

COVER LETTER AND PERSONAL STATEMENTS

THE PROFILE PAGE FOR YOUR APPLICATION

#ABOUTME

You have a “Bio” or “About” option on most social media platforms

WHY?

So people that find your profile know something about you

They know what you WANT them to know about you



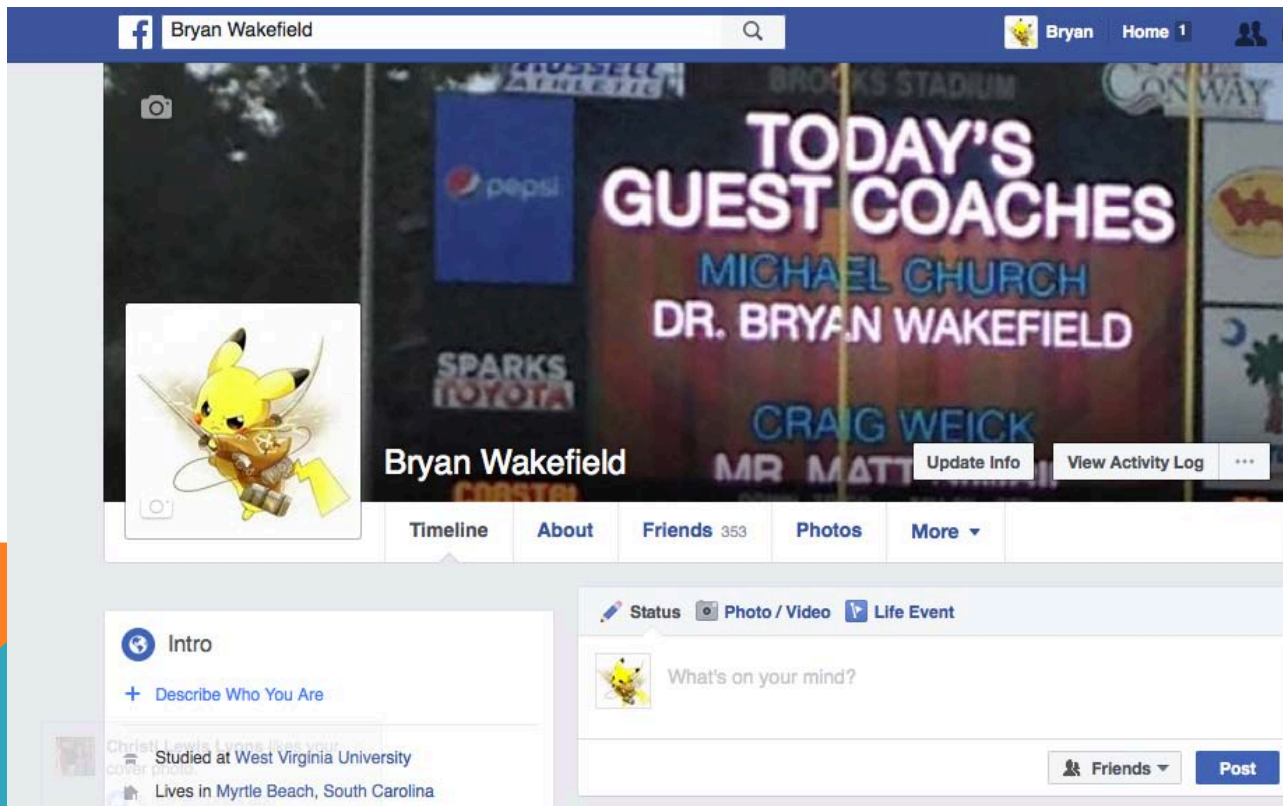
PROFILES

Your profile is an introduction

This is who I am

This is what I like

This is what you should know about me



#HIREME

A cover letter or personal statement provides you with the opportunity to introduce yourself to the person reading your application

It is your chance to let them know about you as a person and why you would be good for the position you are applying for

Do not “over share”

You should try to accomplish four things when writing a cover letter or personal statement:

1. Introduce yourself
2. State the reasons you are interested in the position
3. Explain why you would be good/prepared for the position
4. Describe your motivation/excitement about the position



I WAS BORN IN A LOG CABIN.....

Hit the “highlights”

You want to discuss the most relevant and important aspects about you as an
APPLICANT

Do NOT get too personal

You are not trying to impress the reader

The reader will not be impressed

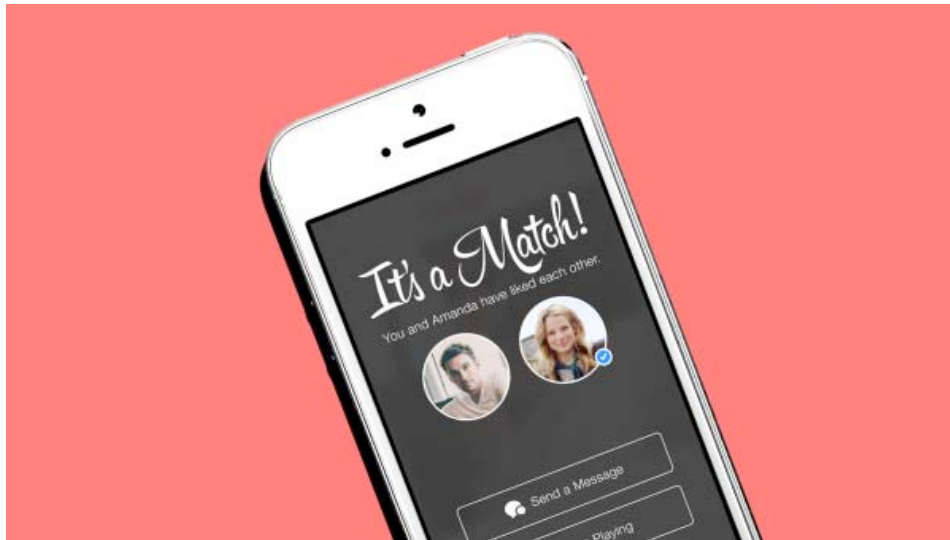
You are not trying to sell yourself

You have a page or character limit

Be concise



SWIPE RIGHT FOR EMPLOYMENT



YOU HAVE FOUR FLOORS.....GO!

The Elevator Pitch

How would you explain yourself if you were the elevator with a hiring manager or admissions committee?



YOU HAVE FOUR FLOORS.....GO!

The Elevator Pitch

How would you explain yourself if you were the elevator with a hiring manager or admissions committee?

Probably by doing the following:

1. Introduce yourself
2. State the reasons you are interested in the position
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COVER LETTER VS. PERSONAL STATEMENT

COVER LETTER

- Typically for job applications
- Introduces your education and qualifications
- Makes clear the position you are applying to
- Highlights aspects of Resume or CV that are relevant to the position
- Ties your experience to the job description
- Length – 1 page

PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Typically for graduate or professional school
- Introduces you and your motivations for seeking the position
- Highlights experience with detail that is relevant
- Ties your motivation to the mission of the institution
- Length – 1-2 pages

COVER LETTERS: THE RECIPE....NOT BY E-40

1. State what position you are applying for

Give the position title and number if available

i.e. "I am writing in regards to the Quality Control Chemist Position (#655321) at the Anheuser Busch facility in St. Louis, MO."

2. Introduce yourself and background

Be brief you only have a few lines for this

i.e. "I will be graduating with a degree in Chemistry from Coastal Carolina University in December 2016. During my time in college, my coursework and research on fermentation have provided with the skills I need to be successful in this position."



COVER LETTERS: THE RECIPE...STILL COOKING

3. Describe your experience

Use words, abbreviations and similar phrasing to the what was in the job description

If the job description says “Applicant must be proficient in use of HPLC, GC and other analytical methods for determining the content of beverages.”

Then say that or something VERY similar

i.e. “My focus as an undergraduate was on the analytical instrumentation and methods. I became proficient in the use of HPLC and GC while completing an independent research project on caffeine contain of different coffees in my Instrumental Analysis course. Additionally, I worked extensively with HPLC as part of my research with Dr. Drew Budner. My research was directed toward using GC to determine flavor profiles of beers fermented from different grains. I analyzed samples of beers using head-space sampling.....”

Go into some detail, but do not get too technical



COVER LETTERS: THE RECIPE....STILL COOKING

4. Tell them why you want to work there

Try to show some knowledge of the company or organization

This information can come from the website or recent news

i.e. “I am passionate about beer and brewing. I have envisioned myself working in the field and I feel that this position Anheuser Busch provides me with an excellent opportunity to achieve this goal.”

i.e. “I am excited to have an opportunity to use the skills I have acquired during my undergraduate work at a company like Anheuser Busch. Recent reports of donations of water to areas such as Flint, MI and flooded areas in West Virginia show that the company cares for its community which is important to me.”

Do NOT lay it on too thick – “Since I was a wee laddie, I have dreamed of working for your most excellent and respected company. I love Busch beer more than life itself and ensuring that every can is great would be a dream come true.”



COVER LETTERS: THE RECIPE....DING

5. Wrap it up, B!

Tie everything together with a conclusion

I personally like to restate why I think I will be good for the position by citing the points made earlier in the letter

i.e. “I feel that my training and experience with HPLC and GC along with their specific use in the analysis of beers and other beverages makes me ideally suited for this position.”



REMEMBER

The first person to read your letter has no clue

Your letter first has to make it through HR and the person reading your letter has not training in your field

If you get too technical you can lose them

Assume this is the first person who will read your letter.....



D'OH

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PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Personal statements are more personal than a cover letter

For professional school, they are focused on your motivation

You need to answer the following questions:

Why do I want to go to medical/dental/pharmacy school?

What experiences do I have that have shown me that this is the correct career for me?

For graduate school, there is a greater focus on your research experience in detail

You need to answer the following questions:

Why am I interested in research?

What research experience do I have and how has it prepared me for graduate level research?

What were my research responsibilities and accomplishments?



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL : MOTIVATION

Everyone has hardships

If these experiences are truly the reason you decided to go medical, dental or vet school, feel free to write about them

Do you not feel like you have to write about something because it is “what is expected.”

Make sure that this story does not take over.

This statement is supposed to be about you

You can safely devote a quarter to a third of a page to a personal narrative.

Make sure it ties together with the rest of your statement

You should have a theme

i.e. Helping others, promoting wellness or helping families in need



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL : GOALS

You should state what your career goals are in your personal statement.

Some programs look for student who may plan to stay local or work with a certain group after graduation

Try to tie your motivation and actions to your goal

Often times, your goals will be discussed with your motivations.

“X motivated me to go to professional school so that I can do Y.”



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL : ACTION

The motivation for going to professional school should have lead to some actions

Specific courses taken to prepare for professional school

Research experience

What were your responsibilities and accomplishment?

How did this prepare you for professional school?

Professional training

Volunteering or employment in the field

What were your responsibilities?

How did this experience prepare you or clarify your path?

Community involvement

What organization were you involved with?

What were your responsibilities?

How did these activities tie into your motivation?



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL : CHOICE

Explain why you are choosing this school


Try to tie your motivation, actions and goals to the mission statement of the school or program.

Show that how you see yourself and what you will be doing matches how the program sees itself.

Talk about specific activities occurring in the program that you would like to participate in

i.e. A medical school that has a yearly trip to a the Dominican Republic

“The yearly trip lead by Dr. Awesome to the Dominican Republic is an activity that I hope to participate. I have always tried to help those in need and this would be an excellent opportunity to continue that work. As I hope to work with medically underserved populations in my home state of South Carolina and this experience will help me better understand their needs.”



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL : 1,2,3 AND TO THE 4

So the major points you want to address in your personal statement

1. Motivation – Why do I want to go to professional school
2. Goals – What do I want to do after professional school
3. Actions – What have I do to prepare for professional school?
4. Choice – Why is this is right school for me?

This often times is similar to why you are right for the school

Covering these four topics should introduce you to the program



GRADUATE SCHOOL : MOTIVATION

You go to graduate school to be a world expert on something specific

You gain this expertise through research

So your motivation is focused on your desire to learn and master a specific topic

Why do you want to do this?

Why is it important to you?

You can spend a quarter of a page or less on so you can focus on experience

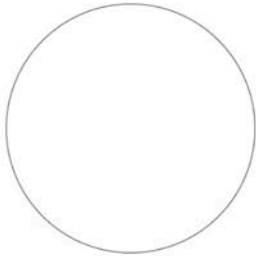
Do not get overly personal or emotional with your motivation

The committee wants to know if you are going work hard to be a successful student

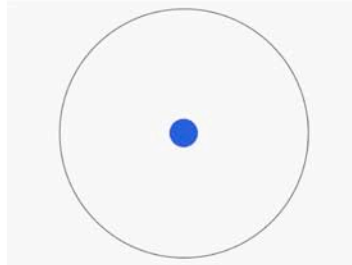


WHAT SCHOOL DOES

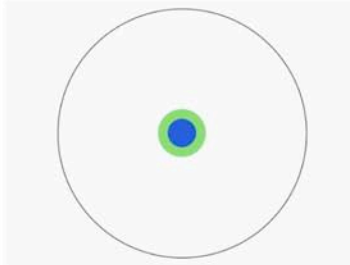
Imagine a circle that contains all of human knowledge:



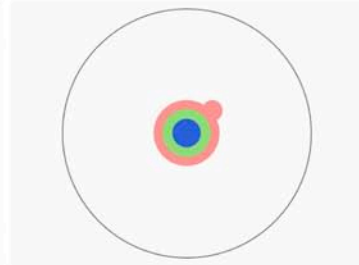
By the time you finish elementary school, you know a little:



By the time you finish high school, you know a bit more:



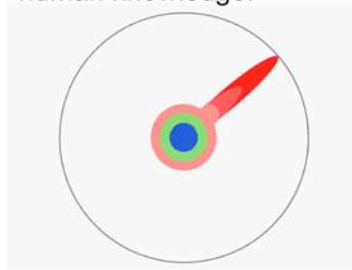
With a bachelor's degree, you gain a specialty:



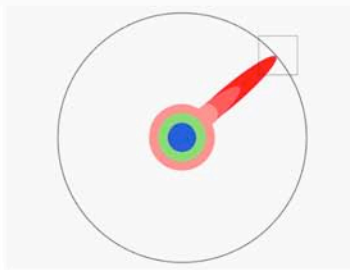
A master's degree deepens that specialty:



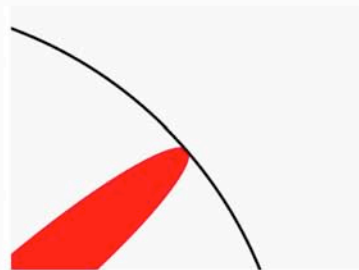
Reading research papers takes you to the edge of human knowledge:



Once you're at the boundary, you focus:



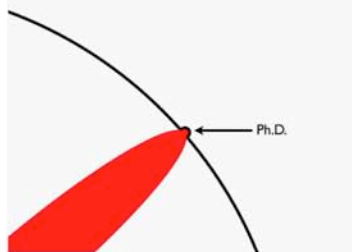
You push at the boundary for a few years:



Until one day, the boundary gives way:



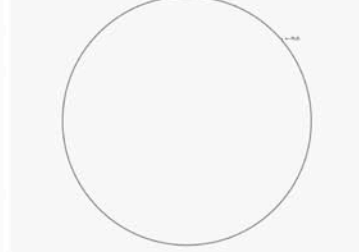
And, that dent you've made is called a Ph.D.:



Of course, the world looks different to you now:



So, don't forget the bigger picture:



Keep pushing.

GRADUATE SCHOOL : GOALS

State what you plan to do after graduate school

What type of position do you plan on pursuing?

Academic

Industry

Government

Briefly state why you are interested in this career

Tie it into your motivation



GRADUATE SCHOOL : ACTIONS

This section is going to be the majority of your personal statement for graduate school

Research Experience

What was the project you were working on?

Why was it important?

What was the group trying to accomplish

What was your specific role on the project?

What did you do?

Be specific but do not get lost in the details

What did you accomplish?

Has your data been presented?

What did you learn about research as a whole?



GRADUATE SCHOOL : ACTIONS

A student working in my group could write the following:

During the summer before my senior year, I worked in the laboratory of Dr. Wakefield on the synthesis of phidianidine analogues. The phidianidines 1 and 2 are natural products that have a unique 1,2,4-oxadiazole ring structure that have been found to possess interesting biological properties. These molecules anti-cancer activity and have shown selective binding to the κ -opioid receptor. The neurological activity is interesting because these molecules could be developed into non-addictive pain relievers. The goal of this project was synthesize analogues of the phidianidines the replaced the 1,2,4-oxadiazole ring with other heterocycles to determine the importance of this ring to the biological activity.

My role in the project was to synthesis phidianidine analogues that contained an isooxazole ring in place of the oxadiazole ring. This was accomplished through a 3+2 cycloaddition of 3-propargyl indoles with dipoles generated from oximes.....”



GRADUATE SCHOOL : CHOICE

Explain why this school or department is right for you

This is focused more on the research available and how it aligns with your motivations and goals

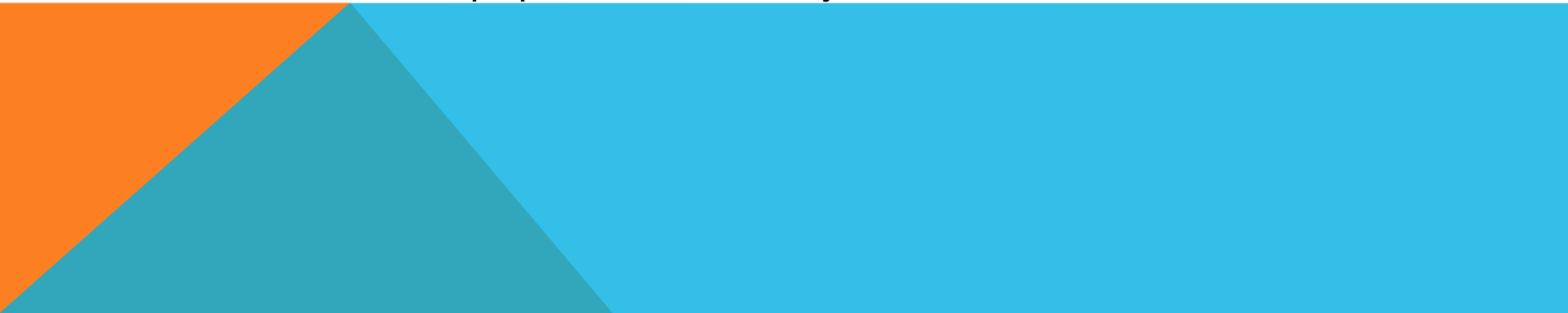
Discuss specific faculty research that you would be interested

How does this research interest you?

i.e. “ The research that Dr. Richardson is conducting on bacteria phages as possible therapeutics is interesting since I hope to work in biotechnology after graduation.”

Discuss training programs in the department that help you reach your goals

i.e. “I hope to be able to participate the departments professional development program helping to prepare minorities and women for positions in academia so that I will be better prepared when I start my career.”



GRADUATE SCHOOL : SNOOP IS BACK

Graduate schools want students who are motivated and excited to do research. Other aspects of you as an applicant are less important.

You will still cover the same basic personal statement areas:

1. Motivation – Why do I want to do research?
2. Goals – Where do I want to work after graduate school?
3. Actions – What have I do to prepare for graduate school?
4. Choice – Why is this is right school for me?

Every answer should be geared specifically toward research and the research you can do in that department



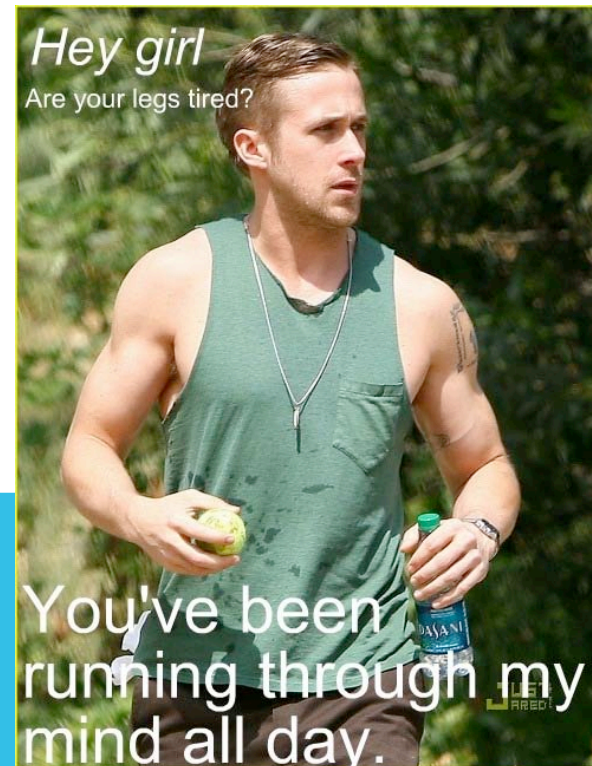
INCEPTION.....

Everyone wants to feel special

Hiring managers and application committees are no different

Tailor your letter to each position that you apply to so each place feels special

You do not have to rewrite the entire thing, but there should be some places where you can make position specific changes



THIS IS NOT THERAPY – DO NOT OVER SHARE

While a hiring manager or a committee wants to know about you, they honestly do not want to know everything

Your letters should not be heavy

People do not want to be depressed or hear the gory details of some personal struggle

Make sure that the professional you is the focus of the letter

We all have baggage, but we do not talk about it all the time

Remember the elevator



Would you hire someone who said “For a long time I really hated how I looked. All through high school and college I felt depressed because I was overweight. After crying myself to sleep every night for years, I decided to make a change.....?”

WISE WORDS FROM CHRIS ROCK

“That's right, man. Relationships: easy to get into, hard to maintain. Why are they so hard to maintain? Because it's hard to keep up the lie. 'Cause you can't get nobody being you. You got to lie to get somebody. You can't get nobody looking like you look, acting like you act... sounding like you sound. When you meet somebody for the first time, you're not meeting them. You're meeting their representative.”



FINAL THOUGHTS

A cover letter and a personal statement are your CV or resume's "profile page"

They let you tell prospective employers and graduate programs about yourself

For a cover letter you want to:

1. Introduce yourself
2. State the reasons you are interested in the position
3. Explain why you would be good/prepared for the position
4. Describe your motivation/excitement about the position

For a personal statement you want to:

1. Explain your motivation
 2. State your career goals
 3. Discuss the actions you have taken
 4. Explain why you chose that school
- 