## Tips and Tricks for the Personal Statement

Lauren Fisher DO

Career and Professional Advisor

Clinical Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology



### Why Do I Need a Personal Statement?

- Exercise in self reflection
  - Opportunity to clarify thoughts/choose between specialties
- Away Rotations (Letter of Intent)
- Letter of recommendation writers
- ERAS Application

### Where Do I Begin?

- Brain Dump Technique
- "Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on."
  - Louis L'Amour
- "The first draft of anything is s@#t."

   Ernest Hemingway



#### **Self Reflection**

- Pivotal Experiences
  - Life experiences or Medical School experiences
- Accomplishments
- Goals
- Values

### **Tell YOUR Story:**

- How are you unique?
- Why did you choose this specialty?
- How are you well suited for this specialty?
- What are your future goals?

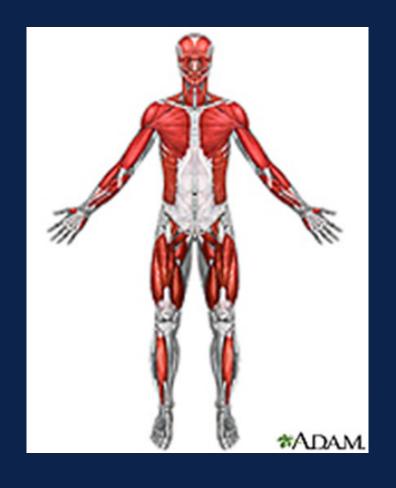


### Show, Not Tell:

- Give examples
- Experience that shaped your decision
- What about you makes your journey special?

# Anatomy of a Personal Statement: Beginning

- Engaging opening
- Start with describing yourself and your background
- BUT do not simply recite your CV
- Give examples to give the reader insight into your personality



### Anatomy of a Personal Statement: Middle

- Clearly state your career choice
- Why did you select this specialty [or prelim year]?
- Why do you think you will excel in this specialty?
- Show Don't tell
  - Cite examples: personal, family, professional

### **Anatomy of a Personal Statement: End**

- Goals and expectations for your career
  - What you expect to achieve in your career/long term goals?
  - What you are looking for in a program?
  - Why this specific program may help you reach your goals?

### **Anatomy of a Personal Statement:**



- If you are interested in a specific area of the country, this is a good place to discuss your ties to that region
- Some specialties require a customized a Personal Statement for each program.
- Even if customized PS not required, it may help to personalize your application to a competitive program
- May need multiple versions if applying to two separate specialties, or prelim plus advanced position scenario

#### Do's and Don't's:

- Don't just update your Med School Application PS
- Don't focus too much on the past, make sure to address your future goals
- Use active, rather than passive voice
- Minimize clichés, dictionary definitions, quotes
- Personal Statement, NOT a creative writing assignment

#### Do's and Don'ts':

- Clear and succinct
- One page max
- Get a few different opinions
  - \*Advisors are great at this
- MUST be error free
  - Typos and grammar can ruin your chances!
  - Have at least 2-3 people edit your work
  - Assign the correct customized PS to correct program

### The Art of the Spin:

- Can use the PS to control the narrative:
  - red flags, non traditional course or deferred graduation.
- Make sure to own your experiences and show how you have grown.
- Advisors can help to craft your approach to your specific scenario



### Difference between LOI and PS?

- Letter of Intent for Away Rotations
- Short and Sweet
- Paragraph 1: Who you are
- Paragraph 2: Why are you choosing to rotate in this specialty
- Paragraph 3: Why do you want to do a rotation at this specific program?

#### In Conclusion

- Just start where you are
- Brain Dump
  - Who are you? Where are you coming from?
  - Where do you want to go?
  - Why?
- \*Career and Professional Advisors



### "I want to go into Ortho"

- Why?
- Because I like to operate
- Why?
- Because I like to work with my hands
- Why?
- Because bones remind me of support structure, like beams of a house.



### Tell this story:



### **Resources and Examples**

- https://www.llusmaa.org/page/examples-of-personal-statements
- https://www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/currentstudents/student-affairs/career-advising/year-4-getresidency/personal-statement
- AAMC Careers in Medicine Site
- Advising database ask your advisor for examples