

## Candidacy Development

### **Mission Statement Development (not always *necessary*, but good to give recommenders and to guide you as you write your application)**

A personal mission statement defines your goal for your future and explains what you are doing now to actively achieve it. A good mission statement is concise and inspirational. It should be clear, engaging, realistic, and describe a bright future. It should state your intentions, summarize your values, and demonstrate your commitment to living up to these values. To develop a mission statement using the prompts, start by reviewing your completed responses and looking for recurring themes and values that stand out. Identify your core beliefs and passions by highlighting expressions of deeply held convictions and areas that evoke a strong sense of meaning. Consider your strengths and skills, noting areas where you excel or have expertise. Finally, use these insights to draft a concise and impactful mission statement that reflects your values, purpose, and desired impact, refining it as needed.

### **Reflection Prompts**

Reflective writing is an excellent way to encourage critical thinking and self-awareness. Open-ended reflective writing is the heart and soul of candidacy development, and it helps students move out of the checkbox mentality. Depth of reflection is what shows through in the best applications. Use the following list to help get started with reflections.

#### **Activities**

This section is for your non-clinical work, community service, and/or extra-curricular activities. This will help you keep track of the different engagements you participate in that can contribute to your candidacy. In the description, reflect on your role as part of the organization, what you learned from it, and how you grew during this experience. Consider the transferable skills you develop and how they are helping make you a better health professional. It isn't just the "what" or "how", but also the "why".

1. Describe the activity in which you were involved. What was your role? What tasks were you responsible for?
2. What motivated you to engage in this activity? How does this relate to your broader goals or interests in the health professions?
3. How has your involvement in this activity changed or deepened your understanding of healthcare?
4. Reflect on a challenge you faced during this activity. How did you overcome it, and what did you learn from it?
5. How has this activity influenced your commitment to the health profession? What specific skills or insights have you gained that will benefit you in your future career?

#### **Healthcare Experiences**

Like the Activities section, complete the Healthcare Experience to describe your non-shadowing clinical experience. If you have been able to work or volunteer in a healthcare setting, you should record your hours for an accurate assessment of those hours. For students interested in applying to PA programs (for example), it is especially important to keep an accurate record of your healthcare experiences and patient care experiences. You can differentiate between the two by using the definitions below.

Remember to check with your programs of interest to determine which type of experiences they count toward each of these areas, and how many patient care hours are required to apply to each program.

- **Patient Care Experience:** Experiences in which you are directly responsible for a patient's care. For example, prescribing medication, performing procedures, directing a course of treatment, designing a treatment regimen, actively working on patients as a nurse, paramedic, EMT, CNA, phlebotomist, physical therapist, dental hygienist, etc.
- **Healthcare Experience:** Both paid and unpaid work in a health or health-related field where you are not directly responsible for a patient's care, but may still have patient interaction; for

example, filling prescriptions, performing clerical work, delivering patient food, cleaning patients and/or their rooms, administering food or medication, taking vitals or other record keeping information, working as a scribe, CNA (depending on job description), medical assistant, etc.

1. Describe your healthcare experience. What role did you play, and what was the context?
2. What motivated you to undertake this experience? How does it align with your career goals in healthcare?
3. Can you share an interaction that particularly moved or inspired you? Why was it significant?
4. How has this experience influenced your perception or understanding of patient care?
5. What skills or competencies have you developed through this experience? How will these benefit you as a future health professional?

### **Shadowing Experience**

It can be a good practice to have the health professionals you observe sign off on your shadowing experiences. You may use the following shadowing verification forms to record your shadowing experiences. Reflect on what you saw in your shadowing experiences. Consider the things that you enjoyed about the experience, anything that you learned about the field, and how it helped affirm your desire to enter the health profession.

1. Describe the shadowing experience. Who did you shadow, and what were their roles and responsibilities?
2. Why did you choose to shadow this professional? How does their work align with your healthcare career aspirations?
3. Share an interaction or event from the shadowing experience that had a significant impact on you. Why was it impactful?
4. Reflect on something that surprised or challenged you during the shadowing experience. How did it change your perspective on the healthcare profession?
5. What key insights have you gained about the daily realities of the health profession through shadowing? How do these insights inform your career goals?

\*Adapted from Pennsylvania State University