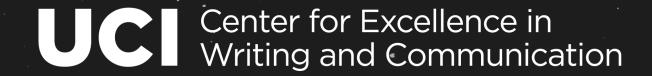# Revising Your Personal Statement or Statement of Purpose

ghostzzy

reminder to myself about the process of drafting & revising:

- first drafts are for making it *exist*
- second drafts are for making it *functional*
- third drafts are for making it *effective*

UCI Center for Excellence in Writing and Communication

Over the course of this workshop, you will take concrete steps to start editing your paper.

By following these slides, you'll:
- identify important aspects of your personal statement (PS) or statement of purpose (SoP),
- evaluate these aspects,
- and consider how to improve.

Set aside **60 minutes** to guide yourself through this workshop.

And don't forget to **make a copy of your draft document**–we'll be asking you to mark up your draft as we go.

Saving the original draft will allow you to see the differences in your writing.

First Pass: Are You Answering the Prompt?

1. In a separate tab or window, pull up the prompt or any guidance for your PS/SoP.

2. Identify what they are asking you to do.

3. In your draft, highlight at least one sentence where you address each question or suggestion from the prompt.

Content Checklist (1/2)

For each item on the lists over the next few slides, underline the sentences where you address the item in your draft.

- ❏ Introduction
    - ❏ Who you are.
    - ❏ Your academic and/or professional background.
    - ❏ 1-sentence statement about the program you are applying to and why.

- ❏ Central Theme
    - ❏ Why should this program accept you?
    - ❏ What are three things the reviewers must know about you?

Content Checklist (2/2)

For each item on the lists over the next few slides, underline the sentences where you address the item in your draft.

- ❏ Show, Don't Tell
    - ❏ What stories or narratives do you present?
    - ❏ What experiences do you describe?

- ❏ The Program
    - ❏ Do you show that you've done your research about this program?
    - ❏ Why is this program the best fit for you?
    - ❏ How do your career goals align with the program?
    - ❏ What will you learn from the program, and what can the program learn from you?

How to *Actually* "Show, Don't Tell"? (1/2)

Example of "Telling":

When I was 15, I took AP Chemistry. I loved the class because I learned so much and never got bored of the subject. I decided to be a biochemistry major in college so that I could find a career path I enjoy. I applied what I learned in my biochem program into research projects with XYZ Lab as a research assistant.

Answer the following questions:

1. In 1 sentence, what is the main idea of this paragraph?
2. What skills does the author demonstrate?
3. What experiences does the author emphasize?
4. How interesting or engaging is this paragraph?

How to *Actually* "Show, Don't Tell"? (2/2)

Example of "Showing":

In my high school nightmares, the periodic table floated at the periphery of my vision during the AP Chemistry exam–but I couldn't see the details. While working as a research assistant at XYZ Lab's project, the nightmares started again; but after so many biochem classes, I can recite the entire table with my eyes closed.

Answer the following questions:

1. In 1 sentence, what is the main idea of this paragraph?
2. What skills does the author demonstrate?
3. What experiences does the author emphasize?
4. How interesting or engaging is this paragraph?

Meeting Word Counts: How to Cut (1/3)

1. List the experiences you discuss in your draft.
2. Order these experiences by importance.
   ○ How important was the experience to your growth and capabilities?
   ○ Which experiences was difficult or competitive?
3. Order these experiences by relevance.
   ○ Which experiences would a reviewer find impressive or unique?
   ○ Which experiences are most closely related to the work you will be doing in the program?

Based on these ordered lists, cut sentences or paragraphs out. Don't worry–one or two well-detailed, important experiences are better than three or four surface-level descriptions.

Meeting Word Counts: How to Cut (2/3)

- Read your draft aloud.
  - What sentences are hard to say?
  - Where do you run out of breath?
  - Highlight or underline these moments.
  - Later, revise by making them shorter. Say directly what you mean.

- Identify and reduce extraneous verbs.
  - Circle the verbs in your sentences. Which is the main or most important action?
  - Most often, writers use extra "to be" verbs(is, am, are, been, etc.) in their sentences.
  - Can you cut any verbs?
  - Can any nouns turn into verbs?

Meeting Word Counts: How to Cut (3/3)

- Identify and reduce repetitive or unnecessarily long content.
  - Have you talked about something multiple times?
  - Do you have words that tend to repeat in a paragraph?
  - Do you use active tense, or passive voice?

- Ask your friends, peers, and/or coworkers to review your draft. Tell them how many words you need to cut. See if they can help!

- Visit us at the Writing Center!

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