WRITING THE RESEARCH STATEMENT

SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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SESSION OVERVIEW

- Defining the Research Statement
- Best Practices
- Samples
Additional information about Butler University may be found at https://www.butler.edu/.

Butler University is a comprehensive, liberal arts-based institution with over 4,400 students, located in a residential area of Indianapolis.

Candidates should submit the following to CHsearch@butler.edu

- CV
- Statement of teaching philosophy
- Statement of research interests and
- Three (3) letters of recommendation

Consideration will begin on September 15, 2016 and will continue until the position is filled.

Butler University is committed to enhancing the diversity of the student body and our faculty and staff. In addition, hiring and other employment-related decisions are made on the basis of an individual’s qualifications, past experience, overall performance and other employment-related criteria. It is the policy of the University to provide equal opportunities for employment and advancement for all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, religion, color, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other legally-protected category.
A rose by any other name:
- Statement of Research Interests
- Research Plan
- Statement of Research Accomplishments

Common component of academic job applications

Disciplines vary in terms of content: always do your research!

Note that this is just ONE part of an application packet for an academic job.
RESEARCH STATEMENTS TYPICALLY DISCUSS:

- Published research and the future direction of your research;
- The contribution of your research to your field;
- Potential research and industrial collaborations;
- Funding history and potential;
- Requirements for laboratory space and equipment (and other needed support).
WHY DO HIRING COMMITTEES CARE?

- Helps distinguish your research goals and qualifications from your chair/committee.
- Gives the committee a sense of your research potential and how it will fit with the department.
- Establishes research support needs and expectations.
FORMAT

- Usually 1-3 pages.**
- NOT just one long narrative; break the sections with headers and subheadings.
- Use bullet points.
- Fonts and margins should be easily readable and match other parts of the application packet.

**Always ask to see an example from a faculty member in your department.
KEY QUESTIONS/CONTENT:

- What are the main themes that you hope to tackle with your research? (Typically this statement addresses the next five years.)
  - How are these topics related to each other?
  - Why does the field care about these topics?
  - What specific skills do you possess that helps you address these topics?
- Discuss the future direction of your research.
- Include a final summary paragraph the provides an overall impression of your research. (Some label this section “Executive Summary.”)
Search committees include faculty from outside your specific field. Include technical discussions but avoid jargon.

This is YOUR statement: first person “I” is appropriate.

Write as a summary and then provide additional detail in your job talk.

Proofread everything! Have someone from your field and/or department read it for clarity and correctness.
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Don’t be afraid to share your enthusiasm for your research. What excites you about your research?
- BUT this is about you as a researcher, not your life story!
- Include anything that might set your application apart from others: publication in leading journals, early research funding, awards, other recognition of your work.
List major findings, outcomes, and implications. Include preliminary results and how you plan to build future research endeavors.

Remember this is both a statement of what you have DONE and a forward document of what you plan TO DO.
Research statements always include a forward look at your research agenda.

- What specific goals do you have for the next 3-5 years?
- What major problems do you plan to tackle? Why are these relevant for your field?
- If you have received past funding, be sure to mention these.
- Provide some guidance about who would fund this research in the future.
While you may choose to not include this in your statement, you should be prepared to discuss or provide this information during your interview:

- Research plans and detailed budget needs
- Greater details about your research goals
- Specific details and budget requirements for laboratory space, graduate assistants, and other research support.
- Remember: this may need to vary depending on the institution. Be honest but realistic!
PLANNING BEYOND THE RESEARCH STATEMENT: ASKING FOR SUPPORT

- Either at the job interview or in the research statement:
  - Prioritize your list of needs. Identify those items you have to have versus those that would be nice.
  - Can you identify any potential collaborators across the department or university?
  - What existing campus resources can you incorporate into your research?
  - Don’t forget about student researchers: undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs.
Be able to describe your experience with the proposal and submission process:

- What roles have you held? Be specific.
- Do you have any experience with budget preparation?
- Do you have any relationships with other funding sources (corporations, think tanks, foundations)?
COMMON MISTAKES

- Overly ambitious or broad proposals.
- Lack of a clear direction.
- Inability to relate the relevance of the research to societal problems or disciplinary needs.
- Poor fit with the needs and facilities of the department or position. (This is why you are probably going to have more than one statement!)
SAMPLE STATEMENTS

- Duke Career Center:
  - https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/graduate-students/academic-career-preparation/research-statement

- University of California, San Francisco Office of Career and Professional Development
  - https://career.ucsf.edu/grad-students-postdocs/career-planning/academic-jobs/applying/academic-samples

- University of Pennsylvania

QUESTIONS?

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Your feedback on this session is greatly appreciated!