

PROMPT: The statement of purpose is an essay crafted to convey your academic and career goals, with an emphasis on your current research interests. In this essay, you should demonstrate an understanding of questions and issues within your discipline and clearly explain your reason for pursuing doctoral level (PhD or MD-PhD) training.

A. Consider the following questions in preparing your statement of purpose:

- What are your current research interests? The clearer you state your research interests (whether they are specific or general), the easier it will be to identify potential faculty mentors.

- Describe how previous research projects, coursework or other experiences have influenced your interests. Would you prefer to continue on a similar path of inquiry, or to engage in a different approach, technique or field of study?

- What are your future educational and career goals, and how does training as a researcher fit with your goals?

- What academic, volunteer or work experiences have best prepared you to engage in research?

- If you have had a previous research experience, describe it in detail, answering the following questions: Who was your mentor or supervisor? What was the purpose of the project? Why was it an interesting project? What impact did it have on your scholarly goals?

B. The statement of purpose should also respond to this important question:

- How do you understand the Leadership Alliance goal of developing a diverse research workforce?

When I first transferred to California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), I declared a major in psychology, believing that becoming a therapist was my only option. I quickly learned that there was more to psychology, including scientific research. Further exploration of experimental psychology led me to my area of interest, specifically sensation and perception, with a concentration in visual psychophysics.

Research Methods and Animal Behavior were some of my first courses at CSUF, and each played a role in introducing me to research. My Research Methods professor had the class conduct a mini research project investigating interpersonal relationships between college students and their friends. Participants were surveyed to examine the relationship between gender, family type, trust, dating and who they liked. I enjoyed conducting inquiry-based research and analyzing and presenting the data I collected. I also participated in experiments in my Animal Behavior lab. One experiment that was carried out involved observing firsthand how a planarian learned. I tested whether the planarian habituated to a scalpel prodding its head. At first it responded to the prodding. However, after multiple trials it became less responsive, suggesting it recognized that the scalpel was not a threat. After participating in these courses, I began to think that pursuing a career in research may be the right fit for me. However, I had yet to experience performing empirical research in a formal laboratory setting because of my need to maintain a job to support my education.

In the spring of 2013, I was accepted into the CSUF Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program. This program focuses on providing its scholars with experience in a research laboratory alongside a faculty mentor, allowing the student to link theory and application, as well as providing growth in investigative and interpretive skills. Acceptance into the MARC program allowed me to focus on research, as the stipend that was provided enabled me to leave my job.

As part of the MARC program I joined the laboratory of Dr. Eriko Self in the Department of Psychology. In the summer of 2013, I began working on my original MARC research project. The goal of my research is to determine if there is a relationship between competitiveness and accuracy/reaction time in a visual search, an association not currently described in the literature. And yet this relationship may have important implications, as a visual search involves important everyday tasks, which range from looking for your car in a crowded parking lot to searching for abnormalities in x-ray images.

To investigate the relationship between competitiveness and accuracy/reaction time in a visual search, I have incorporated test stimuli previously used in Dr. Self's lab, consisting of several red or green circles or squares presented on a computer screen. Each shape contains a white line segment in its center. The goal is for participants, who are primarily CSUF students enrolled in Psychology 101, to determine the orientation of the line within a given shape. Reaction time and accuracy will be analyzed using a mixed ANOVA and competitiveness will be analyzed using the Competitiveness Questionnaire.

I am enthralled with the research process and love conducting original research in the Self lab. Although my main interest lies with sensation and perception, I am also working hard to address my research with an interdisciplinary perspective, taking biology courses and learning to evaluate research papers outside my discipline within MARC seminar. Over the summer of 2013, I participated in the Research Careers Preparatory (RCP) Laboratory Skills course. In this course, I learned the theory behind the central dogma of molecular biology and perfected

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Comment: Nice!

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laboratory techniques that I may use in future research, including DNA and RNA isolation, Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and Reverse Transcription-PCR, and electrophoresis of nucleic acids and proteins.

As a Mexican-American female from a low-income family, I have encountered several impediments throughout my life. Therefore, I believe that the Leadership Alliance Summer Research- Early Identification Program (SR-EIP) is a perfect match for me, as it supports diversity amongst young scholars striving for a career in research. I have seen what outside support and guidance can do for an individual. My father dedicated himself to serving underprivileged families as a missionary. While my large family lived a simple and somewhat difficult life because of my father's calling, it was a fulfilling one. I also learned the value of hard work and perseverance. Despite my family's limited finances, I attended a Christian school for most of my education. When my parents could no longer afford my tuition, I took it upon myself to obtain multiple jobs, in order to remain enrolled. Despite my work schedule, I still maintained good grades and participated in extracurricular activities.

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My dedication to my studies was recognized when I was accepted to the University of Miami. As I looked forward to the start of my college career, my home life began to deteriorate. My father became ill and my parents lost our home. Shortly after this loss, my father passed away. Although his hospitalization affected my academic performance in 2009, I received passing grades, and learned that with hard work and patience anything can be overcome. I see my journey serving as an example to myself and to others; despite challenges, success can still be achieved.

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SR-EIP supports students who have overcome hardships, bringing together individuals with varied life experiences. In doing so, the program provides its participants with an environment that stimulates novel approaches to problem solving. It is essential that diversity is established in the research workforce, as it increases investigation, productivity, and creativity, allowing for a more comprehensive approach to accomplishing one's goals. I have no doubt that the SR-EIP will provide me with outstanding research experiences and guidance, facilitating my goal of attending graduate school and obtaining a PhD in Psychology. It will also allow me to be a role model to others. If accepted into SR-EIP, I know I will be grateful for the opportunities I was afforded and experiences that I participated in.

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Comment: Love this.

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