Writing the Personal Statement for Health Related Professions

Pamela B. Matheson, Ph.D.
Associate Director of Pre–Health Advising

http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/prehealth
A Writing Sample by Any Other Name!
Personal Statements/Essay
Secondaries Too!

- Most personal part of your application package
- Best chance to STAND OUT FROM THE PACK
- Convey Critical Components of your Character
- Make them want to interview you
  - Already numerically qualified, looking for fit
- *If necessary, add explanation for some difficulty
- *Prompts differ by profession
  - Nursing, PA tend to be more directed
Do’s and Don’t’s

- Catch the reader’s attention
- Tell a compelling original story
- Highlight pertinent biography
- Make it memorable

- Bore them
- Get too personal
- Recite your resume
- Exaggerate

DO THIS!  DON’T DO THIS!
What makes a good essay

- Authentic

- Story telling with self-reflection
  - Not just the what you did, rather:
    - why it mattered & how you felt & how did it impact you
  - Begin with hook
  - Poignant examples
  - Find theme/thread
  - Strong ending that ties it all together

- Pass the “I” test

- Multiple revisions
A Place to Start – Homework #1

- List of adjectives/qualities/characteristics
  - Brainstorm list of your descriptives
    - Ask friends, family, coworkers
  - Put them into piles of similar items
  - Name each pile accordingly
  - Decide which aspects of your character are important to convey in your personal statement.

- Think about events/moments/anything that has impacted who you are
  - Brainstorm a list of seminal events for you
  - Write a little about each

- Where do the moments and qualities intersect?
Without regard to length and making sure not to wordsmith, write about the event(s) that can portray the qualities you’ve selected.

Email a draft to me

I will contact you for an appointment once I’ve had a chance to read it.
SAMPLE ESSAYS
SAMPLE SECONDARY