

Personal Statement Example - MESA

How does a 17-year-old girl raise a child to be a successful, responsible and educated adult? This is a question my mother has asked herself for the last 23 years. She wished the best for her bundle of joy, but struggled to provide even basic needs like food and shelter, she could not foresee education past public high school for her baby. She did not expect a child like me. I was naturally inclined to science and a desire for more than what a high school diploma could offer me.

My interest in science stems from the public school education I had in an underprivileged community. You see, when most of the school can hardly speak English, it is hard to teach reading and writing, but math and science are universal languages and therefore were stressed in my education as a child. In high school, among the gang fights, drug searches, hormones and classes I realized that I wanted a career in the sciences. This was greatly influenced by my involvement in after school programs meant to keep teens like me off the streets, such as academic decathlon and the science bowl. It was here I knew that just a high school education was not going to get me where I wanted to go, but none of my family members had ever been to college and didn't have any advice for me. I set out searching for schools on my own. Not only did I have to find the right school, but I had to find the money. Through several applications for colleges, financial aid, scholarships, grants, fee waivers I found myself moving to San Diego for a four-year degree in Biology-Chemistry. I even worked full time to save money for the move.

When school started and I was thrust into a world where every science class had a lab, I was overwhelmed and terrified because I came from poor schools, I had never even seen lab equipment. I quickly realized that I loved being in the lab. In my second year of school I was approached by a chemistry professor to do research in his lab. I jumped on the opportunity to be in the lab, learn and make money all at the same time. With his team I studied organic fluorine chemistry for two years. Supported by NSF and university funding we investigated the influence that vinyl fluorine atoms have on the product regiochemistry of electrophilic reactions. The title of my particular project that I would later present at a national American Chemical Society conference was "The addition of alcohols to monofluoro-terminal alkenes". This was even my first trip out of the western US. During my stint as a researcher I not only learned chemistry, but I learned to be a research scientist. I spent a lot of time formulating my own experiments from journal articles, then accepting defeat when it didn't work. I learned how to fail and get back up again. Working as a team was a strong skill to be had as well. The best lesson was that I loved being in the lab and that this girl from a deprived background could be just as successful as the private school student next to me.

I found myself in an Immunology class my junior year and it was like I had found my first love, the immune system. From then on I have known that I was meant to be in the research field of immunology. Specifically I would like to attain a PhD in immunology and enjoy a career in scientific advocacy. I am hoping that MUSC will lead me down the right path as a student and a future immunologist by opening my eyes to the world of the immune system and finally finding my niche in the scientific world.

23 years have gone by since my very young mother first held me and thought of what kind of future I would have. She provided what she could for me as a child then let me soar as a teenager to find my way into college and I have somehow found my way from the strains of

welfare as a child to the admissions people of MUSC as an adult. I look forward to the day that I will be able to see the proud smile on my mothers face when I receive my PhD.