

## PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

### SAMPLE #1

The first time I played guitar on the memory care floor of the nursing home, a dementia patient wheeled up behind me and started twisting my guitar's tuning pegs until it was wildly out of tune. Others fell asleep while I played, or simply wandered away mid-song. I wish I had a story about how my music therapy changed a life by helping a patient remember his or her family members, or regain the ability to walk, but I don't. I do, however, take great pride in the moments when I made a patient smile, tap his or her foot, or sing along. In these moments I knew that, even if for a short time, I made these people feel better. They taught me about the subtle intricacies of medicine—the same subtle intricacies that draw me to music. These minute moments made me realize that I was called to care for people beyond sharing my rendition of “Georgia on My Mind.” Some of a physician's most important duties include hand holding, careful listening, laughing, and crying with the patient. Like music, the practice of medicine is an art with equal emphasis on heart and technical theory. I believe that I have the heart and want to dedicate my life to mastering the technical theory.

Growing up with a nurse for a mother and a general surgeon for a father, I was familiar with the triumphs and frustrations of a career in healthcare, and considered it warily. From my mom, the nurse, I've learned the importance of holistic care: treating the whole person and not just the disease, a la Osler. From my dad, I understand the workload and sacrifices involved in being a doctor. At the same time, I am inspired by the way he meets these challenges with grace and selflessness. From him, I've learned that medicine is not only mastering the complicated whipple procedure, but also treating patients with patience, honoring the human spirit, and cracking a joke during that 3 a.m. phone call. I'm prepared for these challenges, as I've seen how giving someone else the gift of health outweighs the long hours and potential personal sacrifice.

My parents also instilled in me a love of music. I started taking piano lessons at the age of six, and first picked up the guitar a year later. My interest in music escalated into an lifelong love over the next decade, as I meticulously studied music theory and taught myself to play nearly ten other instruments. The thousands of hours I've spent practicing and writing music are all worth it when I can share my passion at various gigs, including fundraisers, corporate events, hospitals, and, as mentioned earlier, many nursing homes. I've even written and recorded an album, entitled “The Science Experiment,” coincidentally completed at the end of my rigorous semester of organic chemistry.

Beyond being a lifelong love, music has been my greatest teacher, imparting skills and characteristics that I believe will equip me for a fruitful career as a doctor. It has made me a habitual listener and showed me the importance of diversity and collaboration; after all, no one wants to hear a band comprised of five drummers playing different rhythms. Based on what I've witnessed in my shadowing experiences, this emphasis on communication is vital not only between doctor and patient, but between doctor and other healthcare providers as well. Being a musician has also taught me the value of intrinsic motivation. The ability to push myself and take ownership of my goals has also been invaluable in my academic career and will continue to be as I tackle the rigors of medical school and a career in medicine. Lastly, music has fostered my creativity. From shadowing primary care and ER doctors, I know that diagnosis and treatment is often an organized troubleshoot that necessitates creative solutions. I am excited to enter a profession that allows me to flex my creative muscles for the greater good of individuals and the community.

I solidified my decision to pursue a career as a doctor during my first summer working at Tufts Medicine's Neurodegenerative Diseases Research Lab. Although most of my time was spent in the lab, the lab was closely associated with the Neurology clinic, and I found myself drawn to direct patient contact. I spent my lunch breaks talking to and shadowing any and every physician to whom I could introduce myself. I was blown away by the palpable synergy of the patient care team and each physicians' enthusiasm about his or her career. They all felt called to the profession—like their hands were made to heal. I've recognized striking similarities between the movement of my dad's hands while he's operating, and his hands while he's playing his '74 Gibson Les Paul. I've seen the difference these hands have made in so many people's lives. As I strummed the last chord to "Georgia on My Mind" in the nursing home, I looked down at my hands and I couldn't help but feel that mine were built to do the same.