

# Writing a Personal Statement for an REU

The purpose of the personal statement is to communicate what you are interested in doing at the REU and why you want to attend a particular program. Remember, this is a very important part of your application, don't leave it until the last minute. You are trying to stand out of sometimes hundreds of applications. REU programs are looking for students that add value and interest to the research project.

To help you get started consider answering these questions in your statement:

- Who are you? What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admission committee to be interested in you? Sometimes they are looking for personal interests – something that provides a little window into who you are as a person. Have there been any hardships that you have overcome? (Are you an underrepresented group? Attending a liberal arts college with limited research opportunities, first in your family to attend college, low income, rural, minority? Any of these classifications may help in your essay.)
- Why are you interested in the subject area - What projects are you interested in? ( Describe any personal, professional, or educational experiences that have contributed to your interest in the subject.)
- What are your career goals? (This might also include your background, challenges, aspirations.)
- What is your academic preparation? (Include relevant coursework, lab work, projects, etc. - you might describe an exciting or interesting experience you had in that subject area – a course, a project, etc – that peaked your interest.)
- What skills do you possess? Do you have any previous research experience? – Describe previous research experience - this can include the following: undergraduate research, summer or part-time employment – describe your role, did you perform research independently or as part of a team? What did you learn from your experience?
- Why do you want to apply to this particular REU site? Why should the program be interested in you and why are you interested in us? What is interesting about the research? If they are researching Bees than you want to show interest in Bees. (For example, you should look at the REU web site to get an idea of what other students have done in the past, and then mention in your essay what mentors and topics are of primary and secondary interest to you.)

Start by developing an initial one-page personal statement. Ask a peer and a faculty member look over your statement and provide feedback. Proofread many times! Spelling and grammar count – do not rely on spellcheck.