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## Application Advice: The Personal Statement

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### Brainstorming

- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- When have you displayed your best personal traits?
- What are your most interesting life experiences?
- What experiences or activities have surprised you or changed you? How so?
- What do items on your résumé mean to you?
  - What have you learned from them?
  - What was the highlight of each?
  - What anecdotes might illustrate them?
- What errors or regrets have taught you something important about yourself?
- What ideas, books, theories, or movements have made a profound impact on you?
- What are your short and long-term academic and/or professional goals?

### Writing

- Remember that a personal statement is most often designed to be an intellectual and personal narrative
  - Carefully select examples of accomplishments and experiences that illustrate the story of your intellectual development and illustrate how you meet the award criteria
- Convey what matters to you intellectually and professionally, not just personally
  - What you choose to say in your statement tells the reader what your priorities are
- Share your story; the reader needs to know:
  - What personal traits you possess
  - Why you are ready for the opportunity at hand
    - Be specific about how your background and training prepares you
  - What personal challenges you have faced
  - What has shaped your identity and/or outlook
  - How your life experiences have formed and shaped your goals
  - How you have pursued and prepared for those goals thus far
- Don't rehash your résumé
  - Strive to make you and your life experience vivid in ways that complement your résumé instead
- Avoid focusing on why you *haven't* done something; call attention to the positives, not the negatives
- Share your goals and sense of purpose
  - Explain how the specific opportunity for which you are applying will connect your past experiences and achievements with your future goals
- Coordinate the personal statement with other materials (including essays) that are part of the application

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