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## Crafting Your Personal Statement (Research Grant & ETA)

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Personal statements seem very simple but often it is hard to distill your life into a single short essay that is relevant to what you are applying for. Here's some advice for tackling the Fulbright personal statement.

**From the Fulbright website:** *"This 1-page narrative is designed to give the reviewers a picture of you as an individual. It is an opportunity to tell the committee more about the trajectory that you have followed and what plans you have for the future. Whereas the Statement of Grant Purpose focuses on what you will be doing in the host country, the Personal Statement concentrates on **how your background has influenced your development and how that relates to the Fulbright opportunity**. The statement can deal with your personal history, family background, intellectual development, and the educational, professional, or cultural opportunities to which you have or have not been exposed; explain their impact. This should not be a reiteration of facts already listed in the Biographical Data sections or an elaboration of the Statement of Grant Purpose. Format: single spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, 1 inch margins."*

**Everyone has to write a personal statement for their Fulbright application.** There's no way around this. You'll want to make yourself as compelling a candidate as possible with that statement. We have samples of personal statements you can view in the office (2502 UH). Sheena and Beth are available to provide feedback, brainstorm and offer advice on personal statements. We'll also encourage you to consult your peers, favorite faculty, and the writing center for feedback.

1. **Brainstorming:** To generate ideas, you may want to look at the Fulbright site and think about the country you have chosen. What experiences in your life are most relevant to the Fulbright? How and when have you demonstrated adaptability? Have you been an ambassador in one way or another? How have your goals for your future taken shape? **How does this experience fit into your life plan?**

Mary Tolar, an advisor who has worked with many students who have won Fulbrights and other nationally competitive awards, offers ridiculously excellent advice on crafting the personal statement, here: <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/FS/personal.pdf>

2. **OSSP's Personal Statement advice:** The personal statement is a narrative of your personal and intellectual development that gives insight into your background including your career goals and motivation for them. **This is an academic personal statement so you should link your proposal to your goals and background.** **Do not provide a chronological life story or put your resume in sentence form.** Seriously. Instead, consider what your most important experiences, characteristics, values and motivations are and tell the story of how those experiences have shaped you. Readers should be able to imagine you as an ambassador of goodwill and American culture.

### **TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP APPLICATIONS:**

Students applying for English Teaching Assistant (ETA). Positions are *not* expected to present extensive research plans. Rather, you should describe for the reviewers:

1. Why you would like to undertake a Teaching Assistant Assignment.
2. What your qualifications are, and what experiences you have had that relate to the overseas assignment.
3. How you expect to benefit from the assignment, and what use you will make of the experience upon your return to the United States.
4. What use you will make of your time outside the classroom. (Most TAs work no more than 20 hours per week.)

### **INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY:**

In your personal statement or in the proposal, you should sketch out how you plan to get involved in the community in which you will be staying. This can include recreational activities, volunteer work, or other ways that allow you to learn more about the culture surrounding you. Remember that a goal of the program is to “further mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries.”

### **Advice taken from the UVM website from Radha Blackman, a Fulbrighter to Bulgaria:**

#### Personal Statement

Your Personal Statement (PS) should narrate your personal and intellectual development. It should show how your proposal is the **next logical and necessary step in your life, and how you are qualified to carry it out.** It is your opportunity to illustrate what **a unique and exceptional** individual you are!

- Overall, is your PS interesting and easy to read? Does it show, rather than tell, who you are?
- Does your PS demonstrate your motivation and ability to work independently?
- Does it show who you are, and make the reader want to know you better?
- Do you demonstrate your experience and interest in intercultural learning and sharing?
- Do you repeat information included in other parts of your application? Omit those details unless they are necessary for further explanation or emphasis.



Best of luck!

Beth and Sheena