

Developing your Research Statement

Variably called a Research Statement, Statement of Research Goals or Interests, or Research Agenda, many academic job searches give you the opportunity to present your scholarly accomplishments in a summary document. A research statement is often a critical part of your job application packet, but it doesn't end there. Throughout a career in academia you are likely to be asked to prepare similar documents for annual reviews, reappointment and tenure packages, and for promotion. Shorter summaries may be submitted for awards or publicity, or may appear on your departmental web pages. For this reason, the time you commit to crafting a thoughtful and provocative statement of your research interests is an investment in your academic career.

An effective research statement accomplishes three key goals:

1. clearly **presents** your scholarship in non-specialist terms;
2. places your research in a broader **context**, scientifically and societally; and
3. lays out a clear **road-map** for future accomplishments in the new setting (the institution to which you're applying).

Evaluation of Successful Research Statements

Read the two sample statements, each used in recent, successful academic job searches. What works best in these examples? As you read, consider these questions:

- How does the applicant convey and frame their major accomplishments? What is the balance between high-level concepts and concrete examples, and how does this work in the statement?
- How does the applicant convince the reader of the importance of their work? Are they explicit, or is it implied? Again, concrete or general, or both?
- What does the statement do to communicate the research trajectory of the applicant?

Articulate the core ideas of your own Research Statement

Practice writing down some lines answering the following questions:

- What is your central, overarching research question?
- What specific analytical techniques do you employ? List one:
- What is the most scientifically interesting (or: the most socially relevant) application of your work?
- What is one research question or direction raised by your present work that you would like to address in the future?

Capitalizing on the work you've already done

How does this exercise tie back into your self-introduction? When you introduce yourself professionally, are you already satisfying one or more of the three key goals of your research statement? How could you expand your self-introduction statement into a paragraph for your own research statement?