

Department of Anthropology University of Nevada, Reno

PREPARING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE GRADUATE STUDY APPLICATION

The personal statement that accompanies your application for graduate study at the University of Nevada, Reno is very important to the admissions committee and is often a crucial factor in the decision to admit. A clear, well-focused statement reveals your potential for graduate work and may compensate for average grades and test scores. The statement should be limited to two or three single-spaced pages. This statement should be submitted directly to the Anthropology Department.

You should clearly articulate your intended research interests. If your research plans are not yet entirely specific, you should clarify the range of issues in anthropology that you are most interested in pursuing and sketch out plausible contexts for studying them. It is best to avoid extended statements about personal history, except as relevant to your research plan. Overall, your statement should reflect intellectual sophistication, good writing, and a sense of research direction within some area of archaeology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, or linguistics.

Be as specific as you can about the types of problems and research that interest you in the field. Whenever you can, be specific about the kinds of methodologies and approaches you want to learn more about, and what parts of the world you want to study. If you want to work with specific people in the Anthropology Department (or even elsewhere in the University) you should mention this in your essay.

The graduate committee is looking for people who have focused interests, and who are strongly motivated, self-sufficient students. This makes sense, because the ultimate goal is to train people as scholars who can define and solve problems on their own. The upshot of all this is that the more you show the committee that you know what you want to do, and what training you want to get in order to do it, then the better your chances of admission and funding.