Sample Personal Statements:

Sample Statement 1

My interest in science dates back to my years in high school, where I excelled in physics, chemistry, and math. When I was a senior, I took a first-year calculus course at a local college (such an advanced-level class was not available in high school) and earned an A. It seemed only logical that I pursue a career in electrical engineering.

When I began my undergraduate career, I had the opportunity to be exposed to the full range of engineering courses, all of which tended to reinforce and solidify my intense interest in engineering. I've also had the opportunity to study a number of subjects in the humanities and they have been both enjoyable and enlightening, providing me with a new and different perspective on the world in which we live.

In the realm of engineering, I have developed a special interest in the field of laser technology and have even been taking a graduate course in quantum electronics. Among the 25 or so students in the course, I am the sole undergraduate. Another particular interest of mine is electromagnetics, and last summer, when I was a technical assistant at a world-famous local lab, I learned about its many practical applications, especially in relation to microstrip and antenna design. Management at this lab was sufficiently impressed with my work to ask that I return when I graduate. Of course, my plans following completion of my current studies are to move directly into graduate work toward my master's in science. After I earn my master's degree, I intend to start work on my Ph.D. in electrical engineering. Later I would like to work in the area of research and development for private industry. It is in R & D that I believe I can make the greatest contribution, utilizing my theoretical background and creativity as a scientist.

I am highly aware of the superb reputation of your school, and my conversations with several of your alumni have served to deepen my interest in attending. I know that, in addition to your excellent faculty, your computer facilities are among the best in the state. I hope you will give me the privilege of continuing my studies at your fine institution.

Sample Statement 2:

Having majored in literary studies (world literature) as an undergraduate, I would now like to concentrate on English and American literature.

I am especially interested in nineteenth-century literature, women's literature, Anglo-Saxon poetry, and folklore and folk literature. My personal literary projects have involved some combination of these subjects. For the oral section of my comprehensive exams, I specialized in nineteenth century novels by and about women. The relationship between "high" and folk literature became the subject for my honors essay, which examined Toni Morrison's use of classical, biblical, African, and Afro-American folk tradition in her novel. I plan to work further on this essay, treating Morrison's other novels and perhaps preparing a paper suitable for publication.

In my studies toward a doctoral degree, I hope to examine more closely the relationship between high and folk literature. My junior year and private studies of Anglo-Saxon language and literature have caused me to consider the question of where the divisions between folklore, folk literature, and high literature lie. Should I attend your school, I would like to resume my studies of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with special attention to its folk elements.

Writing poetry also figures prominently in my academic and professional goals. I have just begun submitting to the smaller journals with some success and am gradually building a working manuscript for a collection. The dominant theme of this collection relies on poems that draw from classical, biblical, and folk traditions, as well as everyday experience, in order to celebrate the process of giving and taking life, whether literal or figurative. My poetry draws from and influences my academic
studies. Much of what I read and study finds a place in my creative work as subject. At the same time, I study the art of literature by taking part in the creative process, experimenting with the tools used by other authors in the past.

In terms of a career, I see myself teaching literature, writing criticism, and going into editing or publishing poetry. Doctoral studies would be valuable to me in several ways. First, your teaching assistantship program would provide me with the practical teaching experience I am eager to acquire. Further, earning a Ph.D. in English and American literature would advance my other two career goals by adding to my skills, both critical and creative, in working with language. Ultimately, however, I see the Ph.D. as an end in itself, as well as a professional stepping stone; I enjoy studying literature for its own sake and would like to continue my studies on the level demanded by the Ph.D. program.

Sample Statement 3

What if people lived healthier lives, practiced preventive medicine, and took precautions against illness and disease? My days in the physical therapy department often made me think about the prevention of injuries as well as the injuries themselves. I was already doubting my future career choice as a physical therapist. Although I loved the science of it and helping people, the lack of variety within the field and its limited options for growth bothered me. I needed a career that helped a large number of people, emphasized prevention and primary care rather than tertiary care, and would continually challenge and motivate me to improve. Knowing that I really did not want to pursue physical therapy as I had originally planned, my thoughts wandered to the area of public health, particularly health management.

My first true introduction to the public health arena came in a class offered through the Big U School of Public Health. As I listened to experts speak about contemporary health issues, I was intrigued. The world of "capitation," "rationing of care," and Medicaid fascinated me as I saw the range of problems that public health professionals were trying to solve in innovative ways. This one semester class provided me with a basic but thorough understanding of the issues faced in health care today. In the last two years I have continued to learn about public health both through coursework and work in the field.

Because field experience is such a valuable learning tool, I searched for a research assistant position that would allow me to view public health at a different level. I worked on a project at a county health clinic in Englewood, a low-income, minority community. The program attempted to increase treatment compliance rates for adolescents diagnosed with tuberculosis who must complete a six-month medical program. Working for the county exposed me to a different side of health care that I had previously seen. Service and organization were not assets of the county and yet its role in the public health "ecosystem" was and is critical. Its job of immunizing thousands and interacting with all members of the community is often forgotten, but is important for keeping an entire community healthy.

My work at the county health clinic as well as my knowledge of some areas of public health led me to accept an internship in Washington D.C. this past summer. The internship provided me with a greater understanding of a federal public health agency’s operations and allowed me to contribute in a variety of ways to the XYZ Department in which I worked. Most importantly I worked on "policy issues" which involved identifying and summarizing problems that were out of the ordinary as well as documenting resolved issues in order to establish protocols to increase the department’s efficiency. In addition I served on a scientific review panel which was responsible for editing a seventy-page proposed regulation before its submission.

Along with my duties at XYZ, I attended seminars and met with public health leaders at different functions and events. All these activities confirmed my growing interest in preventive medicine, outcomes and effectiveness, and quality of care, particularly within the private/managed care sector. These are my strongest interests because I believe they are fundamental to our nation’s health. We must achieve efficiency and access without sacrificing quality.
The University of _____ would help me achieve my goals of furthering my public health education through the specialize coursework offered as part of its health administration program. [The client provides specifics here about the program’s specific appeal and strengths]

Since rejecting physical therapy as a career possibility my interest in public health has only grown. I welcome the challenge of serving a large community and participating in such a dynamic and challenging field. What if an aspirin a day could prevent heart attacks? What if abandoning unnecessary procedures saved thousands of dollars, which then allowed a hospital to treat other patients needing care? What if every person was guaranteed care and that care was good? I would like to find answers for these questions during my career as a public health graduate student and professional.

Sample Statement 4

Two scenes stand out in my mind from my visit to Brazil’s Wetland: Forests burning before seed planting and trees as hedgerows. Before the planting season, I could see the leafless remnants of burnt trees still standing. The burning of pristine forests destroys both the habitats and countless species which depend on and thrive in these habitats. The few remaining bare, scarred trees silently convey the cost to our natural resources of pursuing our economic interests. Some forests are preserved by government edict issued in response to international pressure. But most of this preservation occurs alongside major roads — not to protect the ecosystem, but to prevent disturbance to ranches and farms along the highways. The clash between economic and environmental concerns that I witnessed in Brazil fascinates me and attracts me to the Environmental Studies Program.

Two courses in my geography department increased my interest in the connection between the environment and economics: Conservation of Underdeveloped Countries and Environmental Impact Analysis. In the former, we studied the problems of natural resource management in developing countries. The balance is always tilted toward economic growth at the expense of environmental preservation. For example, because the Pantanal Wetland could become a highly productive agricultural system once it’s drained, it is drained regardless of the destruction that drainage causes to the ecosystem. Only portions of the wetland are preserved for tourist purposes.

The other course that piqued my interest is an interdisciplinary course called Environmental Impact Analysis in which we, as a group, created matrix and flow diagrams discussing the economic and environmental impact of logging and preservation of old growth forests. I was able to use tools that I acquired in my economics and environmental studies classes. In general, logging creates economic benefits at the local level. It increases employment in the timber industry and subsequently in related non-timber industries; it also benefits local government. Yet, it has great deleterious environmental effects: soil erosion, watershed destruction, and a decrease in species diversity due to loss of habitat. The logging industry represents the classic clash between economic and environmental interests.

I also took two sequential classes in the economics department that are related to Resource Management — Theories of Growth & Development and Policies for Economic Development. Because the courses were taught by a professor who is concerned chiefly with economic growth, I learned the standard economic rationalizations for development unrestrained by environmental concerns.

In addition to my interest in resource management policies, I have a specific interest in Geographical Information System (GIS), a powerful tool for natural resource management. After taking several related classes in GIS, I began interning for the National Park Service (NPS). After I learn how to use ARC/INFO, a leading GIS package, I will assist the NPS in constructing projects. Some of my duties include spatial and non-spatial data analysis, digitizing themes such as fire locations, vegetation, wildlife habitats, etc., and tabular and graphical presentation of results. I hope to use the tools I acquire during this internship in my continuing study of our environment.

I would like to study the social and economic factors that influence environmental policy formation. For example, because people worry more about pollution than endangered species, laws and regulations concerning environmental pollution are more numerous and stricter than for bio-diversity.
Within the School of Environmental Studies, I have a particular interest in the emphasis: Economics, Policy, and Management. This emphasis deals with how economic factors can create negative externalities, such as pollution, and need to be regulated. This emphasis also tries to consider non-economic values, such as aesthetic pleasure and species diversity. It also discusses tools like GIS and system analysis that apply to environmental management. Because of my interest in GIS, economics, and environmental studies, this emphasis suits me perfectly. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach of the School of Environmental Studies attracts me since it combines social science’s strengths with a knowledge of the natural sciences necessary to protect and preserve the environment.

After completing my masters program, I would like to continue my education and obtain a Ph.D. in natural resource management. This degree would enable me to combine a teaching career with advising business and government on natural resource management issues. Teaching college students is more than a one-way channel; I would also learn from their questions like my professors have from mine. In advising business and government, I can help them strike a balance between economic and environmental concerns. GIS will be a useful tool in helping me give them crucial information.

I have enjoyed an interdisciplinary approach in my environmental studies major and become fascinated by the clash between social interests, especially economics, and environmental needs. I pursued an additional major in economics to better understand this conflict. Furthermore, my work for the NPS will train me in the latest techniques in natural resource management. I would like to continue exploring this clash and resource management in the School of Environmental Studies. Ultimately, I would like to teach and work in natural resource management. Ideally, I would like to find ways for allowing development while preventing the burning of beautiful and valuable ecosystems like the Pantanal Wetland.