

# Statement of Academic & Professional Goals (a.k.a. Graduate School Essay)

Statements are typically 1-2 pages (500-1000 words) unless a specific length is stated in your application instructions. Below are the basic components found in a statement of goals. Read your application instructions carefully. You may be asked to comment on specific issues or topics that are not noted here. Depending upon your circumstances, you may not reference all these items, and you may include others. This template is intended to be only a general guide that gets your initial thoughts onto paper in a logical order.

- I. Explain your **career goals** and how you became interested in this field of study/work. You may reference the undergraduate classes that helped focus your goals, an internship experience, or several individuals that you met who shared their career stories with you. It is important to make clear that you have career goals because graduate school is not for the undecided. If you have a very brief and concise story you can tell, do so. Stories are more memorable than a list of facts or experiences.
- II. Make the **connection between your career goals and the graduate program** to which you are applying. Sometimes this is a single statement such as, “*The most appropriate academic preparation for this career is \_\_\_\_\_.*”
- III. Indicate your **academic goals** including research interests, timeline, level (MS, PhD), desire for assistantships, etc.
- IV. Explain **your interest in this program**. Typically you want to point out the unique features, specialties and coursework that appeal to you. You may also mention if one of your professors recommended the program, or you may refer to the research topics that faculty in this program are pursuing. If the program lists a mission statement on their web site, you can address it as well. For example: *Your program is at the top of my list based upon your mission statement, “...to prepare Physician Assistants who understand and can respond to the needs of underserved populations.”* It is important that you are specific in this section. Referring to specific courses or specific professors will demonstrate that you have actually researched their program.
- V. Close your essay with a positive statement about looking forward to studying at the institution and **thank the reader** for considering your application. You may also summarize your previous comments if it doesn't seem too redundant. It is ok if this paragraph is short.

*Appointments are available to review your essay for general content, organization, and read-ability. To schedule an appointment call 330-823-8685 or email [bryanjo@mountunion.edu](mailto:bryanjo@mountunion.edu). We also strongly recommend that you ask faculty within your department to critique your essay since each academic area of study has unique preferences and styles. (An essay for a mechanical engineering candidate should read differently than an essay for a social work candidate.)*