



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
PRITZKER SCHOOL
OF MEDICINE

Personal Statement Workshop

May 22 and June 8, 2023

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

1. PERSONAL STATEMENT (do not attach additional pages or write on additional sheets)

2. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS (do you have any criminal convictions? See instructions)

3. DECLARATION (I declare that the information given on this form is true, complete and accurate and no information reported or omitted is material to the review of my application. I understand that I am responsible for the truth and accuracy of the information I provide. If I do not fully comply with these requirements, I will be considered ineligible for admission to the program. I understand that my application will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee and my name will be included in the list of candidates for the program. I understand that I am responsible for the truth and accuracy of the information I provide. If I do not fully comply with these requirements, I will be considered ineligible for admission to the program. I understand that my application will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee and my name will be included in the list of candidates for the program.)

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: 2022.12.15

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 Dalí

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?

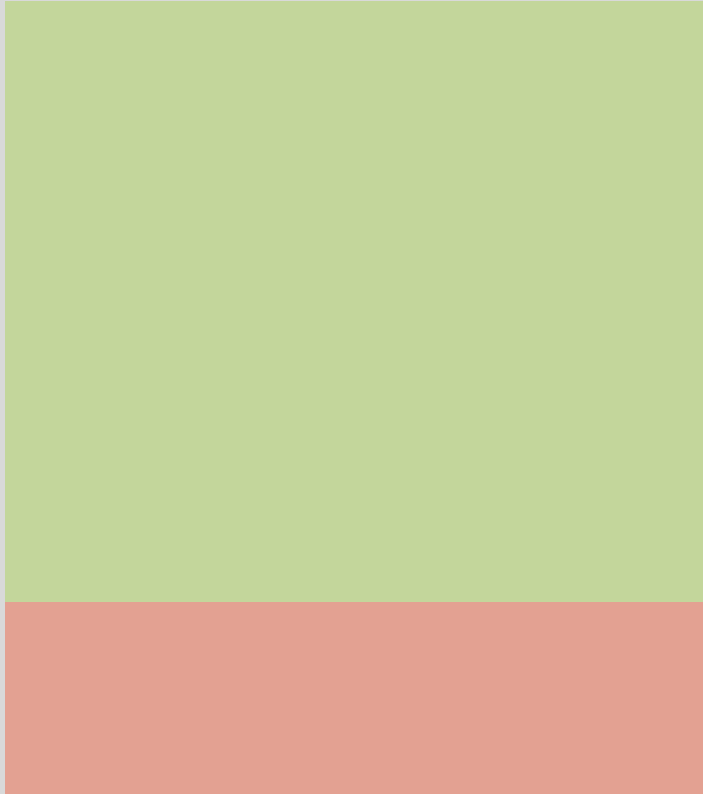
- In what venue do you plan to work?
- Are there specific clinical activities you'd like to pursue?
- Besides clinical activities, are there other activities?
 - Research?
 - Teaching?
 - Leadership?
 - Opportunities?
- Are there strong personal motives for these choices?

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

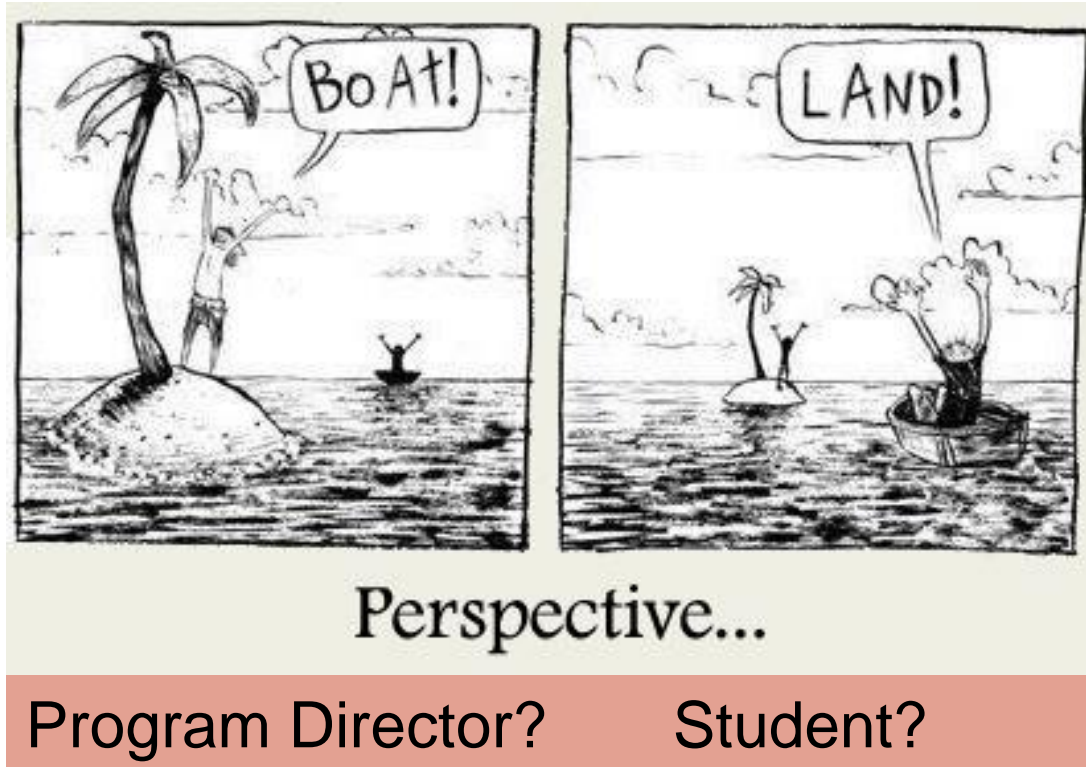
Take breaks from writing

Get critiques

Final draft September 15th

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

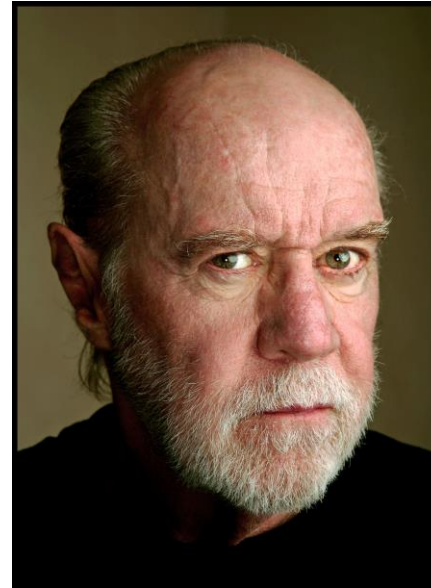
Take breaks from writing

Get critiques

Final draft September 15th

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 15, 2023
- 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 8, ERAS opens fully to registered applicants
- Can begin uploading all components of the residency application
- Personal statements, transcripts, photos, LOR's...

Questions?