Personal Statements
Presented by the UConn Pre-Medical/Dental Center and the University Writing Center

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Today We Will Cover

• What is a personal statement?
• Why write a personal statement?
• Do’s
• Do not’s
• How to submit
• AMCAS
• Resources
• Q&A
Getting Started: What is this thing?

• A short document (5,300 characters) that:
  • Sets you apart from other applicants
  • Provides a more complete picture of you than test scores or a resume/CV can
  • Shows what you value
  • Proves that you can write clearly and coherently for your audience
Getting Started: Why am I writing this thing?

• Medical schools want to know:
  • Who you are
  • Your past experience (more than your plans)
    • It’s easy to make up plans for the future, but harder to fabricate your past
  • Obstacles you have overcome
  • Successes you have enjoyed
Do’s: Rules of Thumb

• Stay focused
• Stay simple
• Stay on topic
• Stay within the rules
Do’s: More Rules of Thumb

• Find your angle

• Represent yourself honestly
  • Avoid being too positive or negative about yourself

• Get feedback
  • This will come up again in this presentation because it is probably the most important rule
Don’ts: Common Mistakes

• Writing before thinking
• Omitting the desire to be a physician
• Trying too hard not to sound generic
• Listing positive attributes without examples
• Writing too poetically or philosophically
Don’ts: More Common Mistakes

• Apologizing
  • Don’t worry about every “C”

• Passive Voice

• Controversy
  • Be prepared to talk about what’s in this statement in person!
Big Mistake: Not Drafting

• Proofread, proofread, proofread

• Share your work with:
  • People who know you
  • People who know writing and grammar
  • People who know your field
Submission: Where is this thing going?

- American Medical College Application Service: AMCAS
  - Online system for applying to medical schools across the US
AMCAS Specs: How do I write this thing?

• Plain text, unformatted
• 5,300 characters, including spaces (approx. one page)
• Typed directly into application
• Proofread, proofread, proofread
• AMCAS application has no spellcheck

• Standard writing practices
  • Case, capitalization, punctuation
AMCAS Specs: How do I write this thing?

• Avoid plagiarism
• No need to repeat information
• *This information goes to all schools you specify*
Additional Information

- 2017 AMCAS Instructions: www.aamc.org/amcas
- UConn Writing Center: http://writingcenter.uconn.edu/
Questions?
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