Writing an effective personal satatement essay

While these insights may seem overwhelmingly formulaic, they are the basis of a highly effective and individual, successful essay.

You will benefit from having a simple, yet effective, structure: thesis; evidence; conclusion. Readers have to read many, many, many applications. Make it easy for them to remember you and your proposal.

Please also see other files that have hints on actual writing styles and language.

INTRO

A strong “hook” and thesis is essential to get and keep your reader’s attention. The first paragraph determines the degree of consideration and investment with which a selection committee member reviews your packet. Make it count. If your hook works, when the committee meets, members will refer to your application with reference to the hook that has established you as an individual in their minds. It is essential that this hook lead into a thesis that makes the argument for your selection, not only based on your performance, but also because of your potential and plans. See below for a few examples of successful hooks. A good hook is useless, however, without the accompanying argument that references accomplishments and achievements, as well as the future and aspirations.

Hooks:

“Valentine's Day will never be the same. Four years ago, Cupid's holiday coincided with my discovery of a tumor in my cheek. Later diagnosed as a rare sarcoma, this capricious cancer has provoked me to understand myself and my passions.”

This candidate went on to talk about his role as leader of the national youth Red Cross and his perspective regarding US health-care – and how that perspective changed as he went through treatment for cancer. He related his Scholarship-funded plans to this evolution and his aspirations for service to the world in health-care.

“I am one of fifteen children in a Maryland farm family.”

This candidate wrote about her journey from that farm to her University in another state and her plans for a larger perspective and the goals she had set, equipped with the tools she’d gain through the Scholarship experience.

“I was one of those little kids that, when tests were returned, surreptitiously looked to make sure I’d out-scored my classmates.”

This candidate went on to talk about the role competition had played in his life and how he had harnessed this drive to further his own, and others, interests. He reflected on the paradox of an individual’s competitive drive furthering others’ welfare.

EVIDENCE

After an effective hook and thesis, you must support that thesis with sound evidence. This part of an essay is not a recounting of your many accomplishments, impressive though they may be (committee members can read your lists in other parts of the application). It is not focused on the past at all. It puts you and your proposal in the context of the granting program, relating the opportunity afforded by the funding to your further aspirations and plans. You need to respond to the prompts, and at the same time, answer three questions: Why me? Why this? Why now?

Why me?

By choosing you, a committee will not be selecting someone else. Let them know why you are their best investment, how you not only meet the criteria, but also will exceed their hopes for fulfilling the promise of the program.

Why this?

Your response to the “so-what” question is critical. Why is your project or proposal important, not only to you, but also to committee members and the communities they serve? How does it fit within the parameters of their funding objectives? How is what you propose unique to you, their funding, and the opportunity?

Why now?

Give readers a sense of what funding will do for and to your life plans. Discuss your proposal in the context of your own life, *and* the greater community or field within which you work.

The evidence section of the essay is the heart of the piece. It is where you have an opportunity to help the committee think of you as one of “theirs.”

CONCLUSION

Finally, you want to close with a restatement of your thesis, a reminder of who you are (hook), and the importance of this opportunity for you.