



# A Guide to Writing a Statement of Purpose for Colorado State University Graduate School

## Statement of Purpose vs. Personal Statement

### Statement of Purpose

**Focus:** Articulate your academic and professional goals, research interests, and your reasons for selecting the specific program and institution.

**Content:** Include an overview of your academic background, research experiences, and career aspirations. Explain how the program aligns with your objectives and detail any faculty members whose work aligns with your research interests.

**Tone:** Maintain a formal tone, emphasizing your academic and career trajectory.

### Personal Statement

**Focus:** Reflect on your personal journey and experiences, illustrating how they have influenced your decision to pursue graduate studies.

**Content:** Share personal stories, life challenges, and motivations behind your choice of field and program. Highlight your individuality and character.

**Tone:** Adopt a more personal and narrative style, focusing on your unique story and personal motivations.

Often, there is some blending of these two options. Don't get too hung up on staying strictly in the bounds of one or the other. The key with both is to link them to the prompts provided as well as the specific program you are applying for.

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### Example of College of Natural Sciences Statement of Purpose Prompt

#### *Master of Science, Biological Sciences*

Please provide a brief (1-2 page) Statement of Purpose that helps us to get to know you and why you are applying to the graduate program. In your statement, discuss:

1. Your research interests
2. Your past experiences that shaped these interests
3. Your long-term career goals
4. Your past experiences that shaped your career goals, and
5. How the degree you're seeking will help you achieve your career goals.

**Tip: Create an account and start your graduate application, select your desired program and skip to the Statement of Purpose section to view the prompt**

A screenshot of a web application form with several sections: Personal, Program, College Education, Residency, Test Scores, and Statement of Purpose. The 'Statement of Purpose' section is circled in black, and a black arrow points from the right side of the form towards it.

### Factors of Consideration in CSU's Graduate Programs Admissions Decisions:

1. The applicant's academic and scholarly achievement
2. Alignment of the applicant with the academic and scholarly interests of the program
3. Alignment of the applicant with the broader mission and goals of the program (e.g., community-based research, outreach, teaching, extension)
4. Personal attributes that contribute to student success (e.g., self-efficacy)

Check out the Graduate School's information about the Comprehensive Review Process to see areas that are scored highly and incorporate these areas into your Statement of Purpose.

<https://graduateschool.colostate.edu/comprehensive-admissions-review-criteria/#scholarly-potential->



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## Advice from Faculty in Graduate Program Admissions

- Personal stories should emphasize growth and strengths rather than portraying the applicant as a victim.
- Specificity is critical; applicants should provide detailed accounts of their research experiences and clearly articulate their motivations for pursuing graduate studies.
- Including demographic information in personal statements can be relevant, but it should not be the focus and should be tied in some way to the prompt and/or area of study.
- Demonstrating research experience and the ability to handle stress are key factors in acceptance.
- Personal statements should convey a clear picture of the applicant's motivations and goals for graduate school.

## Advice from Current CSU Graduate Students

- Academic performance is important, but research experience and relevant work experiences can significantly strengthen an application.
- Demonstrating the ability to manage multiple responsibilities (e.g., jobs, leadership roles) is viewed positively.
- Tailoring the focus of the personal statement to highlight the most relevant experiences is crucial.
- Tailoring personal statements to specific programs and faculty members is highly recommended.
- Compelling personal stories can enhance an application, provided they are relevant and add depth to the applicant's academic and career aspirations.
- Personal stories should highlight resilience, overcoming challenges, and growth, without dwelling excessively on traumatic experiences.

## Advice from the CSU Writing Center

<https://writingcenter.colostate.edu/>

- Before writing a personal statement, make a list of reasons you like the program or why you're committed to this field.
- If you start with a personal anecdote about your motivation to be in the program, ensure that it relates to the rest of your statement and does significant work to provide context for the admissions team to understand why you are applying to the program. Recent events might carry more weight and be easier to connect to your current self.
- Ensure your personal appeal is specific and answers the actual question asked in the prompt.
- Reflect on the classes, projects, papers, or internships that set you up for success, specifying what about your education has contributed to your growth rather than making vague statements.
- Avoid sending the same personal statement to every school; write your first statement for the school you're most excited about and modify it for each institution to maintain a tone of excitement throughout.

For more resources about applying to graduate school, checkout the Career Center's resource page <https://career.colostate.edu/resource-center/topics/>