

Theresa M. Duello, PhD

Beginning outline for grad school essay -

Great introduction

What you want is to talk about something in a way that makes the reader want to keep reading. It may be funny, sad, etc. Maybe something amazing that first got you interested in science/research.

Educational background

Fortunate to pursue a _____ degree at _____ University. (This is a way to 'name drop' to let the committee know where you did your education.)

Next you want to talk about your research.

I conducted research with Dr. Theresa Duello in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison whose work focuses on obstetrical risks associated with low birth weight.

What you did

What you found

Why it is important

If you have had many research experiences, it is better to talk about two or three well, instead of more superficially. "I have had the benefit of many research opportunities, only two of which I will discuss here."

Then you were 'honored' to be accepted into the RISE/MARC/IMSDD/LSAMP/PREP/Bridges program where you benefited from seminars, workshops, travel, etc. (Not just a way to get a stipend. Do not drizzle the benefits throughout the entire essay.)

The point in this section is to talk about your experiences in a way that convinces the admissions committee that you have a clear, real, and deep understanding of what being a career in research entails. (If you do not convince them, they will be concerned that you will get to grad school, not like it, drop out, etc.)

So the issue is not just 'I really want to help people'. Or 'Dr. Smith was really nice'. Nor do you do not want to lecture PhDs on what it takes to be a scientist. Nor do you want to just give the committee your conclusions and expect them to believe you. Data, data, data.

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Instead you want to give enough detail to let them know what you learned in a way that demonstrates that you understand the hard work, commitment, and joys of a career in research. (Also, delayed gratification. 😊)

Great concluding paragraph –

You are applying to this program given its emphasis on (This is where you flatter us.)

You are particularly interested in the work of Dr. Smith on _____, Dr. Jones on _____, and Dr. Duello on _____.

Then what you want to do when you complete your PhD. (Don't just say your goal is to get admitted or get through.)

Maybe what you see yourself doing 5 years out. It is okay to think BIG. If you want to head the NIH or CDC, say so.

Also a good place to add that you plan to be a role model for other youth to become scientists.

All the best,

Dr. Duello