

OT/PT/Public Health/Health Education Personal Statement Keys



Purpose

- Make an evidence-based argument that the applicant will be a successful health professions graduate student
- Make an argument that the applicant has something distinctive to offer to the school and the cohort
- Convey a sense of who you are as a person and a pre-professional
- Convey a sense of the traits and skills of a successful graduate student: persistence, resilience, discipline, analytical thinking, complex problem-solving skills
- Convey an authentic sense of commitment to the profession and the experiences or values from which it originates
- Convey an informed sense of awareness of the nature of the profession, and the schooling required, without suggesting that you already know it all
- Convey a sense of being well-prepared academically and logistically for the challenges of grad/professional school
- Convey a vision of self as a future professional; goals and values.
- Demonstrate writing abilities that will transfer to the profession – clear, concrete, efficient, professional

Audience

- Professional, analytical, rooted in science/social sciences
- Reading quickly with a disposition to reject;
- Reading your essay in the context of hundreds of others written by people with strong test scores and comparable experiences
- Need to construct a diverse cohort so that students can learn from one another as well as the school
- Investing time and resources into a candidate, while rejecting others; need to be sure that investment will pay off and resources aren't wasted

Mixed genre

- Part narrative/part evidence-based argument
- Be specific and concrete; don't *explain* that you have a trait, *demonstrate* it through the way you discuss your experiences, values, or insights.
- Stories need to be micro-stories, told in a few sentences by focusing right away on the most revealing and relevant moments of the experience. There's no space for setup and exposition.
- Events and experiences need to be made meaningful; they serve as evidence of the traits that will make the applicant a successful student and good professional.
- Use field-specific professional language if you know it

Pay Attention to

- Character/word limits
- Efficiency: Every word has to add value to the statement. Look for words and phrases that aren't contributing value and cut or rewrite them.
- Spelling, grammar, sentence-structure, correctness
- Tone (should be simultaneously personal and professional)

Avoid

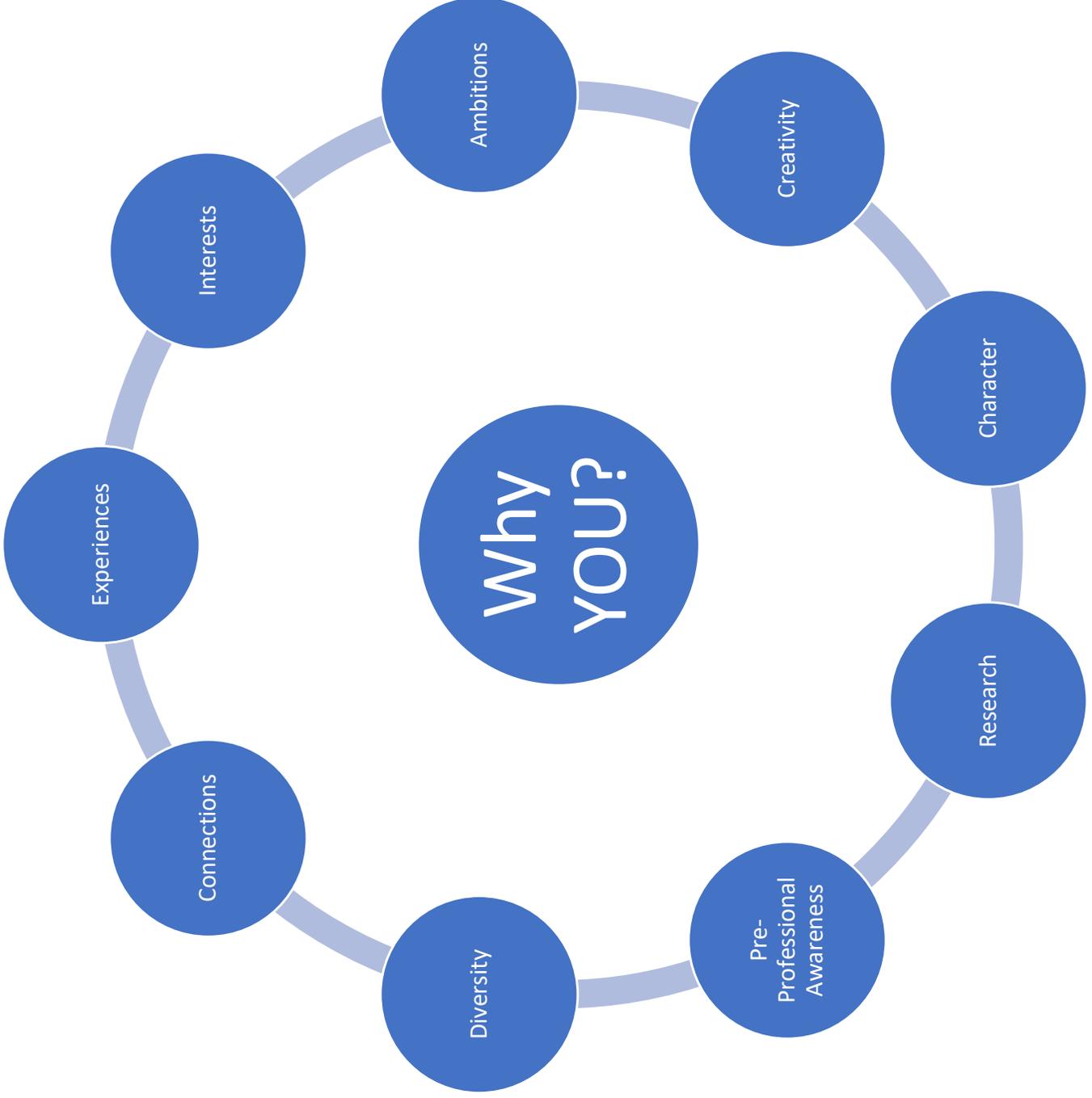
- Rehashing the resume
- Controversial topics
- Demonstrating biases, prejudices
- Colloquial language, slang; but don't be stiff
- Elaborate metaphors, figurative language, clichés/trite language, "clever" devices
- Thesaurus: Use simple concrete everyday language; let your ideas and experiences convey complexity and sophistication rather than your word choice.

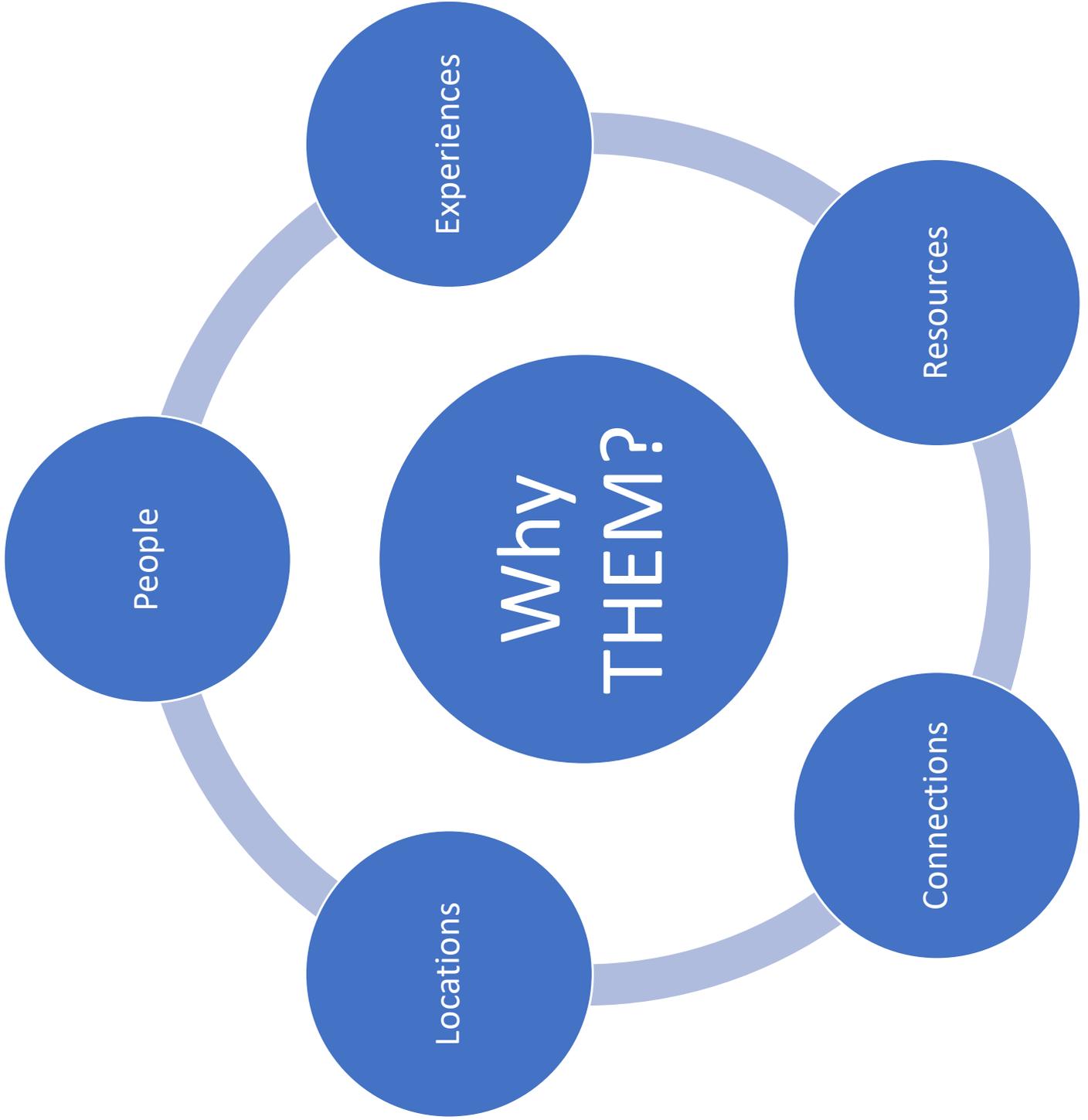
Address AAMC Core Competencies (<https://tinyurl.com/yb73oob7>)

- Thinking and Reasoning
- Science
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal

Qualities to Portray (from Johns Hopkins)

- Maturity
- Compassion and empathy
- Reflectiveness
- Genuineness and sincerity
- Honesty and integrity
- Leadership
- Clarity of thought
- Insightfulness
- Passion
- Humanity
- Individuality
- A realistic perspective
- Positivity
- Enthusiasm
- Logic
- "Distance traveled"/lessons learned
- Distinctiveness
- Industriousness and persistence
- Commitment
- Self-awareness
- Ability to relate to diverse people
- Insight into the chosen health profession
- Strong written communication skills





People

Experiences

Resources

Connections

Locations

Why
THEM?

Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students

The 15 Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students (defined below) have been endorsed by the AAMC Group on Student Affairs (GSA) Committee on Admissions (COA). The competencies fall into four categories: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Thinking and Reasoning, and Science.

Interpersonal Competencies

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society; locally, nationally, and globally.

Social Skills: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

Cultural Competence: Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

Teamwork: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

Oral Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

Intrapersonal Competencies

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

Reliability and Dependability: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

Resilience and Adaptability: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

Capacity for Improvement: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

Critical Thinking: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

Quantitative Reasoning: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.

Scientific Inquiry: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.

Written Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.

Science Competencies

Living Systems: Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.

Human Behavior: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

Sample Essay 4

Too young to volunteer in a hospital yet too old for summer camp, I was determined not to idle away my first summer as a high school student. Undaunted and striving to help my community, I inquired about our local nursing home. My grandmother refused to enter the brown building with me, unable to interact with residents who were ailing and terminally ill. With persistence, I toured the facility with my father and decided to volunteer. The residents who were so debilitated that they would never leave the care of the nursing home really moved me. It was amazing how the support of the medical staff and family members created an environment that allowed residents to live an enjoyable life. I will never forget one resident in his early thirties who was paralyzed from the waist down, unable to live as most young adults. I would run into him on the elevator almost daily. My encouraging words and energy as a young person often brightened his day, and in return made me feel very joyful to serve. It was quite extraordinary to know that such a small gesture could positively impact someone's life. From reading stories to assisting the professional staff with exercise routines for the residents, the experiences I had there were life-changing. It was then that I realized that my life would be most fulfilled working directly to improve the lives of others as it relates to medicine.

With a strong interest in clinical medicine, I continued my studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) as a biology major and a Meyerhoff scholar. I embarked on several projects within the disciplines of immunology, cell biology, genetics, and vascular biology. These research projects gave me an indescribable experience as a participant in the discovery process and newfound appreciation for biomedical research. I was ready to work in the hospital and wondered how various scientific discoveries were being used in medicine. To answer this question and gain first hand experience of life inside a busy hospital, I began volunteering in the shock trauma resuscitation unit at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) in Baltimore. On my first day as a volunteer, I was a bit nervous, unsure of what to expect. However, once I suited up and walked into the shock trauma room, I knew medicine was the profession I was meant to pursue. Through my work, I witnessed the

medical staff working tirelessly to stabilize and care for patients who had experienced car accidents, stabbings, and other forms of trauma.

I will never forget walking into the shock trauma room to find a crying mother and grandmother as they saw their son and daughter severely injured from a car accident. As I looked into the next unit, there was a middle-aged woman who was recovering from a stab wound. Walking away from her unit, I could hear her call “Miss...Miss, can you help me?” I didn’t know what she wanted, but I quickly turned to talk with her. She wanted her food heated and the nurse’s assistance. Although I could not physically interact with her, I felt like a part of the medical team---working to ease suffering and serve those in pain. The most striking incident occurred one Saturday morning when I walked into the resuscitation unit and saw a pool of blood surrounding the rolling bed of one patient. The doctors and nurses tried everything possible to save his life. However, they were unsuccessful and he died. I watched the reactions of the staff as they silently covered his body and rolled it away. It was then that I realized that one day I would be in a position to save someone’s life. I immediately thought about the family of the deceased patient. Most importantly, I understood the important role that I must be prepared for in helping families deal with such a life tragedy.

As I was walking back to the locker room, I started to reflect on the joy I got from volunteering in the hospital and mentoring community kids, combined with my passion for science. I knew at that moment that I would love working as a physician who could not only heal and alleviate pain, but who can educate and innovate. The opportunity to change even a fraction of the lives of those in a city or underserved country is quite amazing. With the untimely death of various community members due to the advanced stages of cancer and the higher incidence of human immunodeficiency virus infection in minority women, I am inspired to join the struggle against deadly diseases and sickness. As I continue to strive for more, I can remember a quote by author Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: “When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die.” I not only want to treat patients in the clinical setting, but am driven to improve the treatment and diagnosis of life-altering diseases through public health research. Without reservation, this will be my contribution.

Next sample starts here

Ten years ago I followed my dad who is an occupational therapist (OT) to work. Up until this time, I was unaware of what he did all day. However, as I watched him interact with his clients, I observed challenges, perseverance, success, laughter, and collaboration in a short, one hour span. He had his client, a young girl, sit on a platform swing and spin in circles. While doing this, she simultaneously caught different colored bean bags with hopes of improving her ability to organize sensory input. He encouraged her to try, praised her when she had success, and motivated her when she was having difficulty. He not only met the physical needs of the client, but also the emotional and psychological needs, and this compassionate exchange became one of the first reasons I wanted to become an occupational therapist. My personal, educational and professional experiences have since furthered this aspiration.

During the summer of 2017, I was lucky enough to be involved in Finding the Pieces, a pilot summer camp for children ages five to ten with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Eight University of New England students, including myself, volunteered their time to be counselors to provide a supportive and accommodating one-on-one summer experience for children who may not have had this opportunity before. Throughout the two-week period, I gained the trust of “Sam”, my five-year-old camper, by validating his strengths, helping him through his struggles, and creating an environment where he could flourish. Prior to a field trip to Rotary Park, a small beach and playground, the staff and I prepped Sam that swimming would be an option that day. For many kids, this would be something to look forward to, but not for Sam who was terrified of bodies of water. We arrived at the park, and Sam responded to every statement I made, related or not, to “I do not want to go swimming!”. During the days that I had spent with him, the other camp counselors and I collaborated and recognized that Sam craved attention; I decided to ignore his attention-seeking behaviors, especially as he sprinted away

from me towards the playground occasionally peeking over his shoulder hoping that I was going to chase him. I patiently stood calf deep in the lake observing him out of the corner of my eye, and I was hopeful that he would join me in the water. After a time, Sam tentatively approached the lake and watched the kids and staff playing. Soon he stepped into the water and joyfully splashed and played games for the next hour and a half. Only once did he fall under the water while playing “sharks”, and I reminded him that sharks get their faces wet too. He was immediately comforted. Through observation, collaboration with others, and reflection of Sam’s behavior, I was able to encourage him to try a new activity, and he was able to experience the world in a new way. Later in the week we visited Ferry Beach where Sam requested enthusiastically, “Can we go swimming?!” Seeing Sam’s growth and development in such a short span of time was rewarding as a volunteer and future therapist.

The skills exhibited during my time with Sam were a combination of innate and learned abilities. My educational experiences at the University of New England and observations of occupational therapists in contrasting settings have not only furthered my interest in becoming an OT but have strengthened my knowledge regarding the client-centered field. I shadowed an Auburn school therapist who interacted compassionately with her clients, and her initial method was to engage the students in an activity of their choice. Once she developed trust, she began to focus on goals that needed to be accomplished. In my Introduction to Occupational Therapy class establishing trust was one of the major tenets of a therapeutic relationship. Even though one might feel the desire to jump right in and begin working on goals, it was evident that the results would be limited without building a therapeutic relationship first. I look forward to growing as a life-long learner and implementing this new-found knowledge as I continue my education into graduate school and throughout my career as an occupational therapist.

Next sample starts here

What if people lived healthier lives, practiced preventive medicine, and took precautions against illness and disease? My days in the physical therapy department often made me think about the prevention of injuries as well as the injuries themselves. I was already doubting my future career choice as a physical therapist. Although I loved the science of it and helping people, the lack of variety within the field and its limited options for growth bothered me. I needed a career that helped a large number of people, emphasized prevention and primary care rather than tertiary care, and would continually challenge and motivate me to improve. Knowing that I really did not want to pursue physical therapy as I had originally planned, my thoughts wandered to the area of public health, particularly health management.

My first true introduction to the public health arena came in a class offered through the Big U School of Public Health. As I listened to experts speak about contemporary health issues, I was intrigued. The world of "capitation," "rationing of care," and Medicaid fascinated me as I saw the range of problems that public health professionals were trying to solve in innovative ways. This one semester class provided me with a basic but thorough understanding of the issues faced in health care today. In the last two years I have continued to learn about public health both through coursework and work in the field.

Because field experience is such a valuable learning tool, I searched for a research assistant position that would allow me to view public health at a different level. I worked on a project at a county health clinic in Englewood, a low-income, minority community. The program attempted to increase treatment compliance rates for adolescents diagnosed with tuberculosis who must complete a six-month medical program. Working for the county exposed me to a different side of health care that I had previously seen. Service and organization were not assets of the county and yet its role in the public health "ecosystem" was and is critical. Its job of immunizing thousands and interacting with all members of the community is often forgotten, but is important for keeping an entire community healthy.

My work at the county health clinic as well as my knowledge of some areas of public health led me to accept an internship in Washington D.C. this past summer. The internship provided me with a greater understanding of a federal public health agency's operations and allowed me to contribute in a variety of ways to the XYZ Department in which I worked. Most importantly I worked on "policy issues" which involved identifying and summarizing problems that were out of the ordinary as well as documenting resolved issues in order to establish protocols to increase the department's efficiency. In addition I served on a scientific review panel which was responsible for editing a seventy-page proposed regulation before its submission.

Along with my duties at XYZ, I attended seminars and met with public health leaders at different functions and events. All these activities confirmed my growing interest in preventive medicine, outcomes and effectiveness, and quality of care, particularly within the private/managed care sector. These are my strongest interests because I believe they are fundamental to our nation's health. We must achieve efficiency and access without sacrificing quality.

The University of ____ would help me achieve my goals of furthering my public health education through the specialize coursework offered as part of its health administration program. [The client provides specifics here about the program's specific appeal and strengths]

Since rejecting physical therapy as a career possibility my interest in public health has only grown. I welcome the challenge of serving a large community and participating in such a dynamic and challenging field. What if an aspirin a day could prevent heart attacks? What if abandoning unnecessary procedures saved thousands of dollars, which then allowed a hospital to treat other patients needing care? What if every person was guaranteed care and that care was good? I would like to find answers for these questions during my career as a public health graduate student and professional.

Source: www.accepted.com

Personal Statement

I was naturally drawn to the medical field because of my early exposure to health implications faced by family members and myself. My father's Type 2 Diabetes and insulin pump was often a conversation starter, as my friends inquired about his new state of the art beeper. During my sophomore year of high school, I was diagnosed with Graves Disease, which is an autoimmune disease that leads to hyperthyroidism. As a caregiver for my Grandma, afflicted with post-polio syndrome and normal pressure hydrocephalus my passion to create and sustain outstanding health care services began to take form. The affordability and quality of health care that my family and I receive is something that I have always taken for granted, as every person should have the right to the highest standard of physical and mental health. It is my goal to make a significant contribution to the health of citizens in my community through effective management, clinical operations, and delivery of health care services.

My aspirations of entering the medical field came to a screeching halt when I realized that biology was neither something I enjoyed or was good at. Although my short stint in biology would not lead to a career in cancer cures, I went back to the drawing board and decided that I do not have to sacrifice my passion of providing quality and affordable healthcare to all citizens. While I remain committed to the promise of science, I have come to realize that I am far more invigorated by the questions of politics and public policy issues facing our health care sector.

My education focusing on health administration and public policy and work experience with special populations will enable me to be successful in managing the integration of new health care delivery systems, technological innovations, restructuring of work and budgets, and the increased focus on preventative care. I intend to earn a Masters degree in Health Administration, which I will use as a springboard and background to develop and expand programs for scientific research, preventative medicine, medical and vocational rehabilitation, and community health and welfare at a health care institution. Having lived and studied in Wisconsin, I am accustomed to a robust system that grants equal access to health care and health-related services to its users. Everyone is entitled to the highest standard of physical and mental wellbeing, and I look forward to working in an environment, which allows me to create and sustain outstanding health care services in a rapidly changing industry. As a health care administrator, I will be committed to improving efficiency in health care facilities and the quality of the care provided in my organization.

My interest in health policy and social welfare policy is dominated by the integration of new health care delivery systems, technological innovations, restructuring of work and policy demands greater involvement in deciding how our knowledge is used. I want to take part in deciding how we as society deal with providing the best quality of care for all citizens. I've accepted that anyone interested in success has to learn to view failure as a healthy, inevitable part of the process of getting to the top. Surrendering to biology was just one failure that enlarged my spirit and provided me the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

Personal Statement Homework

Due next week.

Please upload the results of your work to a Google Doc before coming to class.

Hour 1

1. Make a list of 6-8 personal, academic, and pre-professional experiences that you think have contributed to your desire to go to graduate school in the health professions and which have prepared you to thrive in graduate school.
2. For each experience, recall and record two or three “small moments” that capture the essence of the experience. No need to write out the moments. Just write down a few cue words that will enable you to recall and retell the moment when we get back to class.
3. For each small moment, identify and record the AAMC core competencies/John Hopkins traits that you think are exemplified in that moment. Likely, each small moment will exemplify multiple competencies and traits.

Hour 2

1. Choose two personal, academic, or pre-professional experiences/small moments to develop further. For each spend 20 minutes write freely (without expecting these words to appear in your final statement) about the experience. It’s best to let your mind flow without hesitation, fear, anxiety, or desire to see these words in your final statement. Just try to capture what happened. Here are some prompts to get you started:
 - a. What happened? Who was there? What was your role in the experience?
 - b. What was exciting/interesting/challenging/confusing/problematic about the experience?
 - c. What were your feelings and thoughts as you went through this experience? How did they evolve with the situation?
 - d. What were your actions/reactions to the situation? What do they say about you as a prospective health professions graduate student?
2. For each experience/small moment, spend 10 minutes writing to discover what your experience means to you by writing in response to these prompts:
 - a. How did your experience contribute to your desire to go to graduate school and prepare you for the challenges and opportunities of grad school?
 - b. What would an experienced member of your future profession say about you and your experience?