

UCI Scholarship Opportunities Program

Crafting an Interesting Personal Statement

Personal statements answer the basic question: “Who are you?” You should be able to tie together what you have already done with what you are proposing to do (in your future studies, internship, research project, etc.) to create a connected narrative.

Establish Credibility

- Narrate a genuine personal experience. Good storytelling creates empathy.
- The lives we live are more interesting than what we can invent from scratch! Be truthful and include concrete facts and relevant, specific details.
- Don’t be afraid to reveal or admit a weakness about yourself—this takes courage. You can write about how you’ve overcome or dealt with it to show maturity.
- Align yourself with respected figures (rather than guilt by association, this technique is “credibility by association”). This technique alone will not demonstrate your credibility but helps bolster other supporting evidence.
- Share provocative details about yourself that few people in the world would know.

Illuminate Connections

- Illustrate why you are a good fit with this particular program or award and how your experiences and skills demonstrate that fit.
- Include a range of experiences like major coursework, research, internships or jobs, mentoring, study abroad, volunteering, interactions with family or friends
- What common themes or insights have arisen from your experiences? How has the combination shaped you?
- What has motivated you thus far?
- In what direction do you feel you are growing?

Reveal Sophistication and Maturity

- Demonstrate reflection and introspection about your goals, talents, and values.
- Show a fearless manner of self-questioning and evaluation. How have you learned and grown from your experiences and mistakes?
- See situations from unusual perspectives; what is unique about your take on the world?
- Ensure that the personal statement reveals something new that reviewers cannot glean from other parts of your application.

Be Original

- Open creatively: surprise and engage your reader with vivid storytelling.
- Try to make commonplace events into something unique. Look at it from a different, fresh perspective.
- Eliminate generalizations, clichés and platitudes.