

PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

SAMPLE #3

The love and support of incredible parents is a gift of untold value. My parents taught my sister and I the value of hard work, sacrifice, and service. My parents immigrated to the US having fled oppression and financial difficulty. My dad began multiple education programs in Lebanon, Syria, and Sweden, but political turmoil and financial circumstances robbed him of achieving the degree he deserved. Thus, his resolve regarding the value of education was strengthened. My parents taught me that my upbringing should not be a barrier and it gave us all great joy when I was the first in our family to receive a college degree.

Our spoken languages at home were Arabic and Turkish. I learned English with the help of Barney, the purple dinosaur, and playmates at school. In kindergarten, we were asked to draw a picture of what we wanted to be when we grew up. I drew myself as a doctor because it was one of the few jobs I knew how to say in English, thanks again to the purple dinosaur.

My parents were role models in regards to serving others. Since they had experienced such hard lives prior to immigrating, they were simply happy to share what little we had. My sister and I were taught to serve others, regardless of one's beliefs, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or her or his ability to serve you in return.

My high school biology teacher recommended I explore the medical profession further by encouraging me to meet and work with Dr. Hill, her obstetrics and gynecology specialist. Dr. Hill is a single mother who runs her own clinic, while mentoring and engaging women to pursue careers in medicine. She is an advocate for the underserved and organizes an annual free women's health clinic in Los Angeles with her colleagues, where I was fortunate enough to help. Many of the women are provided with their first ever PAP smear or mammograms. Eager to learn, Dr. Hill provided me additional patient interactions with expectant mothers. She also gave me the wonderful gift of witnessing the first moments of a baby's life and seeing him meet his parents.

With my parents' support, I found a way to fund my college education and felt fortunate to enroll at UC Irvine. The transition was made easier thanks to the TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) program, a federally funded program for first-generation, low-income, underrepresented students. Joseph, my assigned mentor, was brought up in a middle-eastern background similar to my own. I appreciated his encouragement, understanding, and support as I faced the inevitable challenges in my first year of college. I was buoyed by what I had learned that first year and recognized the inordinate value that Joseph provided. It was an easy decision to become an SSS program mentor for my next three years of college. I worked with a diverse team of fellow students to organize the pre-orientation week for incoming SSS students and to mentor underclassmen. The relationships I built with these students who faced their own struggles was motivating and inspiring.

In college, I engaged in a variety of internships with physicians and volunteer opportunities to learn about medicine. Helping hospital staff with stocking shelves, cleaning beds, and a variety of other tasks made their jobs easier and hopefully, in turn, helped their patients. Through these positions, I have not lost my fervor for becoming a physician. Each experience provided a new lesson, new insight, and reinforced my belief that medicine, as a form of service, would be most gratifying.

As my college career was coming to an end, I found the Master of Science program in Modern Human Anatomy at the University of Arizona School of Medicine. I completed graduate level course work in embryology, imaging, histology, gross anatomy and neuroanatomy, taught by medical school professors.

The chance to dissect a human cadaver in its entirety is an experience not likely to be repeated as a medical student, due to curriculum time restraints, and thus contributed to my profound respect for the human body. The gift of learning in that level of detail has only strengthened my commitment.

My continued desire to unify my backgrounds in anatomy, basic science, and clinical volunteer opportunities led me to my role as a clinical research coordinator for the University of Arizona Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. The investigator-initiated studies I work on expose me to the creativity and broad impact that a physician can provide, which translate into improved care and quality of life for patients. The opportunities I have had to sit down with physicians to understand their journey to medicine, their care for patients, and what continues to drive them in their vocation has been invaluable. But most importantly, I am able to sit down and interact with a diverse patient population served at the University of Arizona Hospital and Phoenix Veterans Affairs Hospital. The foundation that I continue to build these medical experiences upon and my love of learning takes me back to my parents. Their encouragement, love, and support has given me the courage to pursue my dreams. I hope to be a doctor of integrity, as they have been for me, and make the picture I drew as a kindergartener a reality.