

# PERSONAL STATEMENT BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

## THE CAREER CENTER, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

This worksheet is designed to help you find an interesting, unique and memorable topic for your personal statement. As you think about the questions, consider how your answers changed your perspective on the world or made you different from your peers. Remember, that your personal statement is one of the few opportunities you will have to introduce yourself to the Admissions Committee. Make it your best. You may use this worksheet on your own to brainstorm for a topic. If you are having trouble deciding on a topic, you may download the form from the Pre-Law Advising website, add your own notes to the form, and email it to your Pre-Law Advisor prior to your scheduled meeting. An electronic copy of the worksheet can be found on the Pre-Law Advising webpage.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADUATION DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ MAJOR/MINOR: \_\_\_\_\_

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ GPA IN MAJOR: \_\_\_\_\_ LSAT/DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### FAMILY BACKGROUND

Did you grow up outside the U.S.? Are you, your family or your grandparents (assuming you knew/know them) first generation citizens of the U.S.? Is a language other than English regularly spoken in your home? Are you an only child? Do you have more than five siblings? Are you adopted? If so, do you know your birth parents? Who grew up in your household? Were all those people related to you? Was there something non-traditional about your household (gay parents, significantly older/younger sibling, multi-generational)? Did your parents have unusual jobs? Were/are they in the military? Were you responsible for providing some degree of financial support to the family? Did you have unusual responsibilities at home (i.e. worked on farm, provided significant care to younger siblings)? Did your family have any unique traditions? Did your family spend vacation time in an unusual or memorable place year after year? Did your family move a lot? Have you lived in more than five states? Have you lived abroad? Have you lived on a military base, farm, "one horse" town or other unique setting? How is your family different from the families of your peers?

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**EDUCATION**

Did you go to a non-traditional high school (i.e. magnet or performing arts)? Were you home schooled? Did you go to high school in another country? Was English your second language in high school? Was your school day non-traditional because you spent extra time on non-school-related sports or performing arts? Did you graduate high school early? Are you in any special academic programs at WU? Have you done a unique independent study at WU? Did your financial situation require you to work in high school or college? Why did you choose your major? Have you changed majors? Why? Did you receive any special honors in college (i.e. something more unusual than Dean’s List or Latin honors)? Were you disciplined for academic or social infractions during college?

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**COLLEGE ACTIVITIES**

Have you held an office in a club/organization of which you have been a member for more than two years? How many hours per week did you devote to your responsibilities? What specific and unique contributions have you made to the club/organization and how did these contributions change that club/organization? Have you founded a club or organization? Why is this new club important to the student body? Have you volunteered for the same charitable organization for more than one year? If so, what were your significant and unique contributions and how did they change the charitable organization? Why did you choose to become involved with that specific charitable organization? How many hours per week do you devote to the organization?

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**SPORTS**

Did you play varsity sports at WU? Did you spend a significant amount of time playing any non-traditional sports (intramural or otherwise) at WU or during high school (i.e. equestrian, crew, kickball, broomball, bowling, downhill ski racing)? Did you win any championships or special honors? Were you the captain of a team that was successful? Were you an underdog or a secret weapon? Did you ever have an injury that precluded you from playing indefinitely? If so, how did this impact your life? Have you ever started your own team? Are you an endurance athlete (i.e. marathons, triathlons, adventure races)? Have you had other unique athletic accomplishments (i.e. hiked Grand Canyon rim to rim, mountain climbed, free-diving)?

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**HOBBIES**

Do you currently play an instrument? Do you play for audiences? What kind of music do you play? Is the instrument unusual (i.e. harp, tuba, harmonica)? Do you currently have unusual hobbies (i.e. build with Legos, model trains, collect antique books)? Have you started a club that relates to your hobby? Have you ever won a contest or competition related to your hobby? How much time do you spend pursuing your hobby? Do other people know about it? Does your hobby play against your type (i.e. football player who plays violin; bookworm who sky dives?)

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**TRAVEL**

What countries have you visited for more than one week? Did you travel there alone? Have you lived abroad? Were the conditions of your living arrangements significantly different from those in the U.S.? Did you speak the language of the country where you lived? Did you journal about your trip while you were there? [If you are traveling abroad this summer, consider journaling.] Did you take any non-traditional forms of transportation? Did your diet change significantly? Did you take part in any unique rituals or traditions while in the foreign country? Did you meet anyone in these countries with whom you continue to correspond? If so, why? Are you fluent in any other languages? Have you gone on a religious mission?

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**WORK EXPERIENCE**

Have you had any unusual jobs? Have you had any blue collar jobs? Did your financial situation require you to work in high school or college? If so, how many hours? Did you work for a family business? Were you required to do so? Did you work with others who were significantly younger or older, disabled or non-English speaking? Were you ever promoted based upon a significant contribution that you made to the work environment or procedures? What was your contribution? Were you responsible for managing others? Have you ever started your own company? What happened to it? Did you learn any important or unusual skills in any of your jobs?

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**MISCELLANEOUS**

Has your writing ever been published in a widely circulated periodical? Have you ever been on television? Have you ever won a contest? Have you ever been on a game show?

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**“BIG PICTURE” QUESTIONS:**

What is your biggest disappointment? What is your deepest regret? What accomplishment are you most proud of? What is the most meaningful thing you have ever done? What is the hardest thing you have ever done?

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In twenty words or less, why do you want to go to law school?

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What would you do after graduation if you didn't go to law school?

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Created by Rebecca Brown

For questions/assistance, contact Pre-Law Advisors

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