Statement of Purpose for MA, MFA, and Ph.D. Applicants

All applicants to the MA, MFA, and Ph.D. programs must submit a detailed Statement of Purpose for admission to the Department of English at SIUC. The statement consists of one or more double-spaced, typed pages (350-700 words) that address the questions below. These questions do not have to be answered in order or in equal detail. The Graduate Studies Committee views the statement of purpose as a chance for applicants to detail their future projects and intellectual interests as well as how department faculty can assist in developing these projects and interests. Although the committee is interested in applicants’ broader career goals, it is most interested in their specific literary, rhetorical, and creative interests.

- In what aspect of literary or rhetorical studies are you interested? Do you have an interest in any specific literary period, critical or theoretical approach, or research topic? Do you have a research or creative project in mind? (MFA applicants: Also see the next section and direct your responses to reflect your creative writing interests and goals) Will you be able to satisfy these interests with the current English curricula at SIUC? What background (i.e., course training, professional or academic experience) prepares you to study English at the graduate level?
- Additional questions for MFA applicants only: Why are you seeking a degree in creative writing? What do you hope to gain from such a degree program? Which poets or writers, beyond the writers you have studied with as an undergraduate student, do you cite as influences upon your own writing?
- Why have you selected the English Department at SIUC? Do you, for instance, want to work with specific faculty? Are you attracted to specific programs or course offerings?
- If you are applying for a graduate assistantship, please discuss your interests in teaching. Do you, for instance, have any training in teaching? Do you envision a career in teaching, if so, at what level? What are your career goals in the fields of English? If your goals extend to fields outside academics and teaching, please explain how an advanced degree in English helps you meet them.

N.B.: The Graduate School requests a separate personal/biographical statement for fellowship applications. Please include this statement with your application if you wish to be considered for fellowships. However, the Graduate Studies Committee recommends that in the statement of purpose you detail only those personal qualities or biographical events that have a direct bearing on your intellectual and creative interests. In short, we recommend that you not construe the statement of purpose as primarily a “personal statement.”