

## Dr. Carrillo's Guidelines for a Strong Statement of Purpose

General guidelines to follow:

1. The statement of purpose is a narrative that helps an admissions committee understand a little bit of your background (mainly professional, although some personal experiences might have had an important impact on your career and therefore could be relevant to make a point), what experiences/skills/goals you are bringing to a specific graduate program and that will be relevant during your studies, and what do you envision learning/obtaining from the program professionally (how would participating in this program help achieving your career goals).
2. A statement of purpose needs to make a case why grad school at this institution would be a good fit (think of yourself as a lawyer providing a convincing argument). Example of a case you need to make: student has research experience, has passion for the sciences, and would like to further expertise by attending graduate school at THAT specific school.
3. A statement of purpose is not a document that only looks into intellectual merits, but tells a story of your different experiences, weaved together with your professional interests and goals, with the purpose of demonstrating a good fit with the program and with your potential advisor (if you have already identified a professor, who is accepting graduate students in his/her/their lab).
4. Follow basic structure: 1. Intro on who you are and introduce topic related to what you eventually want to study in grad school, 2. Enthusiasm and discovery of specific said research topic, 3. Evidence of excellence and research (i.e. research experience, programs, projects, and who you worked with), 4. Evidence of growing expertise and knowing the field by mentioning specific field discussions, 5. Tangible deliverables and contributions you can point to—project, conference, talk, thesis, 6. Make case for why faculty and institution is a good match, 7. Provide brief vision of the future or paint a picture of why PhD is necessary for your future goals. For example, do you want to be a professor, to lead national labs, to address paleoclimate research?
5. When you provide evidence in paragraphs, make sure you provide specific examples. Provide evidence of your academic and educational background. What classes have you taken? Where have you excelled? Were you the only undergraduate working on that project? Did you go out of your way to attain research experience because you are motivated to become a scientist? How has the SURGE/Stanford program prepared you for the next step of graduate school and managing a research project? What skills did

you pick up related to geosciences, paleoclimate, and marine sciences? Consider the hard skills that you came away with and important topics.

6. Show, don't tell. Don't describe, but rather, make a claim about your academic and research experiences. Topic sentence makes **a claim and does not simply describe**.
7. Is the statement of purpose unique to you, the author? Are you the only who can write this statement of purpose? If someone else can say the same thing then it is not unique enough.
8. The Stanford on-line application says that the statement should be two pages. The idea is to be able to be succinct while providing strong arguments. Therefore, you will need to choose carefully what you want to include in this document, while providing at the same time detailed account of your purpose in applying to the program and persuasively demonstrates in what specific ways this program can help you advance your professional goals.
9. A statement of purpose serves as "business card" in the sense that you are introducing yourself for the first time to a group of people who will evaluate you based on what you are presenting. It is important, then, to do a final spell check and make sure that all the ideas are well connected. Make sure that your statement contains no misspellings, grammatical, or factual errors
10. Tips about how and when to include personal details: provide personal details if they only provide context from which admissions committee can better understand your academic accomplishments. In other words, **what was the context in** which you achieved your educational goals? For example, you may want to talk about how even though you weren't able to go directly into a four-year college it confirmed your commitment to education and passion for Earth sciences. Also, has that educational experience informed what you want to do in the future? Do you want to be a professor? Will you be sensitive to first-gen experience in college as a professor and teacher? Also, how do you envision changing the field—how will your unique perspective shape your research or educational goals?