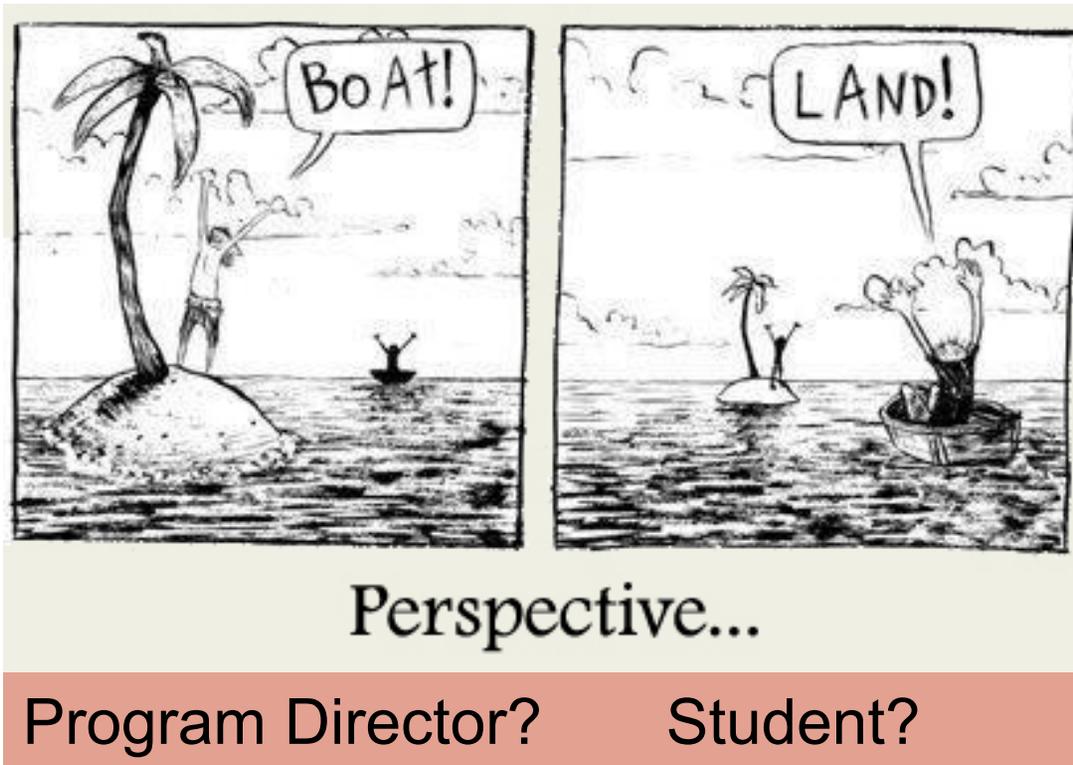
Take breaks from writing

Get critiques

Final draft October 1

Reflection Exercise #4: The PD's Perspective

- If you were a program director, what kind of person would you be looking for?



Style and Tone

- Tell the program a little about yourself and your plans...
- ...while not coming across as eccentric, arrogant, or in any way difficult to work with.



Style

- Expository / Biographic
- First Person
- Concrete
- Well organized
- Correct grammar
- Approximately 1 page



Tone



- Most Programs Directors will forgive errors in:
 - Content
 - Style
- Many Programs Directors will NOT forgive even minor errors in:
 - Tone

Tone Exercise #1: Describe the Pitfall

- Despite how difficult the personalities were on my team, I persevered and effectively attended to the needs of my patients.
- The patient proved to be extremely non-compliant with our recommendations.
- I performed in the top ten percent of students in the medicine clerkship.
- My ten years of working in the private sector before medical school leave me with little worry about stepping into the role of intern.

Tone Exercise #2: Compare and Contrast

I found that performing this procedure was very easy.

OR

I found that performing this procedure was very rewarding.

Tone Exercise #2: Compare and Contrast

Having had this experience, my career path has been very clear to me.

OR

Follow the yellow brick road!

Tone Exercise #2: Compare and Contrast

There are many reasons why OB/GYN is the best fit for me.

While working with my mentor, Dr. X, ...

OR

My mentor, Dr. X, showed me how OB/GYN is far and away
the best of the medical specialties.

Tone Exercise #2: Compare and Contrast

My ten years of working in the private sector before medical school left me
with little worry about stepping into the role of intern.

OR

My experiences working before medical school have given me great perspective
on taking responsibility and functioning within a team.

Tone Exercise #2: Compare and Contrast

I look forward to the challenges of the next few years.

To me, they represent a unique opportunity to grow as a person and a professional.

OR

I know the years ahead will be difficult but I have steeled myself for what is to come.

Tone Table

Desirable Elements	Undesirable Elements
Humility	Arrogance
Sincerity	Ingratiation, craziness, blandness
Enthusiasm	Cynicism
Competence	Overconfidence / Lack of confidence
Diligence	Laziness
Gratitude	Bitterness
“Me, the Team, and the Patient”	“Me, Me and the Me”

Approaches to Setting Tone

- How you talk about patients
- How you talk about yourself and others
- Which stories and role models you chose to discuss
- How you describe your training to date and hopes for the future
- How you outline what you need from a training program

Process Pointers



START NOW!

ID Key Questions / Points

Bulleted responses

Flesh out responses

Start writing

Address grammar & punctuation

Refine tone

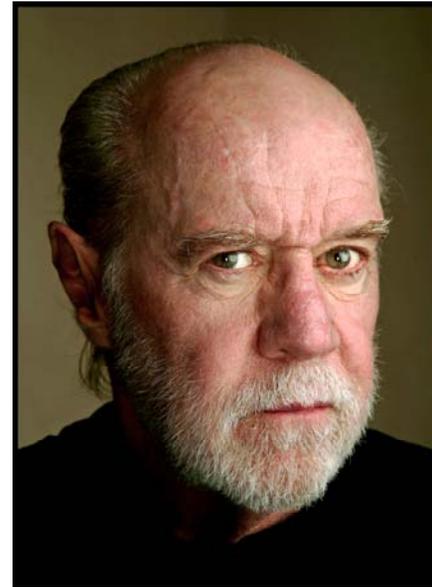
Take breaks from writing

Get critiques

Final draft October 1

Summary

- Content and Process
- Style and Tone
- Adequate time investment
- Reflect
- Gain Perspective



“Some people see the glass half full. Others see it half empty. I see a glass that's twice as big as it needs to be.”

— George Carlin

The Letter of Recommendation



Asking for a Letter of Recommendation

- Objective: A Strong Letter of Recommendation
 - Supportive
 - Detailed
 - On Time
 - Concordant

The “Ask”

- At least 6-8 weeks lead time
- Face to face
- “Could you write me a strong letter of recommendation?”

If “Yes”:

- Provide draft CV and Personal Statement
- Deadline for submission: September 1, 2017
- Upload directly to ERAS (if they have questions, they can ask our office)

Maximizing Detail and Concordance

- “Would you be willing to review my CV and Personal Statement? I would like to answer any questions you may have about my research or activities.”

If the answer is “No, not now”, take an alternate approach:

- “I have a question about my personal statement. Would you have a moment to help me with it?”
- Focus your letter writer on key elements & details of your personal statement / CV.

How do the letters of recommendation get into ERAS?

- June 6, ERAS opens fully to registered applicants
- Can begin uploading all components of the residency application
- Personal statements, transcripts, photos, LOR's...

MyERAS Dashboard

AAMC Dashboard Application Documents Programs Message Center Interviews- Rebecca Silverman -

MyERAS ERAS 2020 Season - Residency -

Rebecca Silverman
AAMC ID: 14038081
Email: rsilverman@bsd.uchicago.edu

Application	Documents	Programs	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Information Incomplete Biographic Information Incomplete Education Incomplete Experience Incomplete Licensure Incomplete Publications Incomplete <p>View/Print Application View/Print CV</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uploaded but Unassigned LoRs 0 Unassigned Personal Statements 0 MS Transcript Not Uploaded MSPE (Dean's Letter) Not Uploaded Photo Not Uploaded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saved Programs 0 Programs Applied to 0 	<p>Please visit our Tools for Residency Applicants for useful information on the ERAS process.</p> <p>MyERAS Terms and Conditions</p> <p>Contact ERAS</p> <p>ERAS Support Contact Form (202) 862-6264</p> <p>Monday - Friday 8am - 6pm ET</p>

Before selecting "Yes", please verify that your email address is correct in the "Personal Information" tab under the "Application" section. Yes No

Are you planning to apply for a residency position at an ACGME-accredited Emergency Medicine program? If you select "Yes", you will receive an invitation to complete the [AAMC Standardized Video Interview](#), which is required for ACGME Emergency Medicine programs. You may change your selection from "Yes" to "No" at any point before you complete the interview. Your response to this question will not be displayed in your MyERAS Application/CV. The specialty requested that all applicants complete the AAMC Standardized Video Interview between 09:00 AM ET on June 6 and 11:59 PM ET on July 16, 2019. *

ERAS

Documents: LORs

The screenshot displays the MyERAS ERAS 2020 Season - Residency interface. The top navigation bar is purple and contains the AAMC logo, a dashboard menu, and user information for Kai Doe. The main content area is titled "Letters of Recommendation" and includes a "Help" link. It provides instructions for authors on how to upload and confirm letters, along with a list of steps and a search bar. A "Confirm" button is visible at the bottom right of the main content area, and a footer contains contact information and copyright details.

MyERAS ERAS 2020 Season - Residency

Letters of Recommendation [Help](#)

In order for an LoR Author to upload a letter on your behalf, you **MUST** complete the following steps for **each** LoR that you intend to use during the application season.

1. Click *Add New* to enter and save LoR information.
2. Confirm the LoR entry by marking the associated checkbox and selecting *Only checked* in the Confirm drop down list.
Note: You may only edit and/or delete a LoR entry prior to confirming.
3. Select *Download Letter Request* or *Email Letter Request* in the associated Action column to provide your LoR Author with the form.

[+ Add New](#)

Search by Name, Title/Dept., or Specialty

0 LoRs Selected [Confirm](#)

You have not added any LoR Authors. Click [Add New](#) to add an LoR Author.

655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC, 20001-2399 [Contact Us](#) [Follow Us](#) © 1995 - 2019 AAMC [Terms and Conditions](#) [Privacy Statement](#)

ERAS

Documents: LORs (continued)

MyERAS ERAS 2020 Season - Residency -

Kai Doe
AAMC ID: 14038081
Email: rsilverman@bsd.uchicago.edu

Documents

- Personal Statements
- Letters of Recommendation**
- Additional Documents

Letters of Recommendation

In order for an LoR Author to upload a letter on your behalf, you MUST complete the following steps for **each** LoR that you intend to use during the application season.

1. Click *Add New* to enter and save LoR information.
2. Confirm the LoR entry by marking the associated checkbox and selecting *Only checked* in the Confirm drop down list.
Note: You may only edit and/or delete a LoR entry prior to confirming.
3. Select *Download Letter Request* or *Email Letter Request* in the associated Action column to provide your LoR Author with the form.

[+ Add New](#)

Search by Name, Title/Dept., or Specialty

2 LoRs Selected [Confirm](#)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	LoR Information	Specialty	Letter ID	Status	Actions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	H. Barrett Fromme, MD, MPHE Professor of Pediatrics	Preliminary Programs		⚠ Not Confirmed for Upload	Select
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	H. Barrett Fromme, MD, MPHE Professor of Pediatrics	Emergency Medicine		⚠ Not Confirmed for Upload	Select

Documents: LORs (continued) | Generate a PDF Letter Request Form

Electronic Residency
Application Service
ERAS |  **AAMC**

ERAS Letter of Recommendation (LoR) Request

ERAS Application Season: 2019
ERAS Letter ID: 75PT2UUE3

I am requesting that you submit my Letter of Recommendation (LoR) to the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS), which transmits my LoR(s) to the residency programs to which I am applying.

ERAS Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP)

The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP) is a centralized service that allows LoR Authors to upload LoRs for applicants applying to ERAS residency programs.

ERAS has established a set of guidelines that should be reviewed prior to writing and uploading LoRs using the LoRP.

For more information about the LoRP guidelines, additional resources, and to access the LoRP login, please visit https://www.aamc.org/services/eras/282520/lor_portal.html.

- Review the information below. If any information is inaccurate, contact the applicant directly so they can make corrections.
- Login to the ERAS LoRP to upload this letter using the unique **ERAS Letter ID** above.

Applicant Details

Name	Silverman, Rebecca
AAMC ID	13909272
Preferred Phone Number	773-702-3333
Preferred Email	rsilverman@bsd.uchicago.edu

LoR Details

LoR Author Name	H. Barrett Fromme, MD, MHPE
LoR Author Title/Department	Professor of Pediatrics
Specialty to which this letter will	

Questions?