Writing Personal Statements

(CM)^2 Program

Serkan Hoşten

November 12, 2009
What is the Purpose?

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- documented proficiency in mathematics (your transcript, your GRE scores)
- level of preparedness to succeed in the program you are applying to (can you pass the prelims right away?)
- knowledge of the program and your possible place in it (your intended area of research and why it fits to the program)
- professional goals (what do you want to be when you grow up?)
- experience in doing research in mathematics (your thesis, your papers/manuscripts)
- familiarity with the world of research mathematics and its requirements (your talks, presentations, posters, conference travels)
- professional accomplishments (prizes, fellowships (CM))
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- professional accomplishments (prizes, fellowships (CM)^2 !!, honors)
Other Issues You Might Address

- Gap in study, bad semester, exceptionally bad grade (be clear and straightforward but not apologetic)
- Questions that are specifically asked to be addressed (read the instructions)
- Teaching experience (read: experience in teaching calculus, do not emphasize too much)
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Your audience is a committee of faculty members who are experts in their field, are overworked and have very little time (short and concise essay) need to reach an objective decision within a committee (if one needs to defend their application what is the best ammunition to give them?)
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Before you start writing

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- For specific schools: look at the information provided by the department one more time
What it should NOT be

It is NOT “what I did with my life” (self-revelatory but objective)

It is NOT “I've always wanted to be .....” (focus on how to achieve what you want to be and how the program you are applying to fits in this project)

It is NOT “My calling is ......” (clear and realistic goal)
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