Writing an Effective Research Statement

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Research Statements I

- **Picture** of you as a scientist
  - Your accomplishments and plans
  - Your approach
  - Context for your research
    - The significance of your work

- Sense of your potential - How likely are you to be successful in the new setting

- Tone and appearance
Research Statements II

It is expected that you will have begun to think coherently about research beyond your dissertation.

- The research statement tells
  - what you have been doing recently and currently,
  - in what direction you hope to go
  - how your research contributes to your field

- Along with your c.v., cover letter and letters of recommendation, it helps hiring committees assess your
  - areas of specialty
  - potential to get grants
  - academic ability
  - compatibility with the department or school

From Career Services, University of Pennsylvania
Undergraduate-only department (one perspective)

- Your potential
  - Ideas/plans for work beyond the PhD
  - Ideas/plans for working with undergraduate research students
  - If high-tech, indication that you understand departmental constraints and have a plan in mind
  - What you might do locally (especially regarding undergraduate research)
  - Ability to get some external funding (possibly)
Graduate program (one perspective)

- Your potential
  - Ideas/plan for work beyond the PhD
  - Is research cutting edge?
  - Ability (ideally, demonstrated) to get external funding; potential funding sources
  - Fit of potential collaborations internally and strength of external collaborations
  - Facilities/equipment needs
Suggestions: Content

- Write clearly and concisely.
- What excites you about your research?
- Where appropriate, acknowledge the work of others.
- Use language that shows you’ve begun to think of yourself as an independent researcher.
- If you have identified funding organizations likely to support your research, indicate that.

From Career Services, University of Pennsylvania
Suggestions: Format

- Use heading (and subheadings), bullets, whitespace.
- Avoid page-long paragraphs.
- Length of 1-2 pages, 3 pages at most.
- Get feedback.
- Proofread.

From Career Services, University of Pennsylvania
Other Points

- Different audience → different statements
- Your research statement needs to reflect YOU
- Get others to critically review your statement (content, tone, appearance)
- Everyone’s will be different.
Some Starter Questions

- Research Accomplishments
  - Description of program (what are you goals, questions, ...?)
  - What are your major accomplishments (to the field, resulting publications)?
  - Why is your research cutting edge? Significant?
  - What methods, approaches, equipment do you use?
Some Starter Questions

- Vision of your research program
  - Description of program (goals, questions, …)
  - Where do you want your research program to be in the next 5 years, next 20 years?
  - Why is it topical? Cutting edge? Significant?
  - Why are you excited about it?
  - How does your research integrate with your teaching?
  - What will your research program and group (i.e. students) look like in the future?
  - Potential collaborators?
  - Other points: funding, facilities/equipment