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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