

WRITING CENTER TIP SHEET

PREPARING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Almost every application for graduate school contains a Personal Statement question. Much like the essays you wrote to get in to your undergraduate school, the personal statement serves as a way for the faculty to judge your commitment level to the program of study. However, there is one major differences between the two:

Faculty actually read—no, scrutinize—your personal statements for grad school. This is because fewer students are accepted into upper level programs of study, and because each graduate school has a particular type of student it looks for.

Ways to get your statement noticed:

Plan first, write later. Do some research on the school you want to attend, and find three specific reasons why you want to attend it (for example, particular classes you want to take, faculty you're interested in working with, unique programs of study)

Define yourself and your goals. What type of an artist are you? What interests you about exploring art at a focused graduate level? Why do you want to pursue this avenue of study? If your best answer for these is “because I don't think I can get/don't want to get a job,” you probably should reconsider your goals for applying.

Pick a project, any project. Be able to write about a project that you completed as an undergrad that shows your growth as an artist, a developing theme or interest in your work, or a new route of exploration—and how the only way to change/grow/develop this talent/project/interest is to attend this school. This shows your commitment to your work and their program.

Accomplishments. Exhibited in a student show? Won any prizes? Make a note of them, especially if they are significant to your direction of study.

Now write. Begin your essay with the connection between your art and their program, and then discuss your accomplishments and goals for graduate study. Your goal is to sell yourself on paper—be confident, clear, and don't be afraid to brag!

Revise. Bring your personal statement to the Writing Center or Career Services Office for a bit of extra polish.

Good luck!!