**Professional Goals Statement**

**What is a professional goals statement?**

It is a writing sample describing you at your best, your reasons for choosing the field you have chosen, your research interests, your objectives, and the unique ways you can contribute to the school where you will be student teaching. Professional statements are commonly requested when applying for scholarships and graduate/professional schools. They may also be requested for certain types of jobs, such as competitive teaching and research appointments in education, or for internship applications.

***A professional goals statement is designed to communicate five things:***

1. **Writing abilities** – grammar, creativity, organization, etc.
2. **Connections** – between past education/experience and future goals.
3. **Philosophy** – How you plan to make an impact in the field of education?
4. **Uniqueness** – What makes you unique? How you will add the diversity of a program and school?
5. **How can you be an asset?**

**What makes a statement compelling?**

1. **Knowing your strengths** – Begin by looking at your achievements and good experiences for evidence of your strengths. Ask those you know best for their thoughts.
2. **Knowing your audience** – This statement will be read by teachers and school administrators who you hope to work with.
3. **Making a good case for the “match”** – Why is the teaching profession a good fit for you? How are you going to be a good fit for the school or district?
4. **Telling a story that demonstrates your strengths with examples** – Avoid writing a first-person essay and using words such as “I” or “I want”. Use unique examples that set you a part from others and show your ability to contribute as an educator.
5. **Your visions and beliefs about primary/secondary education** – You could write about learning and teaching styles or reflect on key policies relevant to the age range you want to teach.
6. **Other related educational experience** – This may include previous work experience, training activities, etc.
7. **Other related skills and interests** – Give details about yourself that help a school to know more about you as a person (i.e. book club, youth summer camps, study abroad, etc.)

**How do I get started?**

1. Map out a timetable for yourself.
2. Identify your strengths.
3. Ask yourself some hard questions (and write out your answers, it’ll help when you go to write your paper):
   1. **Intellectual influences** – who has influenced you? Was it a professor/teacher, a book, an article? What is the single most important concept you have learned in your studies?
   2. **Encouragement** – Recall and write out the encouragements given to you by a professor, teacher, or other influential persons in your life.
   3. **Turning points** – Where were you and what were you doing when you decided to go in this particular direction? What influenced you to make the decision to become a teacher?
   4. **Experiences** – List all volunteer, travel, family, educational and life experiences that inspired you to choose this career.
   5. **Academics** – How have you prepared yourself to succeed?
   6. **Skills** – What skills have you honed through the experiential and educational choices you have made?
   7. **Personal attributes** – What personal attributes make you particularly likely to succeed?

**What are some basic tips for writing a professional goals statement?**

***Content***

1. Be concrete and specific, your examples should demonstrate your strengths and the reasons for why you are a good “match”.
2. Do not exaggerate or make things up.
3. Your writing should be centered on one common theme or thesis. Too many different ideas can become confusing.

***Expression***

1. Write in the active voice.
2. Do not use words you wouldn’t normally use – Be yourself.
3. Be clear and concise. Do not include sentences that are unclear or not necessary just to fill space.
4. Try not to repeat an idea too many times (mapping out your writing will help with this!)
5. Don’t write an autobiography, market yourself but do not tell your life story.
6. Some humor can be appropriate but be cautious when making jokes in your statement.

***Organization***

1. Follow the given directions on length. If no directions given, aim for 1.5 – 2 pages of single-spaced text.
2. Start your statement with a attention-grabbing sentence (quote, question, vivid description of a scene or experience, etc. ). Do not start your statement with “I am, I was” or any similar statement.
3. Make sure your transitions between paragraphs are smooth.
4. Your conclusion paragraph should tie back to your introduction paragraph. Make sure to re-introduce your main theme and summarize your main points.

***Editing***

1. Proof read and revise your essay at least 3-4 times. Do not rely on your computer to catch all spelling or grammar mistakes.
2. Ask a peer, advisor and/or professor to critique your essay.

**Need additional help?**

Please visit the Oregon State Career Development page for additional tips: <http://career.oregonstate.edu/students/graduate-and-professional-school/graduate-school-statement>

**Examples of Statements**

***Poor Personal Statement***

Having graduated with an MA in English from Purdue University, with an emphasis on the writing of poetry, I feel that I have come a long way as a writer. I think that my poetry is strong, but I also feel that I need to continue in a concentrated study of writing poetry. This is an important stage for me, and I think that continuing in a writing program – especially one as strong as the University of Washington program – is the best way for me to accomplish my goals.

Eventually, I would like to be teaching poetry writing at the college level. After teaching creative writing at Purdue, I realize that it is something that I would like to continue doing as a career, along with writing my poetry. I have also taught composition at Purdue, and I enjoy teaching at that level as well.

If accepted into the program at UW, upon graduation I would like to teach composition, and continue to write and publish poems, in the hopes that I will eventually be able to publish enough to allow me to gain employment as a creative writing teacher.

***Better Personal Statement***

Every morning at 10:00 a.m. I come face to face with the power of language to free; it happens in a classroom. The students I teach at Seattle Central Community College come from night work in an industrial bakery, from a Vietnamese refugee camp, from a 9-to-5 job in a car wash, or from the day care center where they’ve left their children. All come to the English Skills Shop to improve their use of language and they move through the same process I have undertaken: uncovering their voices. When they get discouraged, I read aloud excerpts from their own writing. They applaud themselves. In this room, their varied experiences count. I remind them that the only reason to learn how to write well is because they have something to say. And they do.

Until this past summer, I had no training in creative writing, nor even in literature; all my knowledge was absorbed like trace minerals from mass consumption of contemporary American fiction. The writer who does most masterfully what I attempt in my own stories is Wallace Stegner. He makes the intricate webs connecting his characters visible by illuminating the tears of dew balanced on each strand. Last summer I enrolled at the University of Washington and have been working ever since to find resonance in my own stories and study the voices within others’. Through an advanced short story class and a creative writing conference, along with literature and critical theory classes, I’ve become a more critical reader and a better writer.

I’m looking for a graduate program which combines the two elements I’ve found most valuable in my recent studies: strong mentors and tight community. I seek teachers who can pull me out of the details of words and phrases to see the whole piece, its form and contradictions. I seek guidance; the self-motivation is there. To balance the hours of solitary writing, I want a graduate program which nurtures a supportive community.

Throughout this process of thawing my voice, I’ve taken periods of formal training and applied the techniques; I see graduate school as one of these steps. Through it I expect to move to another level in my writing and myself, the ability to honestly and compellingly explore the world through stories. The stronger and more fluid the connection between my life and my writing, the better I’ll be able to teach that connection to others. I’d like to write my own stories and teach others how to write theirs. In the end, both undertakings help us all find our voices.

***Good Personal Statement (with commentary)***

My awakening to the wonder of human cultural diversity began with my entry into Army Basic Training. Living in an open barracks for three months with women from every corner of the United States opened my eyes and mind to the amazing variety of cultural groups just within our own country. Since then, I have lived, worked, and traveled in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. I gained invaluable cross-cultural experience as a member of a multi-national task force, which provided Emergency Medical Service in Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm. In addition to these experiences, my Army training has enabled me to develop strong skills in leadership, teambuilding, and organization. These are all qualities that will help me to be successful in my chosen field of Community Health Nursing.

**[In this paragraph, she shares her turning points, skills, and attributes. She also connects her past and present.]**

I have chosen the focus area of cross-cultural nursing because I know that making health programs culturally accessible is as important as making them geographically and financially accessible. This has been clearly demonstrated to me at the Washington Poison Center where we provide telephone information services to the entire state of Washington. Poison Center services are underutilized by non-English speaking population groups and those with English as a second language. This is due in part to a lack of awareness of or understanding of the services provided by the Poison Center. Cross-cultural health education is the key to informing these populations of the benefits of using Poison Center services.

**[In this paragraph, she discusses why she is applying for this program and talks about some related experiences.]**

As a cross-cultural nursing consultant I will work with multidisciplinary teams planning and implementing community health programs for underserved populations. I will bring to these teams the unique nursing perspective and an expertise in the effects of culture on health-seeking behaviors. Washington State has a rapidly growing Hispanic population with a large subculture of migrant farm workers. I intend to spend some time in rural eastern Washington working with Public Health officials and community leaders to increase the focus of primary prevention for this population group. I am also interested in working with Hispanic populations in other locations. With these plans in mind, I am currently studying Spanish. In addition, I plan to teach cross-cultural nursing subjects in the academic setting and in other venues such as hospital in-service training.

**[In this paragraph, she talks about her future goals. She also describes why she is a unique candidate.]**