

## Personal Statement Example for Graduate School

The following examples, drawn from real student essays and public sources (details altered for anonymity), demonstrate the wide range of academic and professional interests, writing styles, and approaches taken by applicants in the science and technology fields. Some of these essays are really quite good, while others would benefit from substantial revisions. Rather than templates or models, these samples are best considered for their inspirational value – whether to help you find something you like in a piece of writing, or to help you avoid certain types of passages that don't add value to your essay.

Importantly, your essay should be authentic to you: your voice, your story, your passions, your career plans.

### Critical Evaluation of Essays

Certain questions may be useful to help you evaluate and suggest improvements to personal statements, *including your own!*

1. Does the statement make clear near the beginning what the applicant is seeking, whether an internship position, a spot in graduate program, etc.?
2. Does the statement explain why the applicant is interested in the opportunity?
3. Does the statement address ways that the applicant will bring benefits to the internship sponsor, graduate program, or field broadly? (Does the statement consider the reader's interests?)
4. Does the statement explicitly connect past experiences with future intentions?
5. Does the statement employ specific examples to demonstrate the applicant's accomplishments and qualifications for the proposed path?
6. Does the statement give you a sense of knowing the applicant's motivations in professional (and sometimes private) life?
7. Does the statement avoid recounting the sort of information that would normally be listed in a resume/CV, such as GPA, transcript details, club membership, etc.?
8. Is the statement easy to read, organized in straightforward way, and free from grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors?

A simple bridge truss was the first structure I ever analyzed. The simple combination of beams that could hold cars, trains, and trucks over long spans of water fascinated me. Having the tools to analyze the loads on the truss further increased my interest in structures. I encountered the bridge in a textbook for my first engineering class.

Knowing that the professor, Mr. Lionel Trane, was a tough teacher, I purchased the class book ahead of time and began to read it over the summer. The first member of my family to attend college, I was determined to succeed. In class we learned about forces on simple members and then we put the members together to form a simple truss. At this point I had almost decided that structural engineering was the career for me. I loved the practical, problem solving aspects of the field.

As I continued in my program, the coursework became more advanced. In my analysis and design classes, I especially enjoyed studying steel design because we not only learned the use of the load resistance factor design but also applied that knowledge — I designed a four-story building. The professor was a practicing engineer, and he always related the subject to real life steel structures he had engineered, for example, the Goodman Library in San Diego. This is the kind of project on which I would like to work, designing the structure and considering how the building will respond to environmental forces.

Although I liked my classes, my internship experiences really confirmed my interest in structural engineering. While working at Canteco as a student volunteer the summer after my sophomore year, I reviewed calculations for load-bearing members in new commercial building designs. The calculations were based on three sets of end-application assumptions, and I had to verify the numbers and make sure the core parameters matched the clients' intended load predictions. In this role, I attended weekly meetings with the technical staff and reported on the discrepancies I found in the project portfolios. It was exciting to know that I was the last checkpoint before the whole design went for approval, and I enjoyed working on something where I could use my analytical skills in a project with real-world results that created safer and more useful structures.

At Milwaukee University, I hope to enroll in the structural engineering program. In this program I hope to draw on my structural analysis and internship background as a foundation for studying more advanced concepts. I am particularly interested in researching the ties between the structural engineering and applied mechanics. I hope to be involved in some structurally related research at Milwaukee University. I am particularly interested in the research programs of Prof. John Smith and Prof. Diana King.

After completing my degree in engineering, I know I want to design structures. That is what has fascinated me since I took Mr. Trane's class. The program at Milwaukee University will help me to be competent and competitive. After working for several years designing structures for seismic, wind, fire, and flood readiness with a large firm, my long-term goals are to found my own engineering consulting firm.

As the time approached for me to set my personal and professional goals, I made a conscientious decision to enter a field which would provide me with a sense of achievement and, at the same time, produce a positive impact on mankind. It became apparent to me that a career in electronics would fulfill these objectives. In retrospect, my ever-growing commitment to electronics has been crystallizing for years. My intense interest in computer gaming, education, and current events seems particularly appropriate to this field and has prepared me well for such a critical choice at this juncture of my life.

Even though I have been passionate about electronics for a long time, I actually didn't know that I wanted to make it into a career until recently. When I was a freshman here at Rudolf College, my friends were all in the pre-med track. Although I liked the chemistry and biology classes I took, I just couldn't see myself doing surgeries or having to look at blood all the time. I also really had a passion for education, and I even took two classes in the Education Department at Rudolf. For the next three semesters, I imagined myself as a teacher or educator. At the end of my sophomore year, I read an article on Buzzfeed that changed my whole perspective.

It basically laid out how the next generation of portable devices would need a "thought revolution," that is a new way of thinking about design and materials in the future for the seamless integration of web-enabled access to all. The limits of Moore's Law need to be overcome, and I have always known that to me, a challenge is just an opportunity to succeed. When there is something to be done, I am always the first to volunteer, whether it's in my classes or in the Delta Gamma Sigma fraternity, for which I am proud to serve as Membership Chair and Vice President-elect.

I've been asked many times why I wish to become an electronics researcher. Upon considerable reflection, the thought of possessing the ability to help others communicate provides me with tremendous internal gratification and offers the feeling that my life's efforts have been focused in a positive direction. Becoming an electronics scientist is the culmination of a lifelong dream; and I am prepared to dedicate myself, as I have in the past, to achieving this goal.

I have always been fascinated by the amazing jobs robots are able to perform, and by the way all these cars around us were designed. The problem is, my interest was not satisfied by revolving around the outer appearance of these machines or by how well they achieved their functions, but was constantly demanding to learn more about how they managed to do so, and what inner complexities I was not allowed to meet closely made it capable of attracting my attention.

Engineering arrived like a wish granted, as it combines the two subjects I am very passionate about. A masters degree in engineering is going to give me the chance to further dive into the interesting findings of physics and finally put the mathematical knowledge I gained in my bachelors program into practical application.

In addition to that, a very important group of those who change the world are engineers. They get to look for ways to control and prevent the pollution going on because a greener environment, free from pollutants is what we are all looking forward to. They also create new medicines, explore and develop new technologies. They can try out all the amazing things we thought would only exist in imagination, from flying vehicles to undersea buildings. They are able to grasp these wonders and make them the future's reality, and I would be very glad to join them in doing so.

After choosing to be one, I read various pieces of information about engineers that achieved success. Among the texts I went through, I found Hedy Lamarr, who has affected today's availability of Wi-Fi, Smartphones, and any other wireless technology possible. I honestly regard this as very impressive, as almost all our reliance nowadays is on the result of her creation. Despite the fact that Hedy had no degree in engineering, she had an idea for switching from a frequency to another in a matter of split-second intervals, and putting it into application was enough to help us reach today's technologies.

In our time, though, I believe that an engineer is not going to prosper if he depends only on the knowledge he graduates with. Every engineer needs to build certain skills including leadership, business adeptness, management, and ease of communication.

At the University of Madison, I will have a chance to mix with students with different backgrounds and talents, and this will be a step forward in being a better participant during teamwork and a good boost to my confidence. Apart from that, studying in your program will free me, somehow. I will be more capable of organizing my time without being held back by family obligations. It will bring about a more independent person out of me that can work her way through life with a lot of her own effort.

Finally, I hope that a degree from your university is going to serve as the ultimate base to the journey I am taking to achieve my dreams towards a successful engineering career.

The aerospace industry is currently one of the most rapidly advancing and high tech industries, it fascinates me to see how the machines are being built and developed to achieve magnificent goals. I have a basic understanding of how this is achieved through documentaries and research, however I endeavor to know more about this industry and broaden my understanding as the more I know the happier and more content I will become, the thought of working within this industry and helping mankind to advance and improve really excites me and your university provides me with the key features and opportunities to achieve this. My passion for the aerospace industry started at a very young age when my parents took me to the Chicago Air and Water show. I can remember standing next to my father constantly asking questions and being fascinated in particular by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels (F/A-18 Hornets) and the Czech-built L-39 C Albatros jets. I was also fortunate enough to visit Washington, DC on a seventh-grade trip and visit the National Air and Space Museum, where I was able to peek into the flight deck of the space shuttle and look inside a Mercury capsule.

I have a competitive personality and through completing an internship in engineering I have gained the skills to allow me to proactively problem solve or question if something is the best it can be. Which I think are fundamental skills within this industry.

Obtaining a Master of Engineering will greatly increase my career prospects and allow me to pursue a job in an industry which greatly interests me. Part of this drive I feel comes from my father who is an engineer himself, and being very happy with his job. I have also completed an internship in the engineering firm Kaplan & Haupt; this has taught me essential skills such as: teamwork, planning, punctuality, commitment, CAD, manufacturing, and problem solving. Working in an actual industry has given me key experience with dealing with customers and keeping people happy, it has also matured me greatly and taught me how to balance my life between work and home. I have had many different jobs since the age of 13, and this has taught me to be independent and not rely on other people to get me through life. As an undergraduate I was involved with a number of extra-curricular activities, these included the intramural soccer championship, Society of Mathematics Scholars, and varsity cross-country.

Attending your graduate program will also provide me with the rare opportunity of being surrounded by people who share the same interests and ambitions, which means ideas can be discussed and improved greatly. I am a very outgoing person which can be shown through my hobbies, which include all types of music and instruments, mountain biking and a variety of sports. I am always looking for a challenge to take on and your program will be able to provide me with that challenge and the satisfaction I will get from achieving it.

Recently I have been looking into the prospect of how engineers are taking ideas from nature to move along and improve the engineering industry, one thing which was of keen interest to me here was how understanding a giraffe has enabled a suit to be made which allows pilots to experience 9G's without blacking out. I visited a NASA research site, and was given the opportunity to see some of their research facilities, even though a lot were off limits and top secret the parts I was allowed to see absolutely fascinated me. Graduate school will give me the fundamental grounding I need to achieve what I want in life, and a way of getting there.

As a sophomore at Mendota College, I spent the month of June volunteering on the small island of Salvador, Guatemala, along with 25 other Mendota students. There were five medical "clinics" on the island which consisted of a one-room hut with a table for the patient to sit on, a lawn chair for the doctor, and boxes of donated medicine. These clinics were staffed with three Mendota students and one local doctor each day, and in these conditions the doctor and his student assistants (with absolutely no medical experience) performed anything from routine physicals to minor surgeries. Patience and cooperation were important for the success of the medical team and the safety of the patients. My trip to Guatemala was a tremendous learning opportunity for me; I learned the importance of team cooperation, problem solving, hard work, and giving back to the community, which I try to apply to my career path and everyday life.

After my trip to Guatemala, I discovered a passion for using science and technology to benefit the community. I followed this passion by pursuing opportunities for original research. My first research experience was as a summer researcher with Prof. Melvin Calvin at Mendota College. My research studied how strongly chiral  $\beta$ -blockers bind to chiral micelles, which is important for chiral drug separation techniques and ensuring the safety of consumers. The challenges and rewards of performing independent research compelled me to pursue more research opportunities. In two summer internships at the Eli Lilly Laboratory I developed instrumental methods for better separation of impurities from new drug candidates. My experiences in the pharmaceutical field inspired me because I saw how the applications of my research directly improved public safety. I was eager to apply my passion for impacting the community through research and outreach and to satisfy my interests in analytical chemistry, which is why I chose to attend the University of Minneapolis for graduate school. The University produces top-quality, high impact research and at the same time focuses on community outreach.

Outreach to a community, scientific or otherwise, happens through engaging and effective communication. As an active member of the national chemistry, biology, and theater honor societies at Mendota College, I gained experience giving numerous presentations to a variety of audiences. I have presented my research to other scientists at several local and national conferences, including the National ACS meeting, a regional ACS Conference in Milwaukee, a regional Science Conference in Chicago, and numerous presentations on the Mendota campus. I have been pursuing a mission to become a mentor to a broader community by presenting my research to audiences with varying levels of scientific background. Although I believe it is important to be able to present current research to others in the scientific community, I have developed a special passion for making science exciting and accessible to non-scientists and underrepresented groups.

I have demonstrated a capability to conduct innovative research, an eagerness to utilize available resources to further develop my skills, and a desire to communicate my passion to others. I am excited to share my passion for science through mentoring and inspiring the next generation of scientists. I look forward to a career based in research while keeping the mentoring of future scientists of all backgrounds as an utmost priority in my life.

A career in experimental science is not for the lighthearted. The requisites of hard work, creativity, certain failure, and long hours can only be successfully sustained by one attribute: passion. Passion fuels the desire for experimental excellence, communication of the phenomena, and a certain penchant to always ask the question “why?” or “how?” Over the course of my undergraduate studies, my passion for scientific knowledge and the ability to share that knowledge with others has led to my decision to pursue a doctoral degree in chemistry with the ultimate career goal of becoming a professor.

My experience in the scientific community at La Crosse University significantly opened my eyes to the beauty of chemistry all around us. My professors loved sharing their passion for science with us students, and their guidance over the years fostered the development of my interests in science. I was fortunate enough to experience research in organic chemistry in the lab of Dr. Francis Erlenmeyer at La Crosse University. Prior to research, I was not aware of how gratifying, social, and exciting a career in research could be. I became enamored with idea of answering questions that have not yet been answered. In this aspect, I found research to be both intellectually stimulating and humbling, which quickly became the cornerstone of my passion for science. In that summer, I learned the basic fundamentals of organic chemistry: how to set up a reaction, how to run a column, and how to make fancy PowerPoint slides. Above all, my ability to think analytically, ask good questions about the literature, and how to plan future research greatly improved. During the remainder of my time at La Crosse, I spent time on two projects and both have led to manuscripts to be submitted for publication.

My involvement in the science was expanded during the last years of undergraduate studies. I was awarded a fellowship to assist in the teaching of laboratories, and I was required to hold regular office hours for supplemental course instruction. This proved to be one of the most influential blessings; I learned that I loved sharing and teaching science. I cannot envision myself, in the future, as a professional, without having a role in education. This has motivated my drive for scientific excellence, and I have learned so much about chemistry from teaching it.

I made my decision to pursue a doctoral degree under the guidance of Dr. Julia Stone. I have found a balance between being a teaching assistant, student, researcher, and community member. I have become a national member of Engineers Without Borders, and I am working on a project that is dedicated to providing clean water and health education to a small community in Panama. This is something that I am really excited about because I am able to use my scientific background to help with problems and reach out to many people in need. This is important to me because I have seen the need for help firsthand. I was a volunteer and missionary at an orphanage and youth group as in Quito, Ecuador, and it is amazing to see how much impact you can have on the lives of others. I firmly believe in change, and I believe that it starts with passion, commitment, and service.

I am excited for the challenges that are ahead of me in graduate school and career. I accept them with alacrity. After graduate school, I want to pursue a career in academic research. The doctoral degree will enable me to work at a research institution in addition to being an educator. I want to have a direct impact on the science of organic chemistry during and after graduate school. I can see myself leading a lab after completion of graduate school and postdoctoral research. Also, a career in academic research will allow me the opportunity to mentor undergraduate and graduate students and attempt to foster the rich academic community that I was fortunate to receive an education in.