



Continuing Ed Pre-Health Advising
Pre-Application Workshop

Part II: *Writing Exercise*
Personal Statement
Experience Descriptions
Sensitive Topics

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Before We Begin

Be sure you have printed out the following document:

- Pre-Application Workshop handout packet

Reminder: Keep a running list of topics you'd like to discuss further at your next individual pre-health advising session.

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Writing Exercise

How did you become interested in pursuing a clinical career in the first place?

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Writing Exercise

Out of all of the healthcare careers, what are the distinctive elements of the one you've chosen that make it a particularly good fit for your personal strengths, values, and motivations?

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Writing Exercise

What are your guiding principles for effective, compassionate care of sick and injured patients, as informed by:

- Your own experiences interacting with patients in clinical settings
 - The examples set by the clinicians you've shadowed

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Writing Exercise

Left side of page:
List 4 or 5 of the most impactful experiences that you've had since graduating from high school and that:

- Helped you become the person you are today
and/or
- Were instrumental in informing your decision to become a clinician

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Writing Exercise

Left side of page:

List 4 or 5 of the most impactful experiences that you've had since graduating from high school and that:

- Helped you become the person you are today and/or
- Were instrumental in informing your decision to become a clinician

Right side of page:

For each item on your list, identify a few ways in which that experience shaped your:

- personal strengths
- values
- motivations

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Writing Exercise

Take a moment to wax philosophical:

- What do you find satisfying about scientific learning and inquiry, in general?
- What excites you about learning about the science of the human body, specifically?

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Writing Exercise

What is the **impact** you hope to make in your clinical career?*

(How do you hope to do better than simply becoming a competent clinician?)

Potential topics could include:

- Your personal approach to patient care
- Strong interest in caring for patients in a certain population
- Research
- Becoming a member of the teaching faculty of an academic institution
- Etc.

* What you say here should follow naturally from your history of long-term experiences.

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Writing Exercise

Have you overcome personal hardships, challenges, or obstacles that influenced your educational pursuits?

Did you have any significant fluctuations in your academic record?

... If so, jot down a quick list of factors that you may want to acknowledge in your application so that your reviewers will have context for understanding what you have overcome.

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Pre-Application Workshop

Part I:

- Examples of successful applications
- Overview of the application process
- Pre-application timeline
- Tips for asking for strong letters of recommendation
- Self-assessment of your readiness to apply next summer

Part II:

- Writing exercise
- **Tips for writing a compelling personal statement**
- Tips for writing effective experience descriptions
- Disclosing sensitive topics

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Sample Essay

Read the sample essay in the *Pre-Application Workshop handout packet*

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Sample Essay

Read the sample essay in the *Pre-Application Workshop handout packet*

Also read "Guidelines for Writing Your Personal Statement"

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Tips for Writing a Compelling Personal Statement

Commonalities among highly effective personal statements:

- Written as a series of anecdotes/stories and your thoughtful reflections upon them.
 - "Show, don't tell"
- Often, the most compelling stories are of situations that were *not* externally flashy, but describe experiences that were deeply meaningful to you. They should capture the essence of your motivations to become a clinician.
 - Direct experience is more compelling than observational experience
 - Situations in which you had a high level of competence are more compelling than first-time experiences
- You'll have room for just ~3 stories, each carefully chosen because it implicitly conveys your reasons for wanting to become a clinician
- Not a sales pitch, not a comprehensive play-by-play of the experiences that led you to want to become a clinician
- **The writer wrote multiple drafts over several weeks, got feedback from others, did careful proofreading.**

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Tips for Writing a Compelling Personal Statement

Guidelines for Getting Started

Detailed suggestions provided on colorado.edu/ceprehealth website:
Application Tips > Personal Statement

Suggested work to do over winter break:

- Brainstorming activity posted on webpage listed above
- If desired, read a reference book on the topic
- Early draft of your personal statement
- Complete your first 1:1 personal statement coaching session w/ Jess Talbot

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Tips for Writing a Compelling Personal Statement

Continuing Education Pre-Health Advising

Get Started Upcoming Events Profession-Specific Details **Application Tips** Letters of Recommendation Meet the Advisor

Personal Statement

Tips for Writing an Effective, Memorable Personal Statement

- Tip #1: Learn about this genre of writing
- Tip #2: Brainstorming session
- Tip #3: Tell stories and share reflections upon your experiences
- Tip #4: It is okay that you like science and want to help people!
- Tip #5: Seek feedback from many readers (and be prepared to revise many times!)
- Tip #6: Find a good proofreader

Application Tips

Choosing Your Schools
Standardized Test Prep
Personal Statement
Common Application
Supplemental Applications
Interviews
CASPer Test
Dean's Letter of Good Standing
Get Started on FAFSA
Letters of Intent/Update Letters

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- **Tips for writing effective experience descriptions**
- Disclosing sensitive topics

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Tips for Writing Effective Experience Descriptions

Which Activities to Include?

- You can enter a limited number of your work and extracurricular activities since graduating from high school.
- Think broadly about relevance: Many non-clinical/non-research activities are considered highly valuable because they allow you to develop relevant competencies.
 - Refer to list of competencies on back of *Writing Compelling Letters of Rec* handout
- Each experience you enter should be truly meaningful to you. Do NOT add activities that "look good" but were not important to you. Anything you enter is fair game for an in-depth interview question.
- You can use the Excel spreadsheet posted on the Pre-Application Workshop webpage to organize your activities

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Tips for Writing Effective Experience Descriptions

How to Write About Them?

- Detailed tips in the *Writing Effective Experience Descriptions* handout

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- **Disclosing sensitive topics**

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Sensitive topics

- Disadvantaged status
- Disclosing group identity (in your personal statement and/or Experiences list) that may subject you to discrimination
- Mandatory disclosure statements:
 - Misdemeanor conviction
 - Felony conviction
 - Institutional action

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Disadvantaged Status

- **First-generation college student**
 - Neither of your parents has earned a bachelor's degree or higher.
- **Growing up in a medically underserved community**
 - Based on your own experiences or the experiences of immediate family and friends, you believe there were an inadequate number of available hospitals, clinics, and/or health care providers in your community.
- **Family participation in state and federal assistance programs**
 - Welfare-benefit programs (federal, state, and local), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC or ADC), unemployment compensation, General Assistance (GA), food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, housing assistance, or other federal, state, or local financial assistance programs.
- **Pell Grant recipient**
 - To determine whether you were ever a recipient, you may wish to review your past financial award letters.

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Whether or not to disclose other sensitive topics ...

The categories listed below are considered "illegal interview question" topics. Interviewers are not allowed to ask about them *unless you disclose them first* (either in your application or during the interview)

- Religion
- Gender identity (though there is now a place to provide preferred pronouns on most apps)
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy status
- Disability
- Genetic information
- Citizenship status
- Marital Status or number of children

You may have good reason to bring up some of these topics in your application.

If you do, they are also fair game for interviews.

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Mandatory Disclosure Statements

- Misdemeanor conviction
- Institutional action by a college or university

Quick Pep Talk: These types of issues are common. Young adults sometimes make poor choices.

No need to worry unless:

- You have a recent or ongoing pattern of offenses
- You have a felony conviction, which can prevent you from being licensed as a healthcare professional

... but you must write about the issue in a thoughtful, responsible, and mature manner.

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Mandatory Disclosure Statements

Misdemeanor conviction

"Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, a Misdemeanor crime, excluding:

1. Any offense for which you were adjudicated as a juvenile
2. Any convictions which have been expunged or sealed by a court, or
3. Any misdemeanor convictions for which any probation has been completed and the case dismissed by the court (in states where applicable)?"

"You need **NOT** disclose any instance where you:

- Were arrested but not charged
- Were arrested and charged, but the charges were dropped
- Were arrested and charged, but found not guilty by a judge or jury
- Were arrested and found guilty by a judge or jury, but the conviction was overturned on appeal
- Received an executive pardon"



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Mandatory Disclosure Statements

Institutional action by a college or university

"Were you ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or professional school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation, even though such action may not have interrupted your enrollment or required you to withdraw?"

You must answer "Yes" even if the action does not appear on or has been deleted or expunged from your official transcripts due to institutional policy or personal petition."



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Mandatory Disclosure Statements

How to write your disclosure statements:

- Make sure the reader understands the timeline ("Ten years ago, in my first year of college ...")
- State the facts, explaining what happened and what you did for restitution
- Take responsibility for the poor choices you made in the past: no excuses, no blame on others
- Reflect on what you learned from the experience *and how you changed your behavior accordingly*
- Express remorse in a mature manner

Tip: Write disclosure statement(s) in advance, ask for feedback from advisors.



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Pre-Application Workshop

Part I:

- Overview of the application process
- Pre-application timeline
- Tips for asking for strong letters of recommendation
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Part II:

- Writing exercise to get you on the right track
- Examples of successful applications
- Tips for writing a compelling personal statement
- Tips for writing effective experience descriptions
- Disclosing sensitive topics



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