

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Law

It was not until my senior year at Haverford that I decided to apply to law school. Once I made my decision I quickly became excited by it and the possibilities it opened up.

In pursuing a career in law I can follow an interest I have had since I was a boy—the environment. I was able to further my knowledge of the environment at Haverford College. As a history major with an environmental studies minor, I profited from classes in everything from specific, local environmental problems to international environmental policy. Not only did I learn more about the environment, I learned more about what I could do to protect and preserve it. I was particularly interested in classes on policy and law formation, both domestic and international.

During one of my terms off I worked as a research intern at the Environmental Institute, a non-profit research group located in Washington, DC. There I saw that getting a law degree would open doors to jobs where I could make an impact in environmental protection and policy. At EI I worked under lawyers who were working directly with different groups from around the world to solve their specific environmental problems, who worked to create environmental laws and standards in newly developing Eastern European governments. Others worked with small environmental groups in the U.S. to preserve specific ecosystems through legislation. This is the type of work that I would love to do. With my social science background this is the area where I can make the most difference. Environmental regulation involves complex issues, and I have learned that there are no quick or easy answers to these issues. I want to be able to work these problems out.

I want to go into law because I see that the law provides rules by which people can resolve differences on the basis of reason, fairness and predictability rather than brute strength or guile, and because it will enable me to work for the environment.

Essay for Application to Law School

Essays order: Chronological Development of interest in Environmental Law, focusing on two experiences—at college and during a research internship

Paragraph 1

It was not until my senior year at Haverford that I decided to apply to law school. Once I made my decision, I quickly became excited about it and the possibilities it opened up.

Paragraph 2

In pursuing a career in law, I can follow an interest I have had since I was a boy—the environment. I was able to further my knowledge of the environment at Haverford College. *(This section raises the reader's expectation that more will be said about the writer's boyhood in the environment)*

As a history major with an environmental studies minor, I profited from classes in everything from local environment problems to international environmental policy.

Not only did I learn more about the environment, I learned more about what I could do to protect and preserve it.

I was particularly interested in classes on policy and law formation, both domestic & international.

Paragraph 3

During one of my terms off, I worked as a research intern at the Environmental Institute... There I saw that getting a law degree would open doors to jobs where I could make an impact in environmental protection and policy.

At EI I worked under lawyers working directly with different groups to solve specific environmental problems, who worked to create environmental laws and standards in newly developing Eastern European governments.

This is the type of work I love to do

With my social science background this is the area where I can make the most difference.

(important to mention more about social science background?)

Environmental regulation involves complex issues, and I have learned that there are no quick or easy answers to these issues.

I want to be able to work these problems out.

Paragraph 4

I want to go to law school because I see that the law provides rules by which people can resolve differences on the basis of reason, fairness and predictability rather than brute strength or guile, and because it will enable me to work for the environment. *(no awareness shown of the specific graduate program to which he is applying.)*

Urban Planning

I graduated from Wellesley College five years ago with a B.A. cum laude in sociology. After graduation I worked as an assistant to an executive at a publishing firm. The position was interesting and I did a lot of problem solving for my employer, but it did not seem as if it would lead to anything. I was a glorified secretary, and I wanted to do something more. Last year I went to Perth, Australia, a country I had always wanted to visit. I found the air just as clear and the spaces just as wide open as I had anticipated.

For some time I have realized that I wanted a new career. I have put much thought into this and have decided to apply to the program in urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I feel that the computer skills I acquired at school and work, along with the statistics and demography I learned in sociology, will be a great help in urban planning.

I see urban planning as a discipline that achieves beautiful results and makes communities better places to live. The planner deals with many groups of people with differing values, and tries to attend to their interests, while also serving the community as a whole and preserving the land and the countryside.

I've traveled to the western states several times. I took a year off from college between my sophomore and junior years and worked in Los Angeles as a sales clerk in a photo shop and

also was a volunteer at the Museum of Contemporary Art. I did a lot of walking around the city and thought about the lives of the people I saw on the streets. At the end of the year I realized I did want to get my bachelor's degree, so I returned to Wellesley for my last two years. As my grades show, I worked much harder during my junior and senior years. I also spent several months in France before college, living with a French family and learning to speak French.

When I have traveled I've seen how our culture has gone awry, in the smog haze, the strip malls, and the desert towns that look like scabs. I sometimes think we are coming close to destroying our world. I don't think that our rapaciousness makes us happy. It's impossible to believe that the commuters choking the freeways want to be there.

I think it's inertia and the lack of planning that keeps us stumbling along the same paths. I see urban planning as a possibility for change, a discipline that uses the knowledge we have to strive towards a new relationship with each other and with the earth.

My goal is a job working on urban and community planning in the public sector or in private consulting. I hope to work to help to create a more sustainable urban environment. The University of Illinois is particularly attractive to me, not only because of your program, but because of the location and your department's involvement within the region. I like the fact that your faculty members are engaged in research and public service and I look forward to taking courses with them in environmental studies, community development and transportation and preservation planning. The Midwest is my home and I see its unique aspects. It combines big, sprawling cities like Chicago with small towns amid beautiful fertile country. I want to study in the environment where I will work. Please consider me as a candidate.

Essay for application to graduate school in Urban Planning

Essay's order: Chronological narrative of experiences leading to interest in a career in Urban Planning (*Should the writer have led off each paragraph with points about her interest in Urban Planning rather than simply narrating the successive stages of her story?*)

Paragraph 1

I graduated from Wellesley College five years ago with a B.A. cum Laude in Sociology. After graduation, I worked as an assistant to an executive publishing firm. The position was interesting and I did a lot of problem solving for my employer, but it did not seem as if it would lead to anything. I was a glorified secretary, and I wanted to do something more. Last year I went to Perth, Australia, a country I had always wanted to visit. I found the air just as clear and the spaces just as wide open as I had anticipated. (*Should the writer indicate more directly her overall focus on a career in Urban Planning in this opening paragraph? It may take the reader the whole essay/outline to decide.*)

Paragraph 2

For some time I have realized that I wanted a new career. I have put much thought into this and have decided to apply to the program in urban and regional planning at the Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. (*Does this paragraph contain the unifying focus for this personal statement?*)

I feel that the computer skills I acquired at school and work, along with the statistics and demography I learned in sociology, will be a great help in urban planning.

Paragraph 3

I see urban planning as a discipline that achieves beautiful results and makes communities better places to live.

The planner deals with many groups of people with differing values, and tries to attend to their interests while also serving the community and preserving the land.

Paragraph 4

I've traveled to the western states several times. *(The writer here risks not clearly connecting this paragraph to the interest in urban planning that is to unify the essay. She takes a similar risk in the opening paragraph, whether knowingly or unknowingly.)*

I took a year off from college and worked in Los Angeles as a sales clerk in a photo shop and volunteered at a museum.

I did a lot of walking around the city and thought about the lives of the people I saw on the streets.

At the end of the year, I realized I did want my B.A., so I returned to Wellesley.

As my grades show, I worked much harder during my last two years.

(This section provides a tacit explanation of an irregularity in her record.)

I have also spent several months in France before leaving for college, living with a French family and learning to speak French.

Paragraph 5

When I have traveled, I've seen how our culture has gone awry, in the smog haze, the strip malls, and the desert towns that look like scabs.

I sometimes think we are coming close to destroying our world.

I don't think that our rapaciousness makes us happy.

It's impossible to believe that commuters choking the freeways want to be there.

Paragraph 6

I think its inertia and the lack of planning that keeps us stumbling along the same paths

I see urban planning as a possibility for change, a discipline that uses the knowledge we have to strive towards a new relationship with each other and with the earth

Paragraph 7

My goal is a job working on urban and community planning in the public sector or in private consulting.

I hope to work to help to create a more sustainable urban environment.

The University of Illinois is particularly attractive to me, not only because of your program but because of the location and your department's involvement within the region

I like the fact that your faculty members are engaged in research and public service, and I look forward to taking courses with them in environmental studies, community development and transportation and preservation planning.

The Midwest is my home, and I see its unique aspects.

It combines big, sprawling cities like Chicago with small towns amid beautiful fertile country.

I want to study in the environment where I will work.

Please consider me as a candidate.

(The essays outlined above were printed in *The Grad School Handbook* by Jerrard & Jerrard, Chapter 6)