

# **Writing the Personal Statement**

# Purpose

- Provides the committee a “picture” of you
- Demonstrates unique qualifications for and commitment to medicine
- Your chance to “SELL” yourself beyond the MCAT & GPA numbers

# Possible Topics

(Pick only a couple!!)

- **Motivation**
  - Why a physician?
  - Why NOT a teacher, nurse, scientist, etc?
- **Family Background**
  - What individuals or incidents shaped your life?
- **Extracurricular Activities and Work/Volunteer Experience**
  - What did you learn?
  - How did you contribute to getting the job done?
  - How have you matured as a result?
- **Future Plans (long/short term)**
- **Explain/Clarify any outstanding issues**

# Keys to Success

- Focus on a few illustrative incidents
- Unite with a theme or thesis
- Outline what you want to say and the order
- **BE SPECIFIC!** Use concrete examples and experiences that distinguish you from others
- Write about what interests & excites you
- End your essay with a conclusion that refers back to the lead and restates the thesis.

# The Personal Statement Should:

- Use one or two specific incidents to show what has been learned from these experiences.
- Discuss the experiences, people and events that influenced your decision to become a physician or prepared you to enter this field.
- Discuss your motivation for medicine
- Describe what you have learned from extracurricular and work accomplishments. Describe these clearly and succinctly.
- Discuss any disciplinary actions during college
- Explain how these experiences provide for personal growth
- Explain what makes you uniquely suitable for this professional school.

# Start and End with a Bang

- I – lead
- II – thesis
- III – body
- IV – conclusion (but no “in conclusion” – don’t waste words)

# Things to Remember

- No inconsistencies between essay and interview
- Don't re-list things that are on AAMCAS or other application.
- Use specific incidents to show what has been gained and will be brought to program.
- Secondary essay provides supplementary details; ties into themes and activities; answers specific questions if any; add to what was on application

# Most Common Errors

- I was born... or my parents came from...
- Autobiographic, itinerary, or resume prose
- Excessive vocabulary, verbose, complex words
- Generic statements and platitudes
- *NO Prevarication!!*



# More Possible Errors

- Too many I's may indicate arrogance
- No sense of direction
- Don't use Robert Frost "The Road Less Traveled"!!
- Refer to writing guides (but do not copy!):
  - Writing for success - Jackson and Bordot
  - Elements of Style - Strunk and White
  - Others (first year English, Biology Sophomore Seminar, etc.)

# Helpful Hints

- Revise, revise, revise, hone to as near perfection as you can get, eliminate as many useless filler words to have space for the important words.
- Carefully check spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- Make an effort to make it interesting by good use of language, a literary effort yet meaty.

# **NOW! LET'S GET STARTED!**

- 1. List the things that you have done that illustrate your:**
  - Desire to help people**
  - Knowledge of your profession**
- 2. Outline a draft of a potential personal statement**
- 3. Write a couple of paragraphs**