

Where STEM Meets Self:



Writing a
Personal
Statement
That Owns
Your Why

About Me



- Chicago!
- McNair Scholar Alumni
- Previously Arnold Mitchem Fellows Program Instructor
- EPISTEM Learning Coordinator (NSF grant-funded program), where she:
 - Supports and mentors STEM students
 - Guides them in achieving academic and professional goals
 - Inspires students across varying age levels to remain true to themselves.

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Why Personal Statements Matter

- A chance to tell your story beyond your resume
- Showcase your motivations, experiences, and future goals
- Different statements have different focuses:
 - SROP (research)
 - Med School (healthcare passion)
 - Career Interviews/Internships (fit and competence)

What Does “Personal” Even Mean?

Beliefs?

Culture?



Values?

History?

“Personal” is Rooted in Your Why

Your “Why” is the **reason** behind **what you do**, the **values you hold**, or the **experiences** that shaped you.

It is not only about sharing private details.
It is about connecting your choices, goals, or actions to your deeper motivations.

Anatomy of a Personal Statement

	What does it consist of?	What makes it different?
Structural Suggestion	Hook (personal experience, spark, or motivation)	Your story (voice, values, experiences)
	Bridge (connect personal experiences to academic path)	Your goals (research, career, graduate)
	Future (how the program aligns with your goals).	Your why (why this opportunity/field of study/program)
	BUT really, what is most authentic to you!	Not a resume, not a research paper

SROP/GAP Personal Statement Tips

- **Highlight Research Interests**
- **Showcase Relevant Experience**
- **Emphasize Assests Outside of Technincal Experience:**
 - **Eager to learn, collaborate, and/or grow?**
- **Adapt Your Essay**
 - **Mention why the specific SROP/GAP program aligns with your goals**

Now!

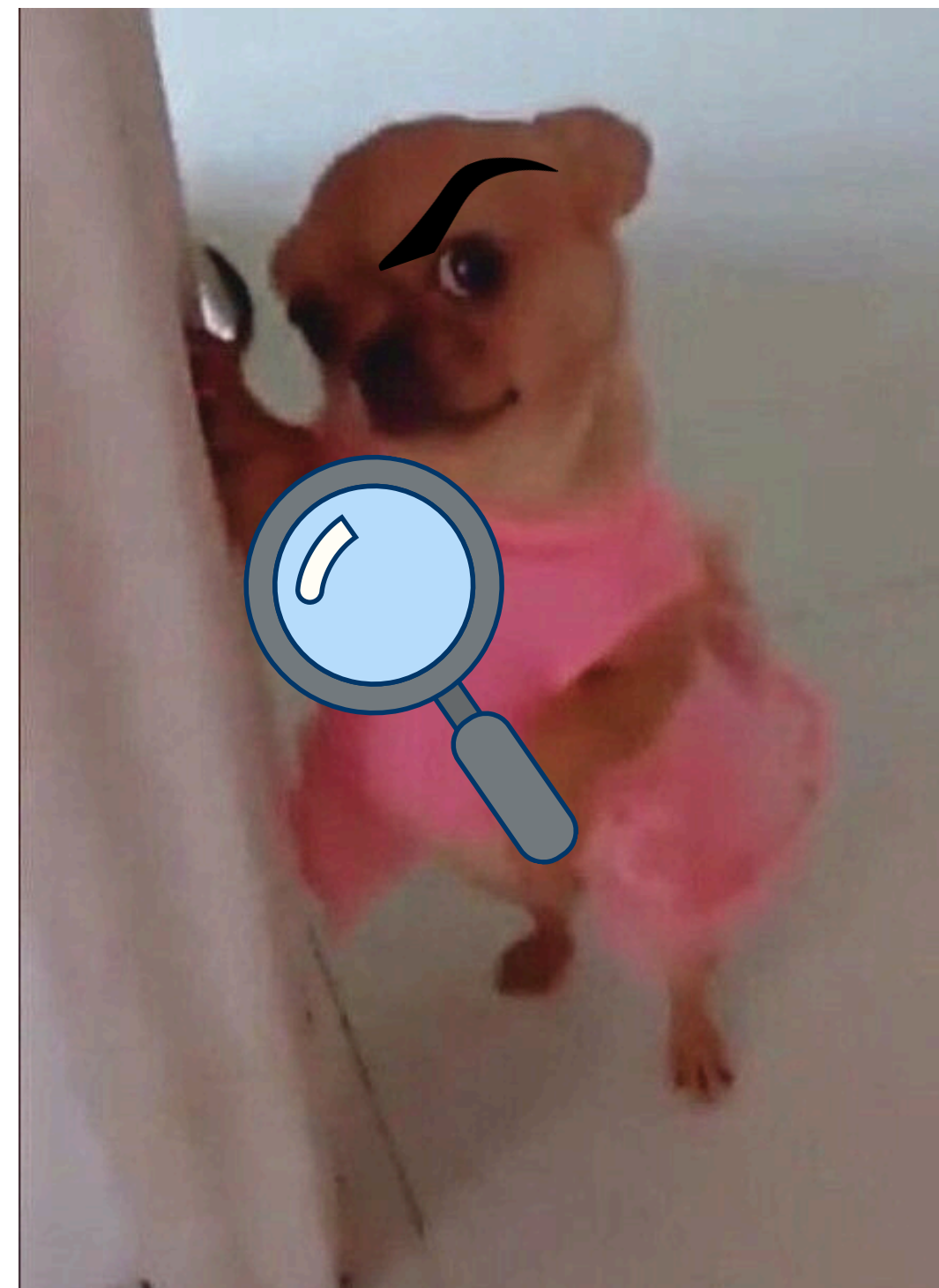
**We have to get
PERSONAL.**





Discuss a defining moment that sparked your interest in STEM.

Why?



Your “Why” is your Strength.





**Now it's your time to
bring your "Why"
into the spotlight!**

**What's one way your
background or identity has
shaped the kind of STEM
work you want to do?**

What challenge/experience in college/life has shaped how you see yourself as a STEM student?

What kind of life do you ultimately want to build for yourself and how do your current academic and career goals help shape that vision?

Last Few Tips!



- Better to lead with a story than a list of the specifics.
- Show, don't tell. Place don't disorient.
- Balance personal + academic.
- Clarity over complexity.
- Connect the dots. This doesn't just mean relevant experience.
- Don't worry if you don't have it figured out!

Final Reflections! + Questions



**What do you hope the
person reading your
statement understands
about you?**

**What's one insight,
phrase, or feeling you're
walking away with after
these conversations?**

**How did hearing others'
responses shift how you
see your own story?**

Final Reflections! + Questions



Thank you!

Provide Your Feedback on:

Where STEM Meets Self: Writing a Personal Statement That Owns Your Why

Survey Link:

<https://airtable.com/appMqgBJxZT21jAQH/pagUjZGkj9xu7v8yl/form>

