



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW MEXICO®

Statement of Purpose Boot Camp:

A MODEL FOR COACHING SCHOLARS TO WRITE
EFFECTIVE ADMISSIONS ESSAYS

PRESENTED BY UNM MCNAIR STAFF

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UNM McNair & ROP (A)

- 1 of 4 universities that is both an HSI and Carnegie Very High Research Activity
- Flagship university in NM: graduate school, schools of architecture, law, medicine, and pharmacy
- Enrollment #s: Total headcount is 24,393/Undergraduate 17,321
- Undergraduate Ethnicity: Hisp. 48.79%, Native Am. 5.55, Asian 3.99, African Am. 2.41%, White 31.96
- Over 50% of undergraduates are Pell eligible
- Freshmen self reporting first generation in 2016 was 47%
- Commuter School

UNM McNair & ROP (B)

- Housed in Student Affairs with other TRIO Programs & state funded programs with similar target populations
- Funded to serve 28 and at least 50% STEM
- Typical participant starts in our program the fall of their junior year
- Academic year: bi-weekly advisement & monthly seminars on Saturdays from 8-noon
- Intensive Summer Research Internship at UNM June/July--all research due in Aug.

Statement of Purpose Boot Camp

- Statement of purpose, personal statement, letter of intent, etc
- Need for boot camp--- Scholars were overwhelmed when trying to create a draft of an admissions essay.
- Getting started is sometimes the hardest task
- Break down essay exercise in chunks based on what most admissions essays require:
 - Personal Background/interest in field of study
 - Qualifications for graduate study
 - Fit to program
- What is best way to deliver this material?

Boot Camp Format

- 3 or 4 days – 2 to 3 hours/day during summer research internship in July
- Day 1: Personal Background/interest in field of study
- Day 2: Qualifications for graduate study
- Day 3: Fit to program
- Presentation, Handouts, Brainstorming exercises, Draft paragraph

Day 1: Background

- Brainstorming Exercises:
 - Who are you? What makes you unique? Are you first-generation, low income, underrepresented? Where did you grow up?
 - Consider what events in your personal life contributed to your academic interests (challenges?)
 - Why are you choosing to pursue graduate school in your chosen field?
- Group sharing (voluntary)
- Write a paragraph or more while in classroom
- Email essay to staff before the Day 2 of boot camp

Day 2: Qualifications

- Why are you qualified for graduate school?
- Brainstorming Exercises:
 - List and describe research experiences including mentors, etc
 - What skills did you develop while doing research? Did you publish or present research?
 - Describe non-research experiences that qualifies you for grad study (McNair)
- Group sharing (voluntary)
- Write a paragraph or more while in classroom
- Email essay to staff before the Day 3 of boot camp



Day 3: Fit to Program

- Equally or more important than Background and Qualifications but often overlooked. Scholars will have had to research a program thoroughly to do this portion well
- Brainstorming Exercises:
 - Describe your specific research interests
 - What school and department/program are you applying to? Identify at least two professors in that department whose research appeals to you
 - find non-faculty aspects of the school that make it appealing (institutes, geography, etc)
- Group sharing (voluntary)
- Write a paragraph or more while in classroom
- Email essay to staff before the Day 4 of boot camp

Day 4: Putting it all together!

- Day 4 is optional but desirable if time permits
- Group sharing (voluntary)
- Writing Exercise: Time set aside in classroom to try to merge the 3 parts of the essay into one coherent essay.
 - Emphasize that we are **not shooting for perfection**---write as much as possible
- Email rough draft of essay within a couple of days

Questions?

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