

UMKC English :: Sample Statement of Purpose :: M.A. Program

I have always wanted to teach. As a small child, I used to teach my cat about the books I was reading, and as I grew older, I helped my peers whenever possible in classes. When everyone said I would be a teacher, I resisted and explored various majors including law, geology, and graphic arts before realizing that teaching is an inherent part of me. I decided to teach history because I excelled at it, and as part of my degree requirements, I took a British literature course at Johnson County Community College (JCCC). During this class, Dr. Jim McWard helped me see the wonders of “Holy Sonnet 14,” and from then on, I wanted to explore symbolism, rhetoric, and historical and social contexts. I found my first literature class extremely challenging, and I watched as my writing changed due to the close reading and textual analyzation required of me. With each revision, I wondered at the change in how I expressed my thoughts. I enjoyed the challenge of literature, and I realized that I wanted to share this quest with others; I promptly became an English major.

While I was undergoing this transformation, I started tutoring at the JCCC Writing Center. Working with students allowed me to see the evolution of the writing process from multiple perspectives, and the Writing Center possessed a congenial atmosphere, where professors and students mingled and exchanged ideas concerning literature and writing. I soon became familiar with the idea of sharing experiences and research. In addition to tutoring, I began to assist Dr. Mary Grace Foret by leading an ESL study group focused on building conversation skills. As I developed lessons around current political topics and short articles, I learned the behind the scenes aspects of teaching, and as I watched my students progress, I enjoyed their progress almost as much as they did.

After two years of tutoring, I transferred to UMKC and to the UMKC Writing Center as well. Although the environment at UMKC was supportive, it contrasted that of JCCC. At JCCC, I learned to discuss my ideas, but at UMKC, I learned how to marshal those ideas into research projects, papers, and presentations. Over the last three years, I have seen the obstacles and joys of a career in the English world, and despite knowing that I will be one of three hundred applicants for any position that I apply for, I wish to teach at the college level.

As I witnessed the academic environment around me, I wanted to become more involved in addition to class discussion. As a result, I began serving with the Undergraduate English Council, and last spring, I helped organize the first Undergraduate English Research Symposium with the help of Rasheeda Plenty and Lisa Maser. After sharing my research once, I found myself enjoying the research and writing process more; however, I started to notice that I have twin interests. I enjoy working with the rhetoric and images of medieval texts, and I wish to pursue an advanced understanding of literature; however, I also cannot ignore the influence of five years of tutoring. I believe that my time as a tutor has helped prepare me for teaching in that I constantly see the writing process from a student’s perspective in addition to my own.

Now, as I finish my undergraduate degree, I am enjoying seeing several of my projects expand and evolve as my understanding and literature continues to grow. I look forward to helping others take part in the enjoyable academic world that I have witnessed.