

Personal Statement Sample Outline

This outline is meant to be a guide to help you as you prepare your personal statement for scholarships in the College of Engineering. Each situation requiring a Personal Statement will have a slightly different focus so make sure you change your personal statement for each use. (Only one personal statement should be submitted for the scholarship application) Your Personal Statement is a living document. Update it as your situation changes and you have new experiences. When drafting your personal statement, focus on the experiences you have had that are most relevant to the question(s) being asked in the scholarship application.

Introductory Paragraph Although you may be tempted to jump right into a narrative of your earliest accomplishments, begin instead by focusing on why engineering has attracted your interest and why you consider yourself an able candidate for scholarships. This opening paragraph need not be extensive, but it should sketch out your view of yourself as a capable individual who has the necessary confidence, maturity, and talent to succeed in this venture. Somewhere in your introductory paragraph, either in your first or last sentence, you should define yourself in a succinct way (this corresponds to the function of a thesis statement in an ordinary essay).

The Body of the Personal Statement, Part 1: The Recent Past Sometimes there is reluctance to “toot your own horn” but remember that only you can put your best foot forward and that all other candidates will do the same. A personal statement should not be egotistical, but it should not be modest. Your readers will be looking for reasons to stop reading your essay, so use all your ammunition (it isn’t bragging if you can back up your assertions with facts). When you write about your educational and/or employment background in the next two or three paragraphs, emphasize how these experiences and activities helped to shape the person you have become (in addition, of course, to family and other influences—but keep those references to a minimum to keep the spotlight on you). Find ways to illustrate the value of your educational and work experiences, providing as much detailed commentary as you can to make your experiences interesting to the reader. ****KEEP IN MIND**

THAT THIS IS **NOT** A RESTATEMENT OF YOUR RESUME.**

The Body of the Personal Statement, Part 2: The Present Add a paragraph or two presenting yourself as you are now. Stress the qualities that you believe best characterize you such as confidence, maturity, intellectual curiosity, and the determination to succeed. This part of your essay will answer the following question: who are you now and why? Once again, the more concrete you can be regarding your positive self-image, the more likely the reader is to accept what you say about yourself as more than mere rhetoric.

The Body of the Personal Statement, Part 3: The Future In a paragraph or two, present a positive forecast of your future development in relation to the specific degree you are pursuing. Obviously, you will feel more confident and have a more specific idea about your immediate future, rather than your long-range plans, but visualizing your identity two or three years from now demonstrates both vision and determination. In this part of the personal statement you may wish to address some of the following questions: How will the degree you are presently pursuing be an important stepping stone leading to your life's work? What do you hope to accomplish in life? What are your personal goals and/or career objectives? How do you see yourself evolving in the next several years?

The Concluding Paragraph After forecasting your future, you may be tempted to end your personal statement on that visionary note. But a brief conclusion will help by summarizing, for the reader's benefit, your past accomplishments, your present sense of identity, and your future goals. Try to make your last sentence a real clincher so that the reader has a vivid impression of you.