

Personal, Relevant Background & Future Goals Statement

This statement will introduce you to the reviewers. In a compelling fashion, you will share your motivation to pursue advanced studies; steps you have taken to gain professional knowledge and skills; your independent and team research experiences, and your career goals. Reviewers will be seeking strong evidence of your intellectual merit and broader impacts: *How have you (and will you) advance knowledge and benefit society?*

Basic Outline for this Statement:

- Part I. Introduction
- Part II. Body (bulk of your narrative)
- Part III. Intellectual Merit*
- Part IV. Broader Impacts*
- Part V. Conclusion

*Even though you provide *evidence* of your IM & BI potential throughout your application, you are also **required** to explicitly address both review criteria in two separate paragraphs in both statements. You must add headings that clearly label the paragraphs as **Intellectual Merit** or **Broader Impacts**. The use of boldface will draw reviewers' attention to the required paragraph headings.

Suggested writing strategy: It will be easier to start with the body (Part II) because you will be writing straightforward answers to the writing prompts found in the GRFP instructions. First create an outline to organize your thoughts (example below). Select experiences that *best* illustrate your knowledge, skills and abilities. Begin by writing freely (you can edit later.) Now review your work. You may need to re-arrange the order of your paragraphs to create a "story." Add transition language to help move your reader from one paragraph to the next. Reread the statement in its entirety. Edit for clarity and length (limit is three pages).

Detailed Outline (adapted from the instructions):

Part I. In 3-5 sentences, make an interesting point about your unique background, your goals, or your vision for benefitting society. These first few sentences must quickly convince the reviewers that you are intelligent, innovative and articulate. Your writing must be original, sincere and engaging. Avoid clichés and the mundane. Your aim is to so intrigue the reviewers that they will want to read the rest of your statement carefully.

Part II A:

- Describe your plans to attain a master's degree and/or doctoral degree. Postdoctoral training?
- Describe your professional development plan. How will you acquire *transferable* knowledge and skills to become a well-rounded professional? (leadership, team building, project management, scholarly writing, public presentations, etc.)
- List your short term (1-5 years) career goal:
- Describe your vision for a successful career. What do you want to accomplish?
- To conclude Part IIA, make this connection for reviewers: *How will graduate school prepare you for a career that allows you to expand scientific understanding as well as benefit our society?*

Part II B. Write a brief vignette that tells *how* you became motivated to pursue advanced studies.

Hint: Your motivation can come from a positive or negative experience. Reflect on personal, professional and educational experiences: teaching; outreach; leadership; mentoring; research; internships; jobs; scholarship; campus & community engagement; family; societal issues; volunteer work; service with underrepresented groups; study or travel abroad; or inspiring role models. Identify what you learned from the experience or how the experience changed your perspective. Ideally, your story should logically connect to the degree program you have chosen to study.


Part II C.

- Describe ALL of your previous research experiences (see worksheet for ideas)
 - Specify your role in the activity. Did you work independently and/or as part of a team?
 - What research and scholarship skills did you acquire?
How will you be able to use your skills in graduate school?
 - If you worked with people from other countries, how can you apply your cultural literacy to successfully connect with international researchers in the future?
 - IM: State how each research project will advance knowledge in your discipline or across disciplines.
 - BI: Specifically state how this type of research will potentially benefit society.
- Describe professional and service activities.
 - Specify your role at a professional conference or with a student group on campus or in the community.
 - How did you enhance your leadership, team building or communication skills or acquire new skills?
 - Explain how these activities have prepared you to persist with a graduate degree program.
 - BI: Who benefitted from your service activities, and *how* did will benefit?

Part III. Address Intellectual Merit. Summarize how your academic, previous research & outreach activities have equipped with you the knowledge & skills necessary to successfully complete a graduate degree. If you have made discoveries or been on a team that made discoveries, say so!

Part IV. Address Broader Impacts. Summarize how your previous research can potentially lead to societal benefits. Summarize your efforts to serve and include people from underrepresented groups in your teaching, outreach and service activities.

Part V. Conclusion: In 3-5 sentences, conclude your essay. Examples: Reiterate how a graduate degree will help you achieve your career goals; or explain how the GRFP will enable you pursue a particular line of research; or describe how you intend to contribute to your profession as a scientific leader or address social needs or global challenges.

 **Suggested editing strategy:** When you have completed a first draft, ask family members and friends for feedback. Revise. Ask your mentor(s) and a GRFP Resource Person to read your polished statement. Faculty members are extremely busy, so allow at least a week turn-around time. Based on the feedback, revise your essay again. Consult a campus writing tutor for help with grammar or mechanics. Set your statement aside for a few days. Now read your statement with “fresh eyes.” Is it compelling? Does it reflect your potential for intellectual merit & broader impacts?