

Diversity Statement: Prehealth Applicants

If a school allows you to submit a diversity statement, consider it as an opportunity to tell them more about yourself. Talk to the personal statement editor and discuss your options.

What is it?

A diversity statement focuses on your background and your place in the family and culture in which you were raised, while a personal statement focuses solely on you and who you are. Make sure to answer all parts of the prompt. If the prompt asks you how you will contribute to the diversity of the classroom, make sure to tie in your past experiences with your ability to contribute to the classroom.

Diversity Is Not Just about Race

Most of us hear diversity and automatically assume it refers to race—or, at a stretch, poverty. *This is not the case.* If your background differs from the mainstream at the medical school to which you are applying, you may be able to discuss this in a diversity statement. How has this difference in background affected your life? For example, a student from Idaho wrote about growing up on a farm with eight siblings and experiencing his parents' divorce.

Assume No Knowledge

Your life may seem boring to *you*; however, the application committee has no idea what it is like to be you. This is your chance to tell them the little things about you and your background that make you different. Don't assume they know what it's like to grow up in a rural farming community or as one of the few LDS people in your high school. But most importantly, how have these experiences impacted your life?

Play against Type

Most of us have been stereotyped before—computer geek, athlete, prom queen. What skills or interests do you have that don't fit the mold? An admissions committee may be surprised to find out that the computer geek was also student body president, the athlete is an expert on Shakespeare, or the prom queen spends her time volunteering at a homeless shelter. Diversity is about what makes you different from the mold. Figure out what kind of mold could easily be applied to you and then look for ways to tell the admissions committee how you break it.

Don't Generalize

The admissions committee is not looking for a treatise on diversity or how your stereotype is portrayed in society. Instead, like the personal statement, they want to know about *you*. The details that you provide about your life and your experiences are what an admissions committee can connect and relate to. Being specific in your diversity statement is what makes it universal. Generalizing causes a person to simply “tune out.”

Don't Apologize

Too often an applicant apologizes for being white, middle-class, or male. Even worse is when applicants joke that due to affirmative action they are now a minority. *The diversity statement is not about what you are not—it is about what you are.* You can always find something about your life, work, or school experience that sets you apart from other medical school applicants—even if you think you come from a “typical” background.

We strongly encourage you to consciously think about your upbringing to look for ANY and ALL aspects of diversity. If you think you aren't diverse—ask us! We guarantee you are much more diverse than you think.