

Constructing your research statement

- **Goals of a research statement**
- **What is your unique story?**
- **Research experience**
- **Proposed research program**
- **Checklist for your statement**
- **Revise and repeat**

Goals of a Research Statement

- **Introduce you...and your research program**
 - You should convince us that you have unique accomplishments that ideally suit *you* to do the proposed research
- **Explain the importance of your research interests to scientists outside your field**
 - What would success in your field facilitate?
- **Spell out what is novel & exciting about your past & future research**
 - What are your accomplishments, how do they propel you towards new goals?
- **Summarize your research goals**
 - Five year plan, leading to a career trajectory

Put yourself in the shoes of a supportive advocate

- **The document should help someone explain your research and make a case for you**
 - Put words in the mouth of your champion
 - What would you like this person to say about you in a meeting?
 - Make sure these statements appear clearly in your document
 - Otherwise, your champion may inadvertently misrepresent you
- **Can I scan the page and find a sentence that states your:**
 - General research area
 - Important research contributions
 - Areas of expertise
 - Long and short-term research goals
 - Importance and implications of your research: past, current, and future

Rules of thumb

- **Use the first person**
- **Avoid using jargon**
- **State clearly important questions in the field you have and will address**
- **Use succinct paragraphs and boldface important points:**
 - Research question
 - Important finding
 - Implications
- **Cite your own publications**
- **Provide specific statements about the importance of your research**
 - This provides ammunition for a supportive committee member
- **Stick to 2 pages**

What is your unique story?

Broad brushstrokes...

- **What is the general motivation behind your research interests?**
 - A basic science question? A particular application? Developing technologies?
 - Why should we care about it?
- **What training and experience do you have to support your question?**
 - Do not focus only on your most current research; try to present a unifying story or trajectory driving your training?
 - Breadth can be a strength if explained well: diversity enables discovery
- **What specific research questions do you want to study and how?**
 - How will this help achieve your long-term goals?

Write one or two sentences for each point, then use them to construct an introductory paragraph

Describe your research accomplishments

Goals

- **Help others assess your talent and experience**
 - Prior work in a field not directly related to your research program can provide useful information about your abilities
- **Accurately describe your own research contributions**
 - Either overstating or understating the importance of your work can be a problem
 - This isn't about being boastful or modest, just an honest assessment
 - If you have difficulty with this, pretend you are writing about a respected friend or colleague
 - Can you frame your work in a broader context?
 - Can you explain the importance of your work to non-experts?

Describe your research accomplishments

- **In a sentence or two, provide an overview of each research area**
 - What are the general questions and methods?
 - Why should we care?
- **Succinctly explain your research in a few paragraphs:**
 - In a sentence, what is the “big deal” for each of your publications or projects?
 - Major hypothesis supported?
 - Novelty--first evidence of...?
 - These should be independent of the particular methods used
 - In a couple sentences, explain your specific contribution or insight
 - Report specific methods and results only generally if it helps explain the findings
 - Explain broader implications of your findings

Summarize your proposed research program

Goals

- **Demonstrate that you have honed your ideas into tractable and fundable chunks.**
 - Have you identified a critical question and a methodology for answering it?
 - What specific short-term goals do you have that would open up a new research area?
 - Think about the first few papers you would like your lab to publish
- **Explain how the proposed work facilitates novel long-term research directions**
- **Demonstrate that you are ideally suited to perform the research**
 - The research should arise naturally from your prior accomplishments
 - You must have a good idea AND be the right person to perform the work

Summarize your proposed research program

- **In a sentence or two, provide an overview of each proposed research area**
 - What are the general questions and methods?
 - Why should we care?
 - How does it combine your prior expertise?
- **Succinctly explain your research goals in a few paragraphs:**
 - In a sentence, what is the “big deal” for each proposed projects?
 - Major hypothesis?
 - Novelty--first evidence of...?
 - Specific aims?
 - Generally, what methods will you use?
 - What results would be exciting?
 - What would be the broader implications?

Checklist for your statement

- **The document should help someone explain your research and make a case for you**
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Evaluate, revise, and repeat

- **Start early**
- **Be prepared to make many drafts**
- **Get feedback often and early from friends and colleagues**
 - Have them do the checklist
 - Give it to them before you've spent hours going in the wrong direction
 - Don't spend time refining something that you may need to completely overhaul
- **Don't be too attached to what you've written**
 - Starting over once you've honed your messages can provide the most succinct and clean document
 - Identify the key ideas for each paragraph and put them in the first sentence
 - Often research statements start out too specific and then broaden over a number of drafts, or vice-versa

Evaluate, revise, and repeat

- **Make sure you're excited**
 - Let your passion and positive attitude come through in the writing
 - Negative thoughts and doubts will also come through
- **Give yourself time to process between evaluating and rewriting**
 - Studies show that simply waiting after receiving information enhances the salience of information presented, and the choices we make with that information
- **Read other people's statements**
 - Identify *specifically* what you like or dislike
 - Can you read it and quickly present a 5-minute summary?
 - Choose a format that works for you

Good Luck!