THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

career center

What is a Personal Statement and Why Is It Important?
In addition to academic record, test scores, and letters of recommendations, applications to graduate and professional schools often require a personal statement as part of the process. The statement allows you to differentiate yourself from other candidates by offering the admissions committee a glimpse of you as a person, not just as a set of numbers and list of accomplishments.

Getting Started:
Take some time to consider why you are applying to a particular program, as well as what specific areas or questions the application asks you to address in your personal statement. Do some brainstorming. The following will help you get started.

- Who are you?
  - What is special, unique, distinctive and/or impressive about your life story?

- What is your area of interest?
  - When did you become interested in this field, what have you learned about it (and yourself) that further stimulated your interest in this field?

- What are your career goals?
  - How did you decide on this pathway? What do you want to do?

- What have you overcome, if applicable?
  - What, if any, unusual obstacles or hardships have influenced your life and career decision-making?

- What do you have to offer?
  - What personal characteristics and skills do you possess that show your readiness for success in this field? How can you best demonstrate or document these?

- What are the most compelling reasons you can give to convince the admissions committee of your strengths as a candidate?
Writing Your Personal Statement
Identify what particular theme or point you want your personal statement to make to readers. Shape your first paragraph around this theme, and develop and illustrate it in the following paragraphs. Once you write a rough draft, ask a few trusted readers for feedback. Continue revising until your statement is clear, succinct and error-free, stays within the word/character count limit, and accomplishes your initial goal. This can be a long, but important, process allowing you to reflect for yourself, and articulate to others, the reasons behind your career decisions and direction.

Tips to Remember

Do...

✓ Address any specific questions asked for in the application
✓ Share what makes you uniquely prepared for the program
✓ Follow standard formatting guidelines
✓ Use a reader-friendly font and font size (no less than 10 point)
✓ Get one or two other people to proofread your final draft
✓ Take advantage of UVM’s many resources, some of which are listed below

Do Not...

X Tell the admissions committee about the profession
X Attempt to write your or another person’s life story
X Concentrate on a high school or earlier experience
X Try to mention everything on your resume

Resources to assist you:

Faculty: If you are applying to graduate school in a specific field, a faculty member should read your essay. Faculty input is often critical to your success. Take advantage of their experience and knowledge.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is located on the first floor of Bailey Howe Library (past the main stairs, to the right). Peer tutors can help you with your personal statement, as well as any other writing. Their website is www.uvm.edu/writingcenter.

UVM Career Center: We provide assistance in your graduate school selection and application process. Our career counselors will assist you in getting started and giving feedback on your personal statement. Call the office for an appointment at 656-3450 or stop by the Career + Experience Hub during drop in hours (M-Th, 1 - 4 pm and Fr: 1-3pm).

Rev. 9/13