

Lauren Aleksunes, PharmD, PhD, DABT



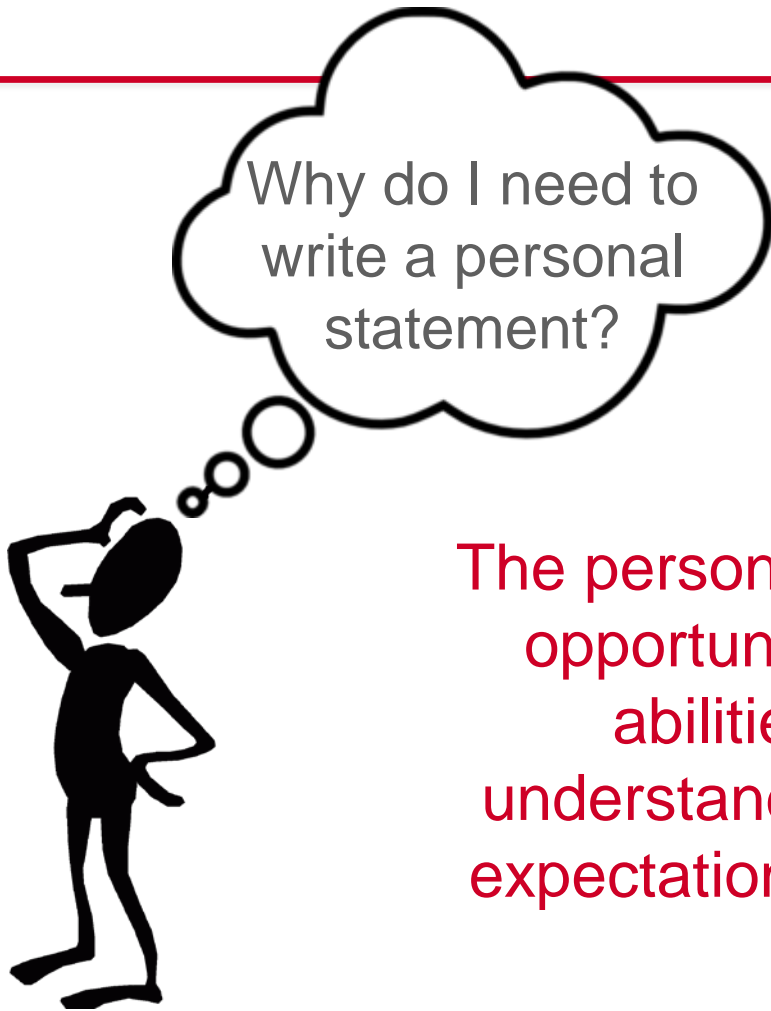
Lauren Aleksunes, PharmD, PhD, DABT
Associate Professor of Pharmacology &
Toxicology
Director, Joint Graduate Program in
Toxicology
Rutgers University

SOT Scientific Program Committee
aleksunes@eohsi.rutgers.edu
[Faculty website](#)



Personal Statements: Where to Start and What to Include

Lauren Aleksunes, PharmD, PhD, DABT
Associate Professor and Director,
Joint Graduate Program in Toxicology (JGPT)



The personal statement provides the opportunity to demonstrate your abilities, strengths and an understanding of the demands and expectations of graduate education.

Personal Statements

- Personal statements provide Admissions Committees with a sense of who you are, what you have done and where you are going
- A well-crafted statement will bring together your cumulative training and experiences and demonstrate how you will capitalize on the training opportunities afforded you



The best personal statements will motivate an admissions committee member to advocate on your behalf even in the face of other perceived weaknesses



**~~One Size/
Fits All~~**

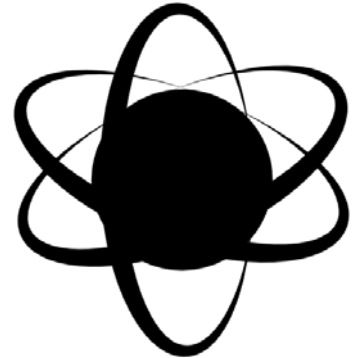
Preparation

- View each institution as unique and tailor appropriately
 - Why do you fit well at their institution?
 - What attracts you to this institution?
- Identify institution-specific questions or topics to address
- Talk with current graduate students and professors to make sure you understand the expectations of graduate students



Questions You May Address

- Did a specific event lead to your decision to pursue graduate education?
- Why are you excited to pursue research training in this particular field of study?
- What skills, training or experiences have you obtained to prepare you for this field of study?
 - Use specific examples: internships, summer fellowships, research projects, unique technologies, special coursework



Questions You May Address

- How are you prepared to succeed in graduate school?
 - Recognize and acknowledge the intellectual and emotional challenges of graduate school
 - Examples that demonstrate your ability to meet these challenges
- Are the circumstances or obstacles that you have had to overcome?
 - Be careful to not appear like you are making excuses for weaknesses



Preventing Common Pitfalls

Pitfall

- ✗ Clichés or vague statements
- ✗ Trying to include humor

- ✗ Reiterating your resume/CV
(long lists of awards or honors)

- ✗ Overly formal/thesaurus-type writing

Potential Solution

- ✓ Specific examples or illustrations
- ✓ Ok to show some personality but focus on you as a future colleague

- ✓ Focus on key experiences that demonstrate specific qualifications


- ✓ Use your voice to write and undergo many revisions

Potential Attributes to Convey




Potential Organization of the Personal Statement

**Introduce Yourself – narrative,
anecdotes, intellectual passion,
unique attributes, commitment**



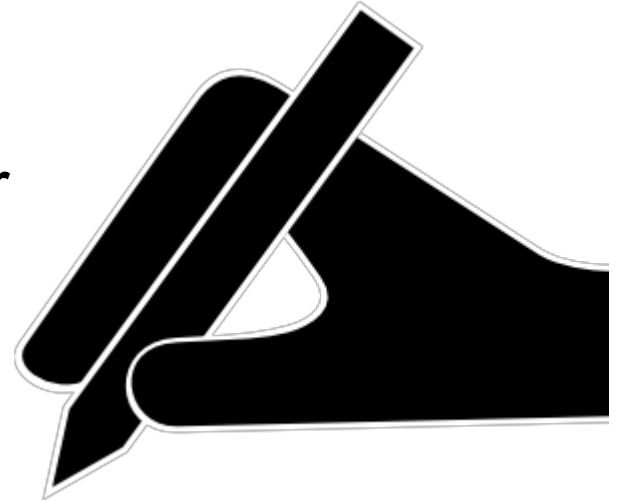
**Provide specific examples
(experiences, training
coursework), address gaps, and
illustrate passion for the field**



**Describe plans for excellence at
the particular institution and for
your future**

First Draft

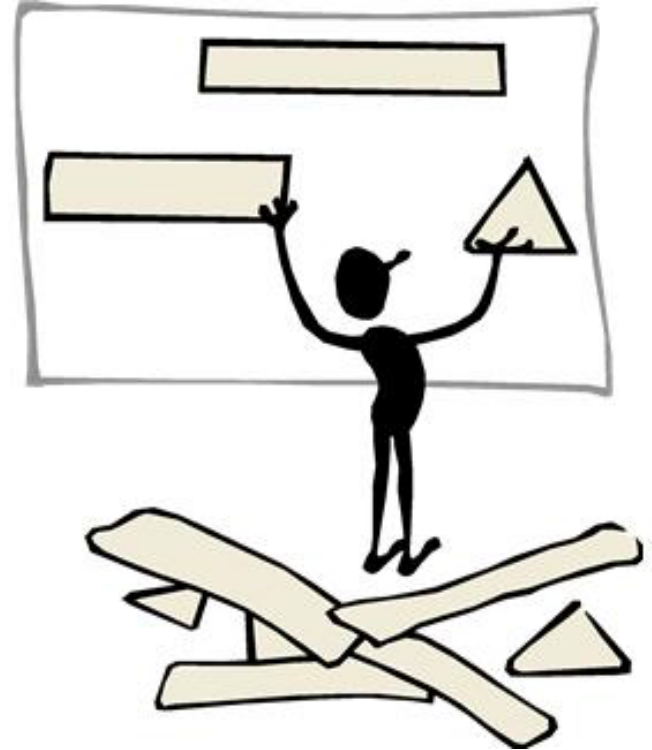
- Start in the middle or the end
- Write down bullet points in order to have your ideas in one place
- Set deadlines with someone
 - Accountability will keep you moving forward



Get started !

Revisions

- Write and rewrite and rewrite
- Look at each word/phrase/sentence and assess its value
- Is the 'voice' appropriate for you as a professional?
- Get feedback !



Other General Tips

- Use your experiences as a learner and a scholar
- Do not overpromise what you will deliver
- Do not plagiarize or quote others
- It is ok to ask a program director what their admissions committee is looking for in the personal statement



- ✓ Be Concise
- ✓ Be Sincere
- ✓ Write Clearly
- ✓ Be Organized
- ✓ Be Memorable

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Feel free to email your
questions to me

Lauren Aleksunes

aleksunes@eohsi.rutgers.edu

Rutgers Toxicology Program
(<http://jgpt.rutgers.edu>)

