



Crafting a Personal Statement Workshop

A Cross-Campus Collaboration Model

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UGA By the Numbers

University of Georgia:

- Large, public, research institution in Athens, GA
- Undergraduate student population: 28,848 (2019)

Career Center:

- 5 Pre-Health Team Consultants
- 13 total career consultants
- Offered Writing Labs and personal statement critiques

Writing Center:

- 13 Writing Consultants (English PhD students)
- 30-minute writing consultation appointments with undergraduates
 - Fall 2018: 1,397 consultations
 - Spring 2019: 1,176 writing consultations
 - 2018-2019: 2,617 writing consultations including summer (44 more sessions)
- Five locations across UGA campus



UGA By the Numbers

Pre-Professional Advising Office:

- Serves all current undergraduates and alumni that identify as pre-professional.

Pre-Professional Office Advising Staff:

- Coordinator
- 2 pre-med advisors
- 1 dental/optometry advisor
- 1 physician assistant advisor
- 1 allied health advisor (PT, OT, etc.)
- 1 pre-law advisor.

Total student population: ~4,800*

Pre-Health student population: ~4,100

- Pre-Medical: ~2,400
- Pre-Dental: ~305
- Pre-PA: ~580
- Allied Health (OT, PT, GC, AA, etc.): ~520
- Nursing: ~350
- Pre-Optometry: ~36

Pre-Law student population: ~700

**Based on students flagged in SAGE advising system.*



The Problem

- High numbers of students competing for limited resources
- Lack of student knowledge regarding on-campus resources for personal statement review
- Multiple units on campus providing duplicate services with little-to-no collaboration



Workshop Goals

Student Goals:

- Exposure to variety of resources available across campus
- Increase usage of these resources
- Connect to professional students for feedback and potential mentorship
- Receive feedback from professional consultants
- Ease student anxiety and prevent procrastination
- Produce strong personal statements

Professional Goals:

- Engage alumni
- Provide template for other professionals
- Create a cross-campus collaboration model
- Offer workshop materials for students online to increase access
- Encourage more communication and access between offices and sharing of resources



Collaboration & Outreach

- Identified and connected with Career Center, Writing Center and Pre-Professional Advising Office staff interested in collaborating on a workshop Series.
 - Volunteers:
 - 2 Pre-Professional Advisors
 - 10 Career Consultants
 - 7 Writing Center Staff (PhD students in English and Linguistics)
- Lead advisors met to discuss organizational details. Included the Associate Director of the Writing Center virtually. Discussion topics included:
 - Personal statement format
 - Commitment
 - Logistics
 - Alumni Outreach
 - Promotional materials
 - Educational materials
 - Training
 - Schedule
 - Feedback



Preparation & Utilization of Resources

- **Created** syllabus with session breakdown for workshop participants.
- **Compiled** a workshop packet which included:
 - Newly developed education materials
 - Materials that were already in use from various units
 - Uploaded content to website after completion of workshop
- **Provided** training PowerPoint to professional consultants.
 - Ensured all were on the same page regarding what makes a quality pre-professional personal statement.



Preparation & Utilization of Resources

- **Condensed** training PPT into a shorter guideline for professional students.
- **Recruited** 23 current professional students via email:
 - 13 medical
 - 5 dental
 - 2 law
 - 2 genetic counseling
 - 1 anesthesiologist assistant
- **Reached** out to 3 current pre-professional students that received a professional school acceptance to ask if we could read their personal statements out loud during the second in-person session as examples of excellent writing.



Workshop Structure

- Workshop held over 8 weeks (February 13 – April 3).
- Feedback survey (April 12).
- 24-hour registration opened with 30 seats available (January 24).
- 36 students registered, 30 received confirmation email, 3 students emailed with waitlist request.
- Prioritized students applying during the 2019/2020.
- 9 students received wait-list email connecting them with Personal Statement Workshops later in the semester with the Career Center.

Final breakdown

- 16 Pre-Med
- 3 Pre-Dental
- 3 Pre-Law
- 2 Pre-PA
- 1 Pre-OT
- 1 Pre-PT
- 2 Genetic Counseling
- 1 Anesthesiologist Assistant



Workshop Structure

- **In-person sessions:**
 - 3 in-person sessions.
 - 2 hour blocks
- **Virtual sessions (Emailed feedback):**
 - 5 virtual sessions
 - One week given between each deadline with the exception of the second draft due to spring break.
 - 10am deadlines for all drafts.
- **Feedback:**
 - 27 out of 30 participants surveyed
 - 1 student never came
 - 2 students dropped out after professional student feedback.



Introduction to UGA's Personal Statement Workshop Series

Logistical Considerations:

- No more than 2 students were assigned to each volunteer.
 - **Professional student commitment:**
 - 1 virtual feedback session.
 - **Professional consultant commitment:**
 - 1 in-person feedback session.
 - 1 virtual feedback session.
- One advisor designated to send all emails and connect participants with both professional students and volunteers.
- Email templates prepared ahead of time.
- Email reminders for all deadlines & sessions sent two days in advance.
- Designated advisor copied on all drafts and feedback exchanges.



Introduction to UGA's Personal Statement Workshop Series

- **Session 1 (In-Person):**

- In-depth personal statement writing presentation and interactive writing activities.
- Participants received assignment for next session.
- Read 3 student personal statement examples

- **Session 2 (In-Person):**

- Pair & Share, PEEL outline and a first draft write-in session.
- Participants given one week to work on their first draft which is due at the time of the 3rd session.

- **Session 3 (Virtual):**

- Students email first draft by 10am on designated session 3 date.
- Professional students have a week to provide feedback virtually to participants.



Introduction to UGA's Personal Statement Workshop Series

- **Session 4 (Virtual):**
 - Professional students must submit feedback to participants by designated session 4 date.
 - Participants are given two weeks to work on their second draft (includes UGA spring break).
- **Session 5: (Virtual):**
 - Participants submit their second draft to designated advisor by 10am to be paired with a professional consultant.
 - Professional consultants given a week to review statements for an in-person feedback session at the next meeting.



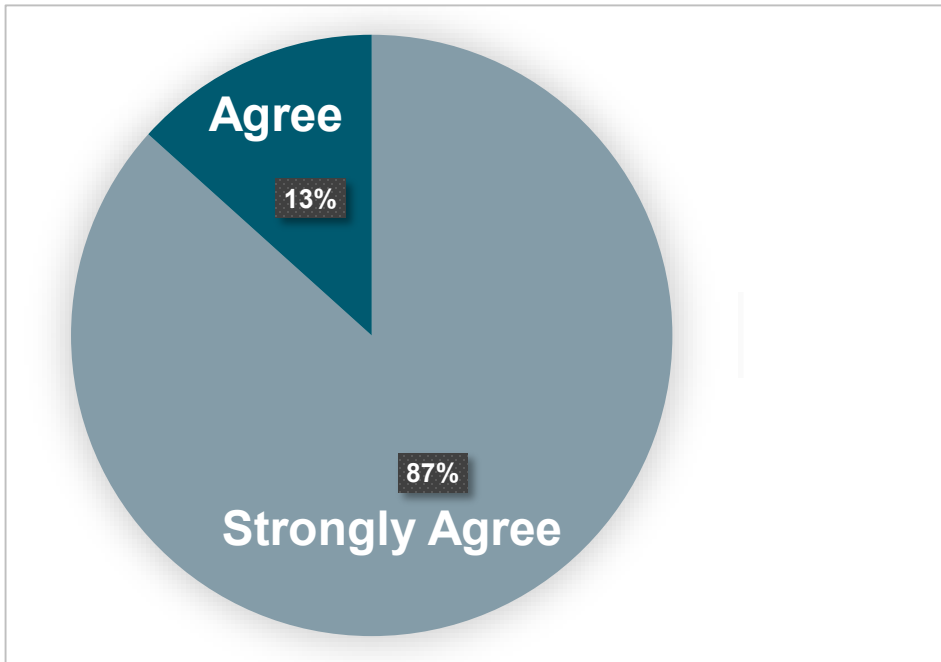
Introduction to UGA's Personal Statement Workshop Series

- **Session 6 (In-Person):**
 - Participants receive in-person feedback from the professional consultants during this session.
 - Final draft write-ins for remainder of time – participants were not required to stay after their meeting with their professional consultant.
 - Participants given a week to finish their final draft and send it to their professional consultants.
- **Session 7 (Virtual):**
 - Participants submit final draft by 10am to their professional consultant.
 - Professional consultants have a week to provide feedback on final draft.
- **Session 8 (Virtual):**
 - Participants receive feedback on final draft from professional consultants.



Participant Feedback

I felt well-informed about the objectives of this workshop including its intended goals and my responsibilities as a participant.



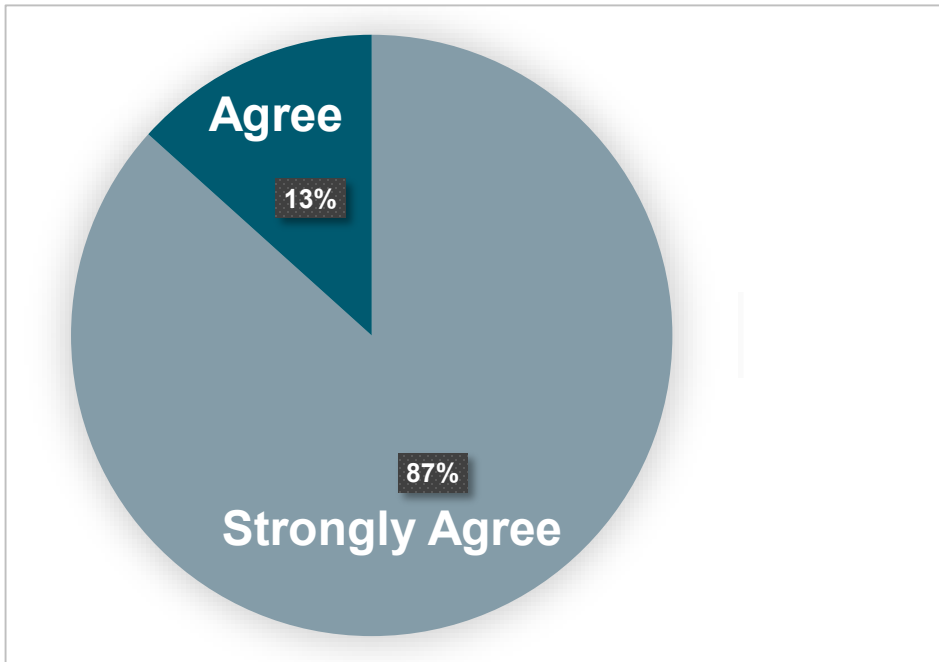
“The deadlines kept me on track and the feedback was tremendously helpful.”

-STUDENT PARTICIPANT



Participant Feedback

This workshop lived up to my expectations.



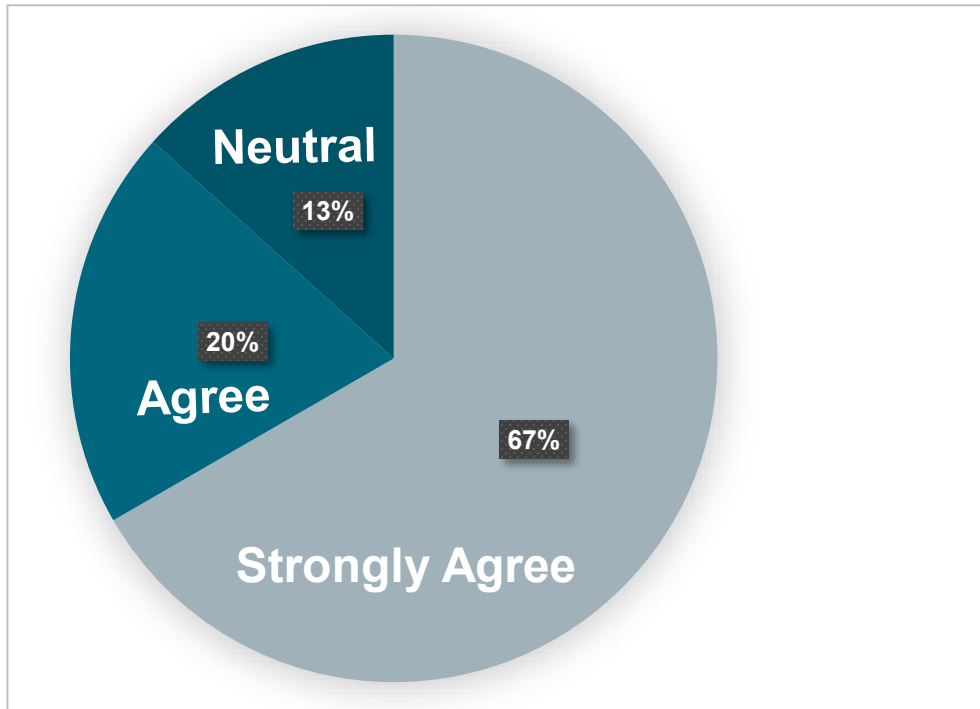
“I felt uncertain about the content of my personal statement but the feedback I received helped me to strengthen my content and feel confident about it.”

-STUDENT PARTICIPANT



Participant Feedback

The pace of this workshop was appropriate.



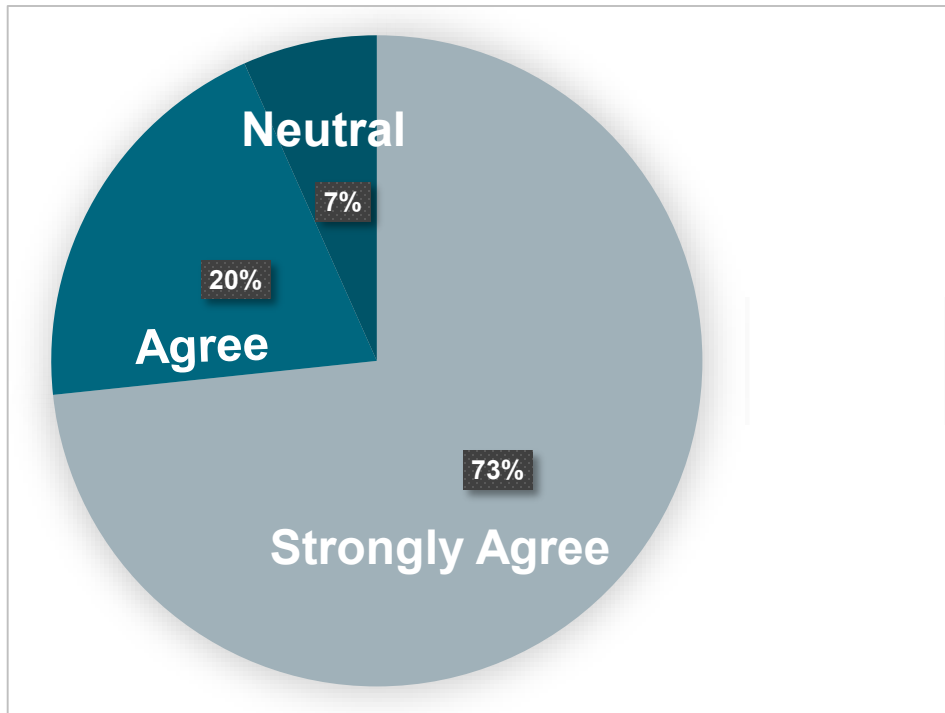
“The first meeting about what to include in a personal statement and how to structure it was very helpful!”

-STUDENT PARTICIPANT



Participant Feedback

The activities in this workshop gave me sufficient practice and feedback.



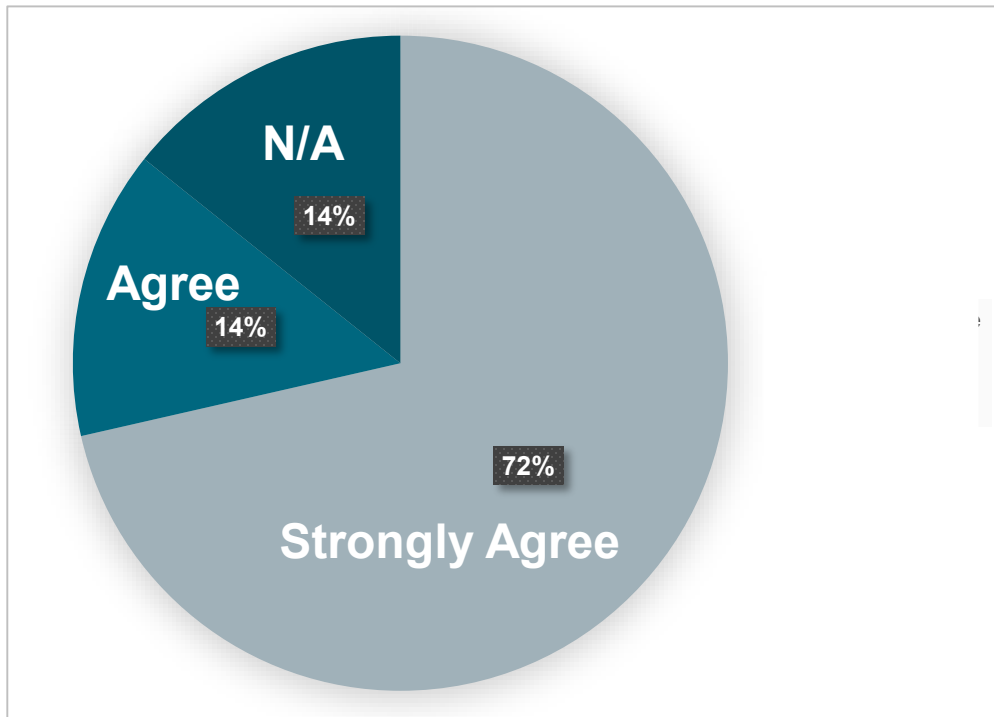
“They provided me with an in-depth critique of my personal statement. They really challenged me to rearrange some things and to explain more about what I was trying to convey.”

-STUDENT PARTICIPANT



Participant Feedback

At the end of this workshop, I had a solid start or completed draft of my personal statement.



“I think the best part of this workshop was finishing with a piece of work that is almost complete. If I had not participated in this workshop, I would have waited until the end of the school year to write the personal statement.”

-STUDENT PARTICIPANT



Takeaways

Things We Learned

- First session was too content heavy.
- Professional student volunteers would benefit from more guidance on how to give constructive feedback.
 - Examples of properly reviewed and edited papers or a rubric.
- Personal statement review/feedback can be subjective.
 - Provide students tools for reconciling conflicting pieces of advice.
- Workshop provides extensive support, but only for a small number of students.
 - Possible challenges scaling the program due to staff and volunteer availability.



Takeaways

Moving Forward

- Extend to other campus partners to be able to scale up to 50 students per semester.
- Continue to grow professional student database.
- Open registration earlier in order to recruit professional students in the participants chosen area.
- Record lecture components of workshop series and add to our [website](#).





Questions?

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Behind the Scenes

January 24:

- Opened registration for the workshop (10am).

January 25:

- Closed registration (10am) and emailed students about their status (enrolled v. wait-listed).

February 6 & 11:

- Sent reminder email to participants regarding the first in-person session.

February 13:

- **Session 1:** Presented in-depth PowerPoint regarding personal statement writing and managed interactive writing activities. Announced collaboration with professional students to encourage continued participation. Gave students a writing assignment on themes.

February 18:

- Sent reminder email regarding next in-person session.
- Sent professional students the names and emails of the participants they will be paired with as well as a guideline and sample questions for reference.

February 20:

- **Session 2:** Did a peer pair & share activity, discussed the PEEL outline and held a first draft write-in session.

February 25:

- Sent reminder email to participants to submit their first draft by 10am on February 27.



Behind the Scenes

February 27:

- **Session 3:** Confirmed that all participants had submitted their first draft. Connected these participants with their professional student volunteers via an introductory email.
- Contacted the participants who had not submitted their first draft by the deadline to assess how to move forward.

March 6:

- **Session 4:** Confirmed that all professional students had submitted their feedback. Reminded participants that they have two weeks to complete their second draft.
- Sent professional consultants the names and emails of the participants they will be paired with.

March 18:

- Sent reminder email to participants to submit their second draft by 10am on March 20.

March 20:

- **Session 5:** Confirmed that all participants had submitted their second draft. Connected participants with professional consultants via an introductory email.
- Contacted the participants who had not submitted their second draft by the deadline to assess how to move forward.

March 26:

- Sent reminder email to participants and professional consultants regarding the upcoming in-person feedback session.



Behind the Scenes

March 28:

- **Session 6:** In-person feedback from the professional consultants.
- Final draft write-in.

April 1:

- Emailed students a reminder of their April 3 final draft deadline.

April 3:

- **Session 7:** Confirmed that all participants submitted their final draft via email.

April 8:

- Emailed reminder to professional consultants to send final draft feedback via email to their assigned participants by April 10.

April 10:

- **Session 8:** Confirmed that final draft feedback was sent to participants.

April 12:

- **Feedback:** Sent survey to 27 participants, compiled data and shared results with both professional students and professional consultants. **Over 50% of students responded.**

