

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDELINES

In a 5-7 page typed, double-spaced statement, please respond to the following questions/ issues. Be as specific as possible. In making your statement, please use the same headings that appear below.

Purpose of social work & choice of social work as a profession.

Explain your understanding of the purpose and function of social work in contemporary society. Why have you decided to pursue social work as a profession? With which populations or groups of people would you prefer to work? With which populations or groups of people would you least like to work? Briefly explain your preferences.

Career goals.

What motivates your decision to attend graduate school at this time? Indicate your career goals immediately following graduation, and 5-7 years following graduation.

Choice of the University of Southern Mississippi School of Social Work.

Explain why you have chosen to apply to the USM School of Social Work in particular. What attracted you to our program? What do you hope to gain from the program?

Significant personal experiences.

Identify and discuss personal life experiences and factors – for example, strengths and stressors in family, work and community experiences – that have been important in shaping your character, outlook, and life choices. How have these experiences and factors influenced your choice of social work as a profession? If there are any discrepancies in your GPA, this is the place to plea your case to the admissions committee. This is the section of the personal statement to include any other information that you would like to be available to us as we evaluate your application.

Professional or volunteer helping experiences.

Describe and discuss any paid or volunteer experiences you have had working in social service agencies. What have these experiences meant to you emotionally? What did you learn from them? If possible, describe an incident or situation in which you needed to extend yourself to people different than you in some significant way.

Understanding of poverty.

Describe the poorest person or family that you know. Indicate your understanding of the reasons for this poverty. In your estimation, what would have to change for them to escape poverty permanently?

Values.

What values are most important to you personally? What values do you think are central to the professional practice of social work? Do you perceive any conflict between your personal values and those of the profession? If so, how do you plan to resolve this conflict?