

The following personal statement was written by a fourth-year DUSOM medical student who was applying to residency programs. Thus, her statement is likely more nuanced than the statement you will produce for admissions committee members. I use this statement as an exemplar because it is strong and because in the past, students have not copied it. Carefully analyze the statement's structure and content, so you can learn the genre's conventions. We do not expect your content to read as this statement reads for you have not completed medical school and thus have not acquired the type of knowledge, skills, and experiences the writer has acquired. However, we are confident that you will compose a persuasive statement that depicts your characteristics and your passion for a career in the health professions. (I received written consent to use of the statement for educational purposes.) Good luck! —Dr. Faulkner-Springfield

"I was trafficked here from Columbia. I haven't seen a doctor in a while and I know I should," Sara replied as she peered at her shoes. Although I had interviewed nine other women at the domestic violence shelter, the gravity of Sara's experiences weighed on me. To conceptualize what she and the other women had gone through was impossible; nonetheless, I wanted to create a way for them to receive quality healthcare, the type of care I aspired to offer women. Sara's words became the impetus that grounded my design and implementation of a comprehensive health referral system for women.

For three months, I reached out to approximately ten local nonprofit organizations. Many email messages and telephone calls went unanswered. It quickly became clear that my plan was not going to be an easy endeavor. Despite my initial obstacles, I was relentless in my advocacy particularly during my negotiations with the three organizations that eventually formed the referral system. The program featured three main components: transportation vouchers, identification records, and healthcare providers. The vouchers and the identification cards created access to healthcare providers who recognized the complexity of the women's situations and were sensitive to their unique needs. The shelter's social workers were trained to implement the referral system and to solve problems in collaboration with each organization's key personnel. This process of building a referral system based on the expressed needs of women filled me with purpose: I had spearheaded an initiative that transformed the lives of women.

My interest in serving women morphed into a dedication to women's health. Rotating through a free women's clinic confirmed that women's health through obstetrics and gynecology was the career path for me. An OB/GYN attending and I gave annual well-woman examinations and ordered free mammography through the local health department. My first patient, Leah, was a woman who immigrated to the United States after fleeing a conflict in her home country. She had not had a pap smear in ten years and was unsure of the reason for the examination. Hence, I addressed the underlying causes of cervical cancer, the purpose of the pap smear, and her options.

"If at any point during the exam, you feel uncomfortable and do not want to complete it, the attending and I will stop," I assured her.

We completed the pap smear thoroughly explaining each part of the procedure. The education and assurance I offered Leah helped us form a partnership. Through this relationship, we successfully assessed Leah's cervical cancer risk. My work with Leah and other patients at the free women's clinic was a highlight of my clinical year. I was touched by their stories and felt a sense of purpose in knowing I had become a provider of quality healthcare.

My experiences at the shelter fed my passion for women's health, and my clinical experiences in obstetrics and gynecology confirmed how I would channel that passion within medicine. I look forward to expanding my evidence-based knowledge and technical skills in obstetrics and gynecology so I may ultimately provide women with quality healthcare irrespective of their social standing.

Commented [SF1]: The writer attempts to appeal to her audience's sense of logic and emotions by beginning her statement with her patients' words. If you began your statement with someone else's words, ensure that the words are more powerful than any words you can articulate and that you contextualize them. Otherwise, begin your statement with your own words. Finally, the personal statement calls on writers to focus on logic and ethos more than they focus on pathos or emotions. In other words, appeal to your audience's sense of logic and demonstrate your character and credibility.

Commented [SF2]: This sentence expresses the writer's motivation to become a doctor, a gynecologist, and the reason the writer is applying to a residency program.

Commented [SF3]: The writer composed a thesis statement that she supports in her body paragraphs. This thesis statement and the entire concrete anecdote reveal the writer's purpose for writing the personal statement. The thesis is grounded in the writer's academic and professional experiences.

Commented [SF4]: The writer could have strengthened this topic sentence (it is weak). A topic sentence should introduce the content of its paragraph.

Commented [SF5]: This paragraph supports the writer's thesis by describing how she designed and implemented a comprehensive health referral system for women. The writer demonstrates her uniqueness, diligence, ingenuity, and dedication without using those adjectives. Additionally, the writer uses vivid and concrete language. Equally important, the writer shows that she is a problem solver, and "shows" is the operative term here.

Commented [SF6]: This is a strong topic sentence (stylistically), and it is strong because the writer supported it (rhetorically). The topic sentence serves another function: it is a strong transition.

Commented [SF7]: In this paragraph, the writer transitioned to an experience that spawned from the previous experience. She uses a specific example to support her assertion that she is dedicated to women's health. The writer demonstrates her understanding of medicine and establishes her credentials (ethos) that are related to the field of medicine. In this sense, she establishes her credibility as well.

Commented [SF8]: To reveal her personality and to further validate her credibility, the writer smoothly weaves her own voice into her story. Do not overload your statement with quotations (monologues or dialogues).

Commented [SF9]: The writer is reflecting and assessing her work. She further demonstrates her understanding of medicine and the doctor-patient relationship.

Commented [SF10]: In a two-sentence conclusion, the writer summarizes her experiences and their consequences. She reflects on her experiences with professional maturity (growth and confidence) and validates her career as an OBGYN (forward looking).