

INSTITUTE WRITING PROGRAM

THE WRITING CENTER

Personal Statements

The Potential Investor Model

When writing personal statements, remember that the program (school, scholarship, etc.) to which you are applying necessarily has more applications than positions (funds, etc.) available. The program has limited resources to **invest** in applicants and wants to find the applicant that will give them the best **return** on their investment.

Below is a set of questions that use the economic language of **investments** and **returns** to help you generate ideas about what content to include in your personal statement.

What kinds of **returns** will the program you're applying to want to see from the applicants it decides to **invest** in?

What makes you capable of delivering those **returns**? Put another way, what makes you the best **investment** as opposed to other applicants?

How can you prove that you will make a good **investment**? What experiences have you had, or are you currently having, that prove you can deliver the desired **returns**?

Remember: Answers to these questions will vary from program to program depending on what kinds of **returns** each program wants to see. Although some concerns, such as ensuring that applicants are committed, are universal, you should tailor your personal statement to the program you're applying to. Demonstrate that 1) you are capable of excelling in the field, 2) you have a long-term, passionate interest in the field, and 3) you know what you're getting yourself into.



The Two Column Model

Here is a worksheet that will help you reconcile your personal story and experiences with the concerns of your audience. Your audience wants to see that you have the qualities and skills that will make you capable of delivering the **returns** they want to see from their **investment**, you. So, of the qualities and skills your audience values, which ones do you have? What stories or anecdotes can you tell about yourself to prove that you have them?

Write down the qualities and skills your audience values in Column 1. Next, write down the personal stories you are planning to include in your personal statement in Column 1. Now, play a matching game and decide what materials from Column 2 best demonstrate the skills and qualities in Column 1 (and what stories should be cut if necessary).

| COLUMN 1 | COLUMN 2 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Qualities/Skills Your Audience Values | Stories/Anecdotes About You |
| | |

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