



**ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN
SCHOLARS IN AMERICA - STATEMENT
OF PURPOSE**



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BACKGROUND

Motivation

With an increasing number of qualified candidates vying for limited admission slots, admission officers are becoming more selective, making the application process more challenging. ANSA recognizes this challenge, hence the purpose of creating this document is to alleviate the burden faced by undergraduate/graduate school applicants during their application process. This document provides access to up-to-date materials that will inspire deep introspection and guide you through your statement of purpose writing process. This initiative is in line with ANSA's broad mission of building a platform that supports career development.

Acknowledgement

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DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this document are personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANSA. References made to ANSA do not imply endorsement and should not be treated as such. All personal information from essay samples have been de-identified for data protection purposes. Do not plagiarize!

INTRODUCTION

You are finally ready to start your application process, but you are either “overwhelmed by your vast experiences/background/extracurricular and confused on how to arrange this to give a compelling statement- what do I need to drop?, what is relevant? etc” or “you are depressed because you feel you do not have enough experience/background/extracurricular to write a compelling statement and you are uncertain about how to make your application stand out”. We were in your shoes some years back, and we understand your position. Writing essays can be challenging but extremely rewarding. Allow yourself to be discovered.

Statement of Purpose vs Personal Statement

Most applicants are usually bogged down trying to figure out the difference between these two statements. In our opinion, the most effective answer to this question can be gotten from your intended school website. However, the difference in practice is that a statement of purpose focuses more on describing how you intend to use your academic strengths, career interests, and experiences to do what you want to do, whereas a personal statement focuses more on your personal background and major challenges you have had to overcome.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This writeup describes the statement of purpose with three broad key components including introduction, body, and conclusion.

Introduction

First impressions matter! The main function of this section is to capture the reader’s interest and encourage them to keep reading. A boring impassive introduction would do more harm than good to your entire essay even if other parts are perfect. This section should be unique, compelling, and give a mini summary of the story you are telling, and clearly state your goal. See samples below.

Arts and Humanities

1. As an undergraduate student of Psychology at xxxxxx, I used to spend an hour commuting to campus daily. Along my route, I would walk past a certain homeless man at least once a week. This individual was mostly unremarkable except for a certain mantra of his. In a voice which fully conveyed the deflation of his spirit, he would repeatedly say the words “I am a poor and wretched man” to no one in particular. Every time our paths crossed, I cringed as he said these awful words about himself. I later recalled this episode in detail at the end of my sophomore year when seeing a TED Talk on mindsets delivered by Professor Carol Dweck and this stirred my imagination for solutions to several social problems in our world. For example, how could we help this “poor man” to overcome his despondent outlook to life and to what extent did his defeatist mantra characterize his entire life? What if we helped him get back on his feet in one facet of his life yet the tragic refrain continued in another? I then began to see some far reaching implications of a fixed mindset on problems such as academic underachievement and racial and gender prejudice in a society. A person with a fixed mindset would endorse rigid beliefs which could be mutually reinforcing where they coexist. Dealing with one belief emanating from a fixed mindset may not insure against the existence of others. While the hosts of these

mindsets may not blurt out their beliefs like the homeless man I used to know, these beliefs could create a recursive process of negativity in spite of divergent evidence and at great cost to society.

These experiences inspired my undergraduate thesis which focused on a subset of these problems. I investigated how the link between growth mindsets and academic achievement is mediated by frustration tolerance. This mediator is particularly salient for difficult educational environments like Nigeria in which successful students are survivors of an overwhelmed, understaffed, and poorly motivated educational system (Korau, 2006). In addition, the prevailing global trend of quick service, increased convenience and instant gratification could have undermined the fortitude of millennials to tolerate delays, setbacks and failures. Furthermore, some students who uphold beliefs consistent with a growth mindset may not always successfully translate their beliefs into action especially in the face of demanding difficulties. This made me wonder what other factors could affect or enhance the success of growth mindset interventions.

2. "Public relations are a key component of any operation in this day of instant communications and rightly inquisitive citizens."

This is a notable quote by Alvin Adams (1804-1877), founder of Adams and Company. The above summarizes my thought as people are becoming ever more sophisticated in an age where internet networking and media are becoming one of the most powerful entities in the world as they are known for shaping the world around us. Overtime, I have developed the drive to use media for social change especially in this part of the world I have found myself in-Nigeria. Being born and brought up in Nigeria has exposed me to several facets of life that are trapped in mediocrity. This fuelled my interest in going into Communication Studies; a career involving unexpected changes and inevitable twists than a life of routine. A career that would not only make the problems encountered obvious but that would also bring solutions to majority. My research interest centres on Public Relation as I find it remarkable and intriguing to see how media and PR has influenced the way people think on daily basis.

Engineering

1. "A steady recognition that the evils which prevent the fullness of a free society are precisely the elements which are also the source of the power that gives existence to whatever moral accomplishments we see about us may eventually lead us to a tolerance we grant to the internal-combustion engine: it is noisy and smelly, and occasionally, it refuses to start, but it is what gets us to wherever we get. We must somehow learn to understand and so to tolerate- not destroy- the free society."

The above were the words of Michael Polanyi which jumped out of the pages of an insightful publication, "Life's irreducible structure" that I read in my sophomore year. As an individual who is thirsty for knowledge and passionate about engineering innovations, these words created a thought provoking experience that stimulated my interest in the improvement of internal combustion engines and alternative fuels. My research interest centres on optimization

centres on optimization of engine performance using alternative fuels and biorenewable energy utilization.

2. Reminiscing about my graduate internship experience with Azimarine and General Services Limited, a major oil contracting firm to Mobil Nigeria Unlimited, in which I sat down in thorough consideration and analysis of the state of my country Nigeria, a third world country that has placed absolute dependence on fossil fuels for energy generation and survival without being aware of the possible negative effects of these finite sources of energy on the environment which include: multiple oil spills, brackish streams, displacement of people and vegetation loss. This stimulated my interest in the creation of pathways for cleaner energy generation including biofuel and waste to energy conversion, to solve these seemingly unresolvable problems thereby making environmental and economic sustainability commonplace. My research interest centres on harnessing renewable technologies and resources such as lignocellulosic biomass for cleaner energy generation, conversion, and usage in engine systems and the optimization of these systems.
3. The century-long dependence on fossil fuel as a major source of energy has led to global warming, because of the emission of carbon predominantly occurring in the form of carbon dioxide. As a result, there has been a rapid increase in renewable energy to replace fossil fuels. But in order to meet the goal of the Paris climate accord of 2015 which set a 2°C global temperature increase for this century; CO₂ capture and sequestration from the atmosphere is a necessary panacea to the problem posed by global warming because; poorer countries cannot afford renewable energy technologies, Also just like fossil fuel, irreplaceable manufacturing industries like the steel and cement industries are major sources of CO₂ to the atmosphere. Capturing the carbon dioxide generated by these process is the best procedure to meet carbon neutrality required to save the environment from exceeding the carbon budget for the century. So, in a quest to protect the environment and make it safe for the next generation I have decided to specialize and research in Carbon Capture and Sequestration; to develop better-capturing process, likewise developing more adapted separation techniques for removing CO₂.
4. My interest in alternative energy solutions began after I lost a close friend, xxx by flue gas poisoning some years ago. A 0.9KVA generator exhaust discharged fumes, suffocating him in his sleep. His death was one of 238 other deaths, from flue gas poisoning, and fire outbreaks from faulty generators recorded in the country in year 2008 alone. These occurrences were troublesome, and pushed me to start thinking of possible ways to improve the insufficient power supply - which induced widespread purchase of gasoline generators. My subsequent interest in alternative energy made me participate in energy technology solutions workshops, engage in practical work involving production of agricultural briquettes from food waste, and generation of bio-methane from wastewater. To advance the field and push current systems closer to commercialization, my aspiration is to engage in cutting edge bioenergy research as I pursue a doctoral degree in chemical engineering.
5. Growing up in Nigeria, a nation with total grid capacity of about 4000 MW for a population of 170 million, I experienced, first hand, the ill effects of erratic and highly insufficient power supply on daily life; from education to businesses. "Burning the midnight oil" literally, by utilizing kerosene lamps and candles was a familiar everyday task for me as electrical energy seemed a rarely attainable luxury. As an electrical engineering student at xxx, Nigeria's most prestigious and foremost research University, I sought to investigate solutions to nation's energy woes among other problems, building upon and applying knowledge gained from

several areas; from computational intelligence and communications to the design of embedded systems. I started with simple questions; “how can consumers save on electricity cost and consumption?”, “how can smart energy systems and storage devices be designed to meet the electricity needs of my local community?” Investigating each question opened up even more interesting questions on the complexities in the design and construction of the cyber physical infrastructure needed to achieve these objectives. It is this exposure to research and the fascination of multifaceted big idea questions that have helped crystallize my interest in an advanced research PhD program in electrical engineering at xxx.

Medicine

1. Pharmacology was my choice for college when I concluded high school due to my interest in health issues because it proffers solutions to health conditions through research in drug development. In my last year of college, I learnt about substance abuse in my Psychopharmacology class, and I saw the havoc it wrecked even to a few college students. The number still stalls high and calls for concern - especially amongst the youth.

My enthusiasm for health and zest to learn saw me through volunteering as a research assistant during the Ebola virus outbreak in Nigeria in 2014 with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Lagos, to contribute to the government's effort to curtail its spread swiftly. I worked with a team of other volunteers on the field to assess communities' knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding the virus through interviews and questionnaires after using a multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents. From the research, I became aware of how population surge and urbanization facilitated an increase in the risk of disease transmission and other health crises with no commensurate plans to improve population health. This sparked my interest in helping the broader population to attain a good quality of health.

Sciences

1. I loved going to the beach as a child. Unfortunately, I couldn't go as often as I would have liked, because my family lived quite far from it. So, when we moved into an apartment proximate to the Lagos lagoon, the largest lagoon in Nigeria, six years ago, I could hardly contain my excitement. I couldn't wait to go on long strolls on the water's edge with my sisters, frolic in the water and just enjoy the beautiful gift of nature. Alas, my excitement was short-lived. My first time at the lagoon was quite disappointing. It was a far cry from the clear, clean water I anticipated. The water surface was marred with solid wastes such as empty cans of food and pesticide sprays and used car tires. The smell of feces and other offensive odors emanated from the water. In my naïveté, I chose to believe that over time, someone – probably the government would take action to alleviate the water pollution issues. I didn't think I could do anything about it. But I would learn over time that this was within my ability to change.
2. Growing up in the suburbs of Lagos, a dirty environment was seen as a norm. From the emissions from cars due to the high usage of leaded petroleum to the noise and fumes from dc generators not to mention improper household sewage disposal. We carried out our daily activities in these conditions which were unfit not just for healthy living but also for environmental sustainability. Although these were all anthropogenic in nature with only a few resulting from natural sources of pollution. It is a major concern for many of us living in the region.

Due to the exploration of oil in the southern region of Nigeria, occupants of these locations have found themselves being deprived of a source of livelihood due to oil spillage which has rendered the vegetation futile. Although there are environmental policies in place to tackle some of these challenges, there has been little or no change towards having a less polluted environment since these policies are not being properly implemented. This has led to the water crisis in this region with over 15 million people lacking access to potable water. This problem of clean water is not limited to Nigeria alone but also Sub-Saharan Africa where over 120 million people do not have access to clean water and have to rely on surface water to carry out their various activities. Some organizations such as The Water Project have tried helping out in these situations but there is still much work to be done to solve this crisis. I believe eradicating this problem requires a collective effort from all spheres of the society and I intend to contribute my quota by engaging in research that will tackle these challenges head-on.

3. As global population growth is increasing drastically, coupled with continuing economic development, additional energy will be required to sustain life. Fossil fuels are expected to meet more than 50% of primary energy demand by the middle of the century, as the energy contribution made by renewable energy will not suffice. So, oil and gas will remain a substantial part of the global energy mix for decades to come. The demands for cleaner forms of energy in the near-term (even the most optimistic predictions show clean renewable energy will only be able to supply about 15% of the world needs by 2050) have led to advances in the development of more constraints on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The colossal contribution to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, set to double or triple the current 85 million tons of CO₂ local emission value per year. The response to this demand by industry has been a rapid increase in research and development in the area of subsurface geologic sequestration of the CO₂ emissions. Carbon dioxide capture and storage involves the capture, compression, and transport of CO₂ to geologically favorable areas, where it is injected into porous rock more than one kilometer underground for permanent storage. The shift from traditional petroleum production to enhanced oil recovery and carbon sequestration has introduced new questions and challenges for science. Solving these challenges is a long term responsibility I will like to shoulder and a good starting point would be to carry out cutting-edge research on methods for monitoring stored CO₂ in the subsurface, find better methods for geologic storing of emissions, and reduce the leakage of sequestered CO₂.
4. I write to inform you of my interest in obtaining a Doctorate degree in Applied Mathematics in XXX. Motivated by a great desire to see the big picture of Mathematics, I have pursued math seriously since high school. As a top institution in research and education, UNCC offers me the ideal environment to continue my studies as a PhD student. Math research and tutoring experience give me confidence that I will thrive in UNCC's rigorous academics.
5. My journey into the field of Soil Science began from my childhood fantasy. Enthralled by the diversity of soils in Nigeria as I travelled by road with my family on long trips from the western to the eastern part of Nigeria for holidays, I was astounded at the beauty and vagaries of one of the earths' most amazing features. On exposure to the myriad of agricultural and environmental courses in high school and with the awareness of the steady rise in depleting soil resources, soil fertility problems, etc., it followed naturally that I should be part of the solution to these problems in order to salvage this enchanting natural resource. As one with

the task of seeking solutions to real life problems, I have always wanted to be part of a result-oriented and focused research team working in the area of Soil Science and Conservation. This which has been my mantra had prompted my post high school decision to study Soil Science at XXX, even when it is not exploited course of study in my country - Nigeria. It is this passion of mine for Soil Science and research in this field of study that is still pushing me into exploring the advanced PhD research program in Soil Science at XXX.

From these sample introductions, it is clear that they all have one thing in common: they clearly introduced a problem statement and how it shaped their decision to take on their new path. They engaged the reader's mind with quotes, personalized stories, history, and current events.

Body

This where you talk specifically about your experiences, academic background, and extracurriculars, clearly stating how they help in furthering your goal and what you hope to achieve from your program. Be intentional about what you write, as every sentence should have a purpose of connecting to your overall outlook. Try answering the following questions:

- What kind of experience do you have in your field of interest
- Are they all still relevant to this degree
- What additional skills will this degree give you
- How does this program help further your broad goal
- What unique characteristics have your experiences shaped in you
- Are you interested in a particular area of specialization or lab
- What useful activities have you engaged in outside of your classroom
- Overall, how do you hope to contribute to the program

Conclusion

A strong concluding statement should reaffirm your interest and clearly state what you want. Try not to sound arrogant. Be concise and thankful. See samples below

Arts and Humanities

1. In the future, I expect to bring my PhD research to bear on educational policy in Nigeria by straddling the worlds of academia and public service. Although I love teaching, speaking and the thrill of unexpected insights from research, I am desirous to spark a transformation of educational policy in Nigeria because education is our last hope for economic recovery. I consider it a privilege to apply to the best social psychology department in the world and earnestly look forward to working with you.

Engineering

1. Upon completing my Ph.D. in chemical engineering, I aspire to devote my life to research and hopefully commercialize the technology I develop within laboratories to reach the broader society and significantly improve the energy situation in my country, Nigeria. I also expect to pass along the body of knowledge that I would be accumulating to the upcoming generation thereby creating a chain effect in this regard to the benefit of mankind.

Thank you for taking time to read my application.

Medicine

1. As an individual, I am motivated, perseverant, and enthusiastic about success. I am aware that graduate school requires a strong determination, focus, right attitude, and mindset for innovation and execution of tasks, which are attributes that I possess. I am confident that I will be that worthy alumnus who can impact on the health of many. Moreover, my few years of work experience in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry have given me exposure to inter-relationship and team spirit with individuals of different cultural backgrounds. With these, I hope to contribute to XXX on campus and in the community through active participation in programs and engagements

Sciences

1. I actively conceive that my portfolio with my experience, and the opportunity to contribute to the marine research at this esteemed university would be a mutually worthwhile experience as I anticipate vigorously contributing to the investigation of the various problems associated with physical limnology. As an international student, I hope to share my cultural diversity while experiencing the same. I have the ability, lined with a determination to master intricate subjects, the desire to contribute meaningfully to the academic community, and a passion for excellence that completing a MS program in physics will demand. I believe my selection for this graduate program will be of great value, and I would be honored to be a part of your program.

Note: The sample essays used were not typo or grammar edited to help readers understand that they don't have to be extremely perfect in order to have a good statement.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Make sure all components of your statement connect and tell a compelling story.
- Provide practical examples that demonstrate your skills, rather than blatantly stating them. For example, instead of saying “I am creative and very intelligent”, present a situation that reflects your creativity and intelligence.
- Quantify data in your story by ensuring that it has numbers affiliated to measurable quantities rather than making the reader speculate. This shows the reader that it is worth their time since you have spent time doing your research. For example, instead of “Growing up in Nigeria, a nation with a large population and small energy capacity...” say “Growing up in Nigeria, a nation with a total grid capacity of about 4000 MW for a population of 170 million”

- Be precise, avoid redundancies, and be specific.
- Do not plagiarize or excessively aggrandize your achievements. Professors can sense hogwash from a mile. Do not cook up stories! Everyone has a unique story, find yours!
- Maintain a formal narrative.
- Perform extensive research on your department and schools of interest. Tailor each application to the specific needs of the department and/or school you're applying to.
- Most importantly: Get review help from experienced individuals and colleagues. Edit, Edit and keep editing till you submit!

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