



I. Motivation Statement: The UChicago **Knight-Hennessy Campus Endorsement** application requires a 1000-word “personal statement”. This statement is the heart of the national application process. We call it a “*motivation statement*”, which cuts to the core of what a good personal statement will do: provide the reader with a clearly written, nuanced narrative about why you are moving in the direction you are moving.

Knight-Hennessy is also interested in the following: how have the influences and/or experiences in your life shaped you? How will pursuing a Stanford education and your Knight-Hennessy Scholars experience prepare you to realize your intentions? Pursue your life's calling?

**These are just tips to help you through the campus endorsement writing process. As an endorsed candidate, CCRF staff will support you every step of the way taking your campus draft to final draft for national submission.*

A. Questions to get you thinking (you don't need to write answers to all these questions nor should you treat these as prompts for your statement. They are intended to get you started thinking about what may go into your motivation statement):

- What gets you out of bed in the morning?
- What keeps you awake at night?
- What hurts you about the world and how do you hope to contribute to alleviating that hurt?
- What is/are the big issue(s) you care most about? What's at stake? Why should the reader care about your care for those issues?
- Where does the care for such issues originate? Why does this matter to you?
- Why have you chosen your major(s) and how do they prepare you for success at the graduate level or contribute to your thinking about the big issues you are interested in?
- What are some (3-4) of the experiences that affirm and illustrate for your reader your commitment to the issues you care about (research, leadership, service, etc.)?
- What is your ultimate ambition (or what do you dream about being able to do if you freed yourself from perceived limits)? How would you go about actualizing that ambition? Be bold, brave, and specific in answering this question.
- Why will a graduate degree in the UK or Ireland get you closer to realizing your ambition or vocational plan?
- How would you describe your developing sense of purpose (what the world needs and how your talents/gifts respond to those needs)?
- What do you want to be remembered for?

B. Tips to get you started:

- Think about writing the statement as independent paragraphs to start with. This will feel less overwhelming than trying to sit down and craft 1000 good words. Write through those key, formative experiences and what they've taught you about the issues you care about and about yourself separately. Then, think about how they might tie together.
- Write at least one paragraph about your academic experience at UChicago and how that has prepared you for your next steps.



- Do everything possible to avoid abstract, theoretical language. A good motivation or personal statement is going to “show” not “tell”. Use your experiences to guide the reader through the case you are building for why you should have the chance to have the Knight-Hennessy program support through ABC graduate program and into your imagined life. In other words, don’t write like you’ve been taught to write at UChicago.
- This should not be a political position statement or a journal entry. It should elevate your intellectual voice but also include the personal narrative.
- Do not write chronologically. There is nothing more boring than a statement that simply narrates a CV and starts with your earliest experience, moving forward to your most recent.
- Write from your present tense and focus on your recent past, as needed. If you are compelled to include something from further back in your past, use it to buttress you more recent experiences and/or as a reflexive tool.
- This is a futurist document; it should use the present/recent past to point the reader toward your imagined future.
- Do not be afraid of naming your imagined position or future. These fellowships will not fund your next existential crisis or some “exploratory” experience. They are going to fund candidates with a clear sense of purpose who have been courageous enough to undertake the thought exercise required in imagining a possible future. Terms like “maybe” or “might”, or “haven’t decided yet”, will not fly. Write in the affirmative knowing that no one will take away your scholarship if your plans change. This is, after all, a motivation statement pitched toward a *proposed* future.
- Remember, we would like to know why you care about you care about *and* why we should care about what you care about. That is, what’s at stake?
- Above all...truly, above all else, *be authentic*.

C. Strategies for construction:

- The introductory paragraph should capture your reader’s attention and invite them to keep reading. We suggest that you kick-it off with a provocative (but authentic) statement about the issue(s) that are driving you forward. This should be one or two sentences followed immediately with something about *you* and *your intention* to be a part of addressing those issues. Do not provide a paragraph of context about the issues you care about; we don’t need a history lesson. We just want to understand what is so urgent about your concerns and how that is motivating your agency. This could and should be one of the shortest paragraphs in your entire text. You may also write it last, after your written through the body of your text.
- The body of the text should consist of the individual paragraphs detailing especially relevant experiences that are moving toward this path you are proposing. Pay attention to your transitions. It is up to you to “walk” the reader through the text.
- Include a concluding, “exit” paragraph about why the Stanford program(s) of choice (brief) and how they will support you in becoming the next XYZ.



- Be specific; talk about actual experiences; do not devolve into abstraction or generalities. Your reader does not have the patience to wade through verbose, unclear text. Write with clarity and use lucid prose.
- **Do not assume the reader will connect the dots for you.** They simply won't. So, connect the dots, provide clear explanations, and write to a reader who may not know all the secret codes/acronyms/language of the University of Chicago.
- Spell-check; avoid contractions; do not use adverbs or colloquial language.
- When you start stitching together your paragraphs, write long. You can eventually cut it down to a tight, lucid essay of 1000-words.

D. A note about the campus endorsement draft: This will not be your final draft. But, it should be a good first draft. Your endorsement depends on it. That said, our selection committee is not expecting perfection. If endorsed, you will have the summer to work with CCRF staff to get your first drafts (of the motivation statement and the short essays) into tip-top shape. You can count on a lot of revision (and support). So, don't write 18 drafts of your campus application. Just do your best to put forward a solid draft.

B. Prompts for the short answers portion of the Knight-Hennessy Campus Endorsement application:

1. **Proposed Academic Program at Stanford (200-words max):** Candidates should describe their top-choice department and proposed program of study at Stanford, giving specific reasons for their program of choice. Those intending to apply for a research-based degree should provide an outline of the proposed research they wish to undertake. Candidates are also encouraged to identify the faculty with whom they wish to work and/or who may supervise their research, if relevant. Candidates *do not* need to reach out to faculty in advance of the campus application processes.
2. **Evidence of ambition for others (350-words max):** Candidates should describe an experience that exhibits their "ambition for others" – that is a significant, meaningful leadership or service experience in which they recognized and responded to needs greater than themselves. This can be related to a candidate's "big issues" or the things they care about academically, politically, or socially. It can also include a discussion about failure; not everything we try works the way we hope. If an effort didn't work perfectly, reflect on the motivations but also where things went a bit sideways.
3. **Post-scholarship plan (350-words max):** What are your immediate and long-term intentions after graduating from Stanford?
4. **List of 8 improbable facts: *this is a list, not a narrative essay.*** Candidates should list eight (8) interesting things about themselves, their experiences, and/or their lives. This should not be a list of accolades or awards, nor taken from the CV. It should provide for the reader interesting information that would not otherwise be in the application. It can be humorous, unexpected, informal, and should be specific to you. Don't over think this.