Research Statements

DEFINITION

- The research statement is a document that describes your research experiences, interests, and plans.
- Research statements are often requested as part of the faculty application process.
- Expectations for research statements vary among disciplines. Ask faculty members in your department about the expectations for your field.

PURPOSE

- Departments want to learn more about your:
  - Academic specialty and interests
  - Passion for research
  - Compatibility with departmental, school, and/or university research efforts
  - Potential to earn grant money
  - Ability to operate as a professional scholar, independent of your advisor
  - Writing ability
- Writing a research statement allows you to:
  - Further reflect on and define your research interests
  - Gain confidence in your research skills and desire to become a faculty member

CONTENT

- Recent & Current Research
  - Research statements for current students and recent graduates usually discuss the dissertation and/or other major projects from graduate school.
  - If you have done several projects, convey the connection among them.
  - Place your work in a broader context or framework – the big picture.
  - Discuss how you became interested in your topic and why it continues to interest you.
  - Answer the “so what?” question. How does your research contribute to the field? Why does your research matter? Why is it important?
  - Briefly describe any significant recognition your research has received - publications, presentations, grants, awards, etc.
  - If you discuss projects that you have worked on with a team, be sure to articulate your contribution to the projects.
  - Acknowledge the work of other scholars in your field, when appropriate.
• Future Research
  o What are your short-term research goals (2-5 years)?
  o Discuss 2-3 feasible research ideas that interest you.
  o Explain how your goals build on (but are not necessarily direct extensions of) your recent work.
  o Describe your ideas about potential funding sources, collaborative partners, facilities, etc.
  o Consider detailing how you will involve students in your research and how your research relates to your teaching.
  o Indicate how your research goals align with departmental goals.
  o What are your longer term research goals (5+ years)?

• Appropriate Detail
  o Your plan should be well-considered, realistic, and practical.
  o Include enough detail to show depth of knowledge but do not go overboard with minutiae.
  o Consider including some preliminary data – perhaps using tables, graphs, or other illustrations.

FORMAT
• Your research statement should be brief and well-organized.
  o Aim for one to three pages (longer statements are sometimes appropriate).
  o The introduction should summarize the contents of the research statement and include the information that is most important for departments to know.
  o The conclusion should also summarize the contents of the research statement.

• Your research statement should be pleasing to the eye and easy to read.
  o Single-spaced or 1.5 spaced
  o Concise paragraphs
  o Short bulleted lists
  o Clear subject headings

• Your statement should not include grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors!

GETTING STARTED
• Contact your home department.
  o What are the norms for research statements in your field?
  o What information is known about your potential employers that might help you prepare your research statements?
• Jot down a preliminary outline and some ideas for content.
• Find sample research statements using a search engine, websites of professional organizations, etc.
• Finish a full draft.
• Have somebody proofread your research statement (peer, research team member, faculty member, career counselor, etc.)
• Consider customizing / tailoring your research statement for different job opportunities.
WRITING SAMPLES

- Job announcements often request a sample of your scholarly writing.
- You can send one with your application packet even if it is not requested.
- Check with a professor regarding how many samples to send, if an announcement doesn’t specify.
- Examples of samples to send:
  - Re-prints of your published articles
  - Copies of book chapters you’ve authored or co-authored
  - Pre-prints of articles in press
  - Completed chapters of your dissertation

SAMPLE RESEARCH STATEMENTS

- Science
  - http://www.geosc.psu.edu/~dupont/tkd_short_r_and_t.pdf (Earth & Space Science)
  - http://career.studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduate/find_job/apply/research_statements.html (Ecology & Zoology)

- Engineering, Technological, & Math Fields
  - http://www.cs.cornell.edu/home/soam/research.html (Computer Science)
  - http://informatics.indiana.edu/fil/Bio/Menczer-Stmt.pdf (Informatics)
  - http://www.cct.lsu.edu/~burak/research.pdf (Math)
  - http://career.studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduate/find_job/apply/research_statements.html (Engineering)

- Social Sciences & Humanities
  - http://career.studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduate/find_job/apply/research_statements.html (Literature & Sociology)
  - http://www.marileneoliver.com/writings/writresstat.html (Art)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/1820
  - Writing a Research Plan
- http://www.engin.umich.edu/students/current/graduate/aces/research.html
- http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/academic_sci_eng.html
- http://chronicle.com/