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Personal Statement: Possible Outline

- **Interesting Opening: The Scholarship Committee reads a multitude of essays. Catch their attention by creating an interesting opening paragraph that allows your voice to come through. Remember, storytelling is captivating, so write to engage your audience. If you can weave your personal story through while addressing the information the committee needs to know, you are more likely to capture their interest.**

Example

For me, there was no Eureka moment when I decided my future lay in the sciences. My decision was far more gradual and considered. Looking back, some of the key moments that contributed to my decision include a female healthcare scientist speaking at a careers event in primary school; an exciting and practical STEM Club in Y9, which I later helped to run; biochemistry workshops at my local university; and wider reading, where I found myself intrigued by the potential uses of graphene in cancer treatments. Although I briefly considered applying to medical school, my technical and analytical skills feel more suited to studying chemistry. Eventually, I see myself helping people in other ways, by specializing in regenerative medicine.

- **If you choose, briefly name the struggles you have overcome to get to college (no sob stories). Keep your tone hopeful and positive.**
- **Name your major and possible career goal and talk about the life experiences which have influenced your decision.**
- **Let the Scholarship Committee know if you plan to pursue your education beyond your Associate's degree. Illustrate your capacity for persistence and reaching your goals.**
- **Address how reaching your goals will positively impact society.**

Example

My family has experienced problems in social housing, so the principle of affordable housing for all is central to my desire to become an architect. Balkrishna Doshi's Aranya and shipping container homes like the REACH project have helped me to understand possible creative solutions to housing challenges. I believe my future lies in small-scale, sustainable, and social builds, rather than sky-scraping vanity projects. Overall, architecture is a good fit for my knowledge and abilities, and I am so excited to begin my studies.

- **Let the Scholarship Committee know how receiving scholarship money will aid you, and thank them for the opportunity to apply.**

Example

If I receive scholarship funds, they will be helpful in paying for my textbooks during the upcoming semester. Being able to apply for these scholarships means a great deal to me, and I thank you for providing the opportunity.

Aim to Define a Central Idea, Impression, or Theme You Hope to Convey

The most memorable personal statements are those that have a clear purpose that unifies the ideas and information presented. As you write, a theme may emerge. Also, keep in mind the original prompt, and make sure to stay focused on what it asks of you. (*Prompt: Please describe your personal and academic goals as well as the life experiences that led you to Columbia College*).

So, in writing your statement, make sure your ideas tie in with the original prompt. For example, if you are writing about ways in which you have served the community, tie that information back in to how those experiences contributed to your journey to Columbia or to your goals. Your statement should be unified and cohesive.

Extra Notes:

- Columbia College's Scholarship Foundation asks you to limit your personal statement to 500 words. This is equivalent to about one page of single-spaced text.
- Make sure to paragraph your work. Each paragraph should focus on one idea.
- Proofread for sentence structure, grammatical, and punctuation errors.
- Take advantage of the tutors in the AAC for help.

Beginning Your Personal Statement: Tips from the Experts

- 'Your interest in the course is the biggest thing. Start with why you chose it.'
- 'The best personal statements get to the point quickly.'
- 'Start with a short sentence that captures the reason why you are interested in studying the area you are applying for and that communicates your enthusiasm for it.'
- 'Go straight in. Why are you excited about studying this course?'
- 'The opening is your chance to introduce yourself, to explain your motivation for studying the course and to demonstrate your understanding of it.'
- 'It's your enthusiasm for the course we want to know about. Start with that.'
- 'Write what comes naturally.'

- 'What you want to study and why should be in the first two sentences. What excites you about the course and why do you want to learn about it more?'
- 'Be specific from line one.'
- 'Talk about you and your enthusiasm for the subject from the very start.'
- 'In your opening paragraph you need to show that you know what you are applying for. Don't waffle or say you want to study something just because it's interesting. Explain what you find interesting about it.'
- 'It's much better to engage us with something interesting, relevant, specific and current in your opening line, not 'from a young age' or 'I have always wanted to'. Start with what's inspiring you now, not what inspired you when you were six.'