Interdisciplinary Research Statements – Verbal and Written

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PhD, American Studies
MA, Women’s Studies
MA, English
BS, Political Science
### Interdisciplinary Madness!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I work in</th>
<th>but get paid by</th>
<th>My Advisor is in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Lab)</td>
<td>(Program)</td>
<td>(Department)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

...but my *real* Advisor is in

| (another Department) | (Research Center) | (Basement of another building) |

Most of my classes are on

| (Stuff I haven't seen since High School) | (Major other than my undergrad's) | (Nowhere) |

...even though my office is in

yet technically, my degree is in

So basically, I belong
By way of reminder...
Every time you describe your research or engage in discussion about your research, you are preparing to write this statement.
What is a Research Statement

A portfolio that summarizes your future research trajectory.

A document included in a job application
Making a persuasive case about the importance of your completed work, and conveying excitement of your future trajectory.

1. Convince the committee you will succeed
2. Describe short- and long-term research goals
3. Show movement into thinking like an independent investigator

Purposes include...
What is a research statement?

- **Summary**
  - Research interests—past, present, future
  - Achievements
  - Current aims
  - Findings

- **Proposal for future directions**
  - Short term and long term goals
  - Resources
  - Potential funding
Why a research statement?

- Benefit to employer or committee
  - Communicates **FOCUS**
    - your interests, contributions, direction
  - Demonstrates **INDEPENDENCE**
    - expertise in a specific area
    - potential to secure funding
    - fit within the department, organization or fellowship

- Benefit to you
  - helps to purpose, clarify ideas, direction

Adapted from Jim Pawelczyk, Ph.D., Noll Laboratory, Department of Kinesiology
Audiences

- Disciplinary—familiar with research
- Interdisciplinary—varying levels of familiarity
- Grants and fellowships
- Academic—teaching, research, combination
- Non-academic—government, industry, consulting, non-profit
Structure

- Background
- Current research
  - What do you hope to solve, discover
  - Importance/relevance
  - Promising lines of inquiry
- Future research
  - Credible, feasible, fits employer needs
  - Short and long-term goals
Style and Formatting

- Clear and concise
- Use headings and subheadings to highlight significant topics
- No more than two pages
- No page-long paragraphs
- Get feedback from peers, senior graduate students, postdocs and mentors
Content

- **FOCUS**
  - Why is your research important
  - What will you do within and beyond the time allotted (fellowship, tenure process, etc.)

- **INDEPENDENCE**
  - Logical progression from past, current, future research
  - Articulates why you are the best person to conduct the research
  - Show innovation—different from past research
Undergraduate-only Departments

- Your potential
  - Ideas/plans for work beyond the PhD
  - Ideas/plans for working with undergraduate researchers
  - Impact – in doing and sharing – from local to global
  - Ability to get some external funding
Graduate Degree-Granting Depts

- Your potential
  - Ideas/plan for work beyond the PhD
  - Is research cutting edge?
  - Ability (ideally, demonstrated) to get external funding; potential funding sources
  - Fit of potential collaborations internally and strength of external collaborations
  - Ability to obtain external funding
  - Facilities/equipment needs
Sticky Messages - SUCCESS

- Simple
- Unexpected
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotions
- Stories
- Savvy Statements
Core Statement
Rule #1: Wait.

Rule #2: Writers fare best when they begin before feeling fully ready. Motivation comes most reliably in the wake of regular involvement.

Rule #3: Impatience blocks writers by associating writing with rushed, incomplete work.

Rule #4: An essential part of instilling an enduring motivation is a regular habit of writing.

Rule #30: The six distinctive acts of resilient writers are: (1) regular, constant practice of adaptive habits connected with writing; (2) clear and realistic plans combined with repeated feedback about progress toward goals; (3) anticipation of blocking points by way of noticing problems, tracing them back to origins; (4) inventing new behaviors to prevent their recurrence; (5) seeing connections for writerly rules to other, broader activities; and (6) occasional flexibility in bending or breaking this and all other rules stated here.
Simplicity isn’t about dumbing down: it’s about prioritizing.
How can we feed the world without destroying it?
If we don't understand learning, then how can we possibly teach?
Examples of research core questions

“Does simple practice improve word recognition in dementia sufferers?”

“Is attachment to deceased’s belongings a factor in complicated grief?”

“How does splicing contribute to molecular symptoms of myotonic dystrophy?”

“How do neurotransmitter transporters change biophysical properties of the synapse?”

“How can we prevent the loss of undergraduate STEM majors?”
Create your core message

- Think about your current research project.
- Distill what you are researching into a single question or statement.
- Try to do this in TEN WORDS OR LESS.
- When you are finished enter this on your worksheet.
Mapping a Bigger Picture
Core + Significance  ➔ Conversation

WHY SHOULD I CARE

ABOUT YOUR NICHE RESEARCH?
Incorporate Significance, and…

- Two audiences – disciplinary / interdisciplinary
- Two reasons per audience – scholar / community
- Two sorts of listeners – in program / affiliated
Create & Rehearse Impromptu Talk

- Key components in examples from SERC
This is What a Librarian Looks Like

challenging the librarian stereotype one post at a time

Home  About  Submission Guidelines  Submit  Archive  RSS

Stories

Roller Derby Librarian

Librarian by day, Bruiser by night, Jan Dawson uses her skills to excel at both. She is one of the leaders of the askON program, which is a chat-based information service that helps students with their research.

A few people from my [MLIS] cohort actually went to a derby game just before we graduated in 2008. We all had “the calling” and went out and bought skates the next day.”

Jan Dawson
askON Librarian

What is askON?

Ask Ontario is a real time chat and information service to connect Ontario residents to librarians across the province. It was launched in January of 2008 to provide help with library services and to foster digital literacy and help Ontarians improve their online research skills. More information can be found at www.askon.ca and help is available Monday - Thursday 11:00am - 8:00pm Friday - Sunday 11:00am - 5:00pm
...a single image
## 1 Page Flyer

### Images

- PowerPoint slides can be an extremely effective way to present visual aids, with emphasis on visual material—that is, material that cannot easily be conveyed with words.
  - By Michael Alley and Kathryn Neely

### Headers

- Simple isn’t about dumbing down. It’s about prioritizing. What’s the core of your message?
  - By Dan and Chip Heath

### Handouts

- Slides are slides. Documents are documents. They aren’t the same thing.
  - By Garr Reynolds

### Here’s why

- Good Copyright and Creative Commons Practices - Presentation Slides, by Nancy Sims
- Understanding Fair Use
  - [https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/fairuse](https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/fairuse)
- Thinking through Fair Use Interactive Tool
  - [https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/fairthoughts](https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/fairthoughts)

### Here’s help on how

- Presentations That Stick, Dan and Chip Heath
- Teaching that Sticks, Dan and Chip Heath
- Slideuments and the Catch -22 of the Conference Presentation, by Garr Reynolds
# Small and Formal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Panel</th>
<th><em>S</em>T<em>A</em>R*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-established Qs</td>
<td>Situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification follow ups</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past / Now / Future</td>
<td>Analysis / Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking semantic space</td>
<td>Result(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* S * T * A * R *
Claudia case - 1

- Educational Background
  - PhD – Feminist Studies, qualitative methodology
  - Ethnic studies expertise; methods linked to literary theory, media studies, historiography, ethnography

- Research Interests
  - Oral History and Midwest Chicanas
  - Media Studies and Cultural Representations
  - Use of Social Technologies in teaching and communities

- Research Experience
  - Dissertation
  - RA assignments
  - Creation of new courses
Claudia case - 2

- Possible Fits
  - History
  - Literature
  - Chican@ Studies
  - Gender / Women’s / Sexuality Studies
  - Cultural Studies

- Unique Characteristics
  - Technology
    - In teaching
    - In research
    - As research
  - Teaching Experience crosses 4 disciplines
  - Work Experience includes educational community organizing
Claudia case - 3

- Positions Applied for
  - History – Comprehensive & Lib Arts; joint appts w/ WmSt
  - Literature – Lib Arts asst prof w/ Chican@ expertise
  - Chican@ Studies – R1 and Lib Arts, asst prof positions
  - Gender, Women’s, Sexuality Studies – all institutional types for asst prof; multiple department teaching expectations but single research & tenure home
  - Ethnic Studies – R1 postdocs, Lib Arts asst prof
  - Variety of postdoctoral posts
Decisions in Writing about Research

Three versions
- for single disciplines, incorporating Chican@ Studies expertise
- Ethnic Studies positions, organizing based on job posting
- Women’s Studies positions, organized based on job posting

Three segments
- Current Research to Planned Next Stages
- Specifics regarding current, on-going, and future ways of working with Students
- Long Term, first setting out a vision to convey research philosophy as linked to student learning and community context, then setting out an agenda for future directions