Writing for 20Qs and the HCEC Application

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Agenda

• Purpose of your essays

• What are the 20Qs?

• Why HCEC registrants are required to complete the 20Qs
  – Where do your responses go?

• HCEC Personal Statement
  – Why you write it.
  – What will you write?
  – How will you write it?
Why You Write
The Holistic Review

• Academic credentials
  – Cornell GPA (overall and BCMP)
  – Standardized test scores (MCAT or DAT)

• Non-academic experiences
  – Service to others
  – Exposure/experience in the world of clinical healthcare
  – Ability to communicate well interpersonally
  – Interactions with others different from yourself

• Commitment to this career path
Purpose of Your Essays

• Communicate to your audiences
  – Non-academic experiences
  – Dedication to and interest in a career in medicine

• This is your chance to personalize your application
20Qs

• A comprehensive self assessment tool
  – Allows potential applicants to assess preparation, background, and readiness for medical or dental school

  – A working document – you should re-visit this document frequently.

  – Answer the questions as completely as possible in full narrative form.
    • Some answers can be copied into the background information form (BIF).
    • You aren’t required to upload any of the responses – this is your document.

★ Question 1:
  – Why do you want to be a physician/dentist/health care professional?
HCEC Personal Statement

• Address this question:
  – What should the HCEC know about you to be able to produce a comprehensive letter of evaluation?

• No specific length constraints
  – Usually ~two pages, but can be one page or up to five pages

• HCEC LoE does not quote from your personal statement

• May serve as basis for eventual statement to medical schools
What Is the Process?

• Self reflection
  – Consider your Core Competencies
  – Review your 20Qs

• Write and re-write

• Review
  – Ask for feedback
Required Elements of Your Essays

- Demonstration of your motivation for a career as a physician/dentist
- Demonstration that you comprehend and can articulate relevant personal strengths
- Emphasis on your core competencies
Start Writing!

• Focus on a central theme that crosses different experiences and demonstrates your contribution to your community and world

• Develop a few of your responses in the 20Q exercise into a narrative that presents information about you as a unique candidate

• Pick a single response in your 20Q exercise and develop it into a narrative essay, deepening the focus and expanding the breadth of your response
What to Avoid

- Mistaking perfection for authenticity
- Picking a “tired theme”
- Insufficient development of your theme
- Emphasis on quotes from others’ writing
- Clichés, over-used words
  - “The world we live in today”, “From a young age”...
  - Passion – show it, don’t say it!
Resources for Writing Personal Essays

- CCS Library: [career.cornell.edu/career/resources/](career.cornell.edu/career/resources/)
  - “Personal essay” key-word search returns 15 resources (books, websites, etc.) across Career Services offices, mostly in 103 Barnes or G55 Goldwin Smith

- Health Careers Advisors
- Walk-in Service of the Writing Workshop
- Writing tutor hired by Cornell Career Services (late spring into summer)
- Guide for the Advanced Pre-Medical Student (Career Services)
“If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.”

Stephen King
Questions?