Law School Applications 101:

Law School Admissions Essays

Rodia Vance, Associate Director
University Pre-Law Advisor
rodia.vance@emory.edu
Session Objectives

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

Tell Your Story
Purpose of the Statement

- Personal introduction to the admissions committee
- Opportunity to highlight unique aspects of yourself
- Communicate your passion for and interest in legal education
- Writing sample
Content of the Statement

“Tell Us About Yourself!”

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.
• 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.
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
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
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!