Law School Applications 101:

Statements, Essays, & Resumes...Oh My!

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Session Objectives

- Purpose and Content of the Statement
- Other Admissions Essays
- Writing Style & Other Technical Issues
- Purpose and Content of the Resume
- Q & A
General Personal Statement

Tell Your Story
Purpose of the Statement

- Your personal introduction to the admissions committee
- Opportunity to highlight unique aspects of yourself
- Communicate your passion for and interest in legal education
- Sample of your writing skills
Content of the Statement

- Basically “Tell Us About Yourself!”, but read each school’s question to be sure nothing specific is asked.
- Begin with self-assessment
  - Original interest in law
  - Life experiences (personal, professional, academic)
  - Short-term and long-term goals
  - Character traits or personal values
- General essay template
  - Experience/characteristic of importance to you
  - Impact on you
  - Connect to interest in legal education
Tackling the General Essay

- **DO** take time to conduct a thorough self-assessment.
- **DO** discuss unique experiences or qualities. Share your perspective.
- **DO** be engaging in your story.
- **DO** make sure the topic is relevant. Remember your reader!
- **DO NOT** be negative or make excuses. No-Whine Zone!!!
- **DO NOT** try to be too creative.
- **DO NOT** write the “I’ve always wanted to be a lawyer” essay.
- **DO NOT** write a narrative resume!
- **DO NOT** be arrogant or overly confident.
Writing Style & Other Technical Issues

- Be clear and concise.
- Usually 2 pages in length, double-spaced.
- Don’t “thesaurize” your essay.
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are important!
- Use varied sentence structure
- Strong introductions and conclusions are key!
- Use varying writing styles, such as expository or narrative.
Getting Started

- Writing Exercise – Self-assessment
- Four key points:
  - Past experiences
  - Present motivations
  - Future goals and aspirations
  - Enduring qualities, traits, or values
- Free-write your first draft
- Glean important points from first draft or start from scratch
- Multiple drafts is the norm
- Have your statement critiqued by the Career Center
  - Document Critique Service icon on Career Center website
Other Admissions Essays

Optional Essays
Addenda
Conduct Statements
Waitlist Letters
Optional Essays

- Write the optional essays, if you are truly interested in the school
- Provides extra opportunity to show writing skills and tell your story
- Potential topics:
  - Diversity
  - School-specific ("Why _____ Law?")
Addenda

- Used to address major discrepancies in the application (LSAT score, GPA/transcript issues, etc.)
- Should not be used without real cause
- State the facts, then move on!
- Don’t make excuses!
- End with a positive spin (i.e. lessons learned, skills honed, etc.)
Conduct Statements

- Will not need to provide this if no academic/disciplinary/legal infractions
- Read the question carefully!!! Be sure to provide information on what is asked
- State the facts, accept responsibility for your actions, and finish with a focus on positive outcomes
- Disclose all matters, even if told to do otherwise
Waitlist Letter of Continued Interest

- Thank the committee for continued review of your application
- Express your continued interest
- Update the school on recent events
- Establish fit between your goals and the school
  - Unique curriculum options
  - Experiential opportunities
  - Other factors
Law School Resumes

Gild the Lily!
Purpose of the resume

- Communicate your experiences to the committee
- Explain how you spent your time in college outside the classroom (time-management skills)
- Demonstrate leadership and engagement
- Show the committee what you have to offer in terms of experience and perspective
Important Characteristics

- Skill sets
- Maturity
- Professionalism
- Activism
- Service-orientation
- Leadership
Content of the Resume

- Contact information
- Educational background
- Professional experience
- Research experience
- Leadership/ extracurricular activities
- Community service & volunteerism
- Honors & awards
- Additional skills/ information
Writing Your Content

- Start each bulleted description with an action verb.
- Detail contributions and achievements rather than just job duties and tasks. Use a results-orientation to describe your work.
- Don’t discount unpaid or non-office experience. Showcasing all involvement shows how well you manage multiple tasks.
- Highlight specific skill sets gained.
- Use of numbers and superlatives when appropriate to emphasize scope of work. For example:
  - Numbers of hours worked/spent on activity per week
  - Dollar amounts, if describing budgets or fundraising
  - Number of people managed/supervised
Formatting Your Resume

- Arrangement is generally similar to employment resume
- Not restricted to one page unless stated otherwise by the school
- Make proper use of indentation and tabbing to separate sections
- No smaller than 11 pt. font
- Try adjusting margins if additional space needed
- Type your document from scratch rather than using templates for greater control over spacing.
General Resume Rules

- PROOFREAD YOUR DOCUMENT! No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors!
- Even when submitting a resume, still complete the school’s application form rather than referring them out to the resume exclusively.
- Have your resume critiqued through The Career Center:
  - www.career.emory.edu
  - “Document Critique Service” icon
  - Fill in the form and upload the resume (in MS Word format)
The Pre-Law Advising Office

The Career Center
B. Jones Center, Suite 200
Mon-Fri, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
404-727-6211
www.prelawadvising.emory.edu

Be sure to meet with the Pre-Law Advisor as needed to get your application questions answered!