

Personal Statement Example (2019)

“I would rather die than not be able to see.” This statement by a patient with diabetic retinopathy captures my drive to pursue ophthalmology in better words than I can conjure. Changes in vision can significantly impact a person’s quality of life. I’ve seen ophthalmologists save children from a lifetime of blindness, allow parents to see their children’s smiles again, and take musicians from perceiving hand motion back to reading sheet music. Working to preserve and improve sight while making tangible differences in every moment of patients’ lives incorporates everything I could hope for in a profession.

Growing up, I was naturally drawn to detail-oriented tasks. Boatbuilding comprises one of the many hobbies I proudly continued through medical school as I have been captivated by the art and science of building sailboats for many years. While often restricted to materials and tools from home improvement stores, I enjoy the challenge and chance to generate solutions to limitations and overcome obstacles. Doing this in a landlocked state requires determination, but the skills I learned helped significantly with my academic endeavors. Perseverance, problem solving, and hand-eye coordination translated well to both undergraduate science and music courses. I realized early on that medicine actually encompasses all of my passions while promising the opportunity to use creativity and dexterity in the service of others. This made pursuing medicine an easy decision. Progressing through medical school, I realized that a good physician relies on art as well as science. Just as sailing balances the physics of vectors with the art of gauging the wind, successfully reaching a diagnosis relies on both objective knowledge and subjective judgement. Like my other passions, medicine also has the similarity of constant innovation in technology and technique. A rapidly evolving and hands-on field is right for me.

Ophthalmology contains the best of every specialty. I enjoyed the long-term relationships primary care physicians make with their patients just as much as the rapid cures that surgeons provide; ophthalmology offers both. Encountering more rare diseases in the eye clinics than anywhere else, I also recognized the potential to continue learning about medicine in a holistic sense. Research endeavors with Microinvasive Glaucoma Surgery demonstrated how rapidly technology and treatments develop. The idea of a career that allows me to work in a continuously advancing field to defend what many consider their most precious sense solidified my decision. The ophthalmology faculty has provided generous mentoring, amazing opportunities, and the inspiration to join such a caring and supportive culture. Humbled by the privilege to meet and collaborate with ophthalmologists from all over the country and world, I couldn’t imagine working in any other specialty.

I aspire to contribute my training in medicine, research, and boatbuilding to ensuring optimal visual outcomes for patients by using my dexterity and inherently persistent and meticulous nature. This will allow a balanced practice as a technically proficient surgeon and a thorough clinician. I’ve come a long way from making sailboats out of plywood in the backyard with my grandfather. I look forward to the opportunity to study and develop new technologies and treatments for ocular disease to continue defending the sense so many find as valuable as life itself. Although it seems impossible, a sheet of cloth can push a boat almost straight into the wind and a tube the size of a human eyelash can save an optic nerve. I hope to master both.