When you apply to a graduate program, your personal statement must be truthful and professional while also making you stand out. Through your personal statement, you must convince the admissions committee that

- you have chosen to apply to this particular program for good reasons – identify the attractive elements of their program;
- you will complete this program successfully and use it professionally;
- you have a personal or professional characteristic that makes you a bit special and will enhance the learning of your fellow students.

Follow directions:

- Respond to the specific question/instructions on the application.
- Do not submit the same essay to different schools with different prompts.
- Tell a coherent story of the paths you have been on and hope to follow next.

Planning activity: Create an intellectual timeline of your life. Pick out achievements and lessons relate to your goal. Identify connections and themes.

Emphasize things that actually happened in college.

- Your recent achievements prove that you are ready for this program NOW.
- What specifically have you done and learned in your discipline? Demonstrate your knowledge so the admissions committee can believe that you are prepared.
- If there’s a relevant weak spot in your college career, BRIEFLY explain it.
- Avoid high school and earlier unless it helps to explain your special characteristic.

Writing the personal statement:

- Revise, revise, and revise. Then have others proofread. Consult with CWC.
- Get input from faculty advisers.
- Be sure your statement makes sense and is logical. Stay focused and cut the fluff.
- Have a good opener to hook the reader’s interest in you.
- Share this handout and others with your reviewers.
- Quality counts: this statement is an advertisement of your writing ability.

Some material drawn from: *Making It Into a Top Graduate School*, H.Greene and M.Greene; Clarkson University website; Hilary Oak’s presentation at SLU
Questions to Ask…

From University of San Diego:

Why do you want to go to graduate school? What will this degree enable you to achieve? What will you do with this advanced degree?

Be able to express what about you and your experiences will help you to succeed in the program:

- Make lists of professors, courses, research projects, ideas, travel, and other experiences that have been important to you, or have influenced your decision to apply to graduate school.
- Think about any volunteer, extracurricular, or paid work experiences, as well as interests,
- special skills you possess, or honors and awards you have received.
- What have you learned from your experiences? How have you used this knowledge?

From Greene and Greene:

• What are your major strengths and how do they relate to what you want to do?
• In what ways will you enhance the professional field you are preparing for?
• What specific examples can you describe that illustrate your personal set of values, ethical standards, and code of behavior?
• What research are you interested in doing?
• How does your academic performance in college, and your volunteer or work experience, explain who you are and why it makes sense for you to pursue graduate studies and a career in the profession you are considering?
• How will your talents and personal characteristics contribute to success in this professional career?
• What have you accomplished in your schooling or work or volunteerism that you are proud of?