Personal Statement for General Surgery

Discipline, compassion, and determination have been my leading character traits and are the driving forces for becoming a surgeon. Through family, sports, academics, and research, I have combined these traits to achieve my goals in life. Discipline motivates me and permits me to maximize my potential as a future surgeon. Immigrating to this country meant learning a new language, understanding a different culture, and dealing with daily reminders of a lost home. During this time of maturation, I learned my parents' rules of daily life very early. Strategic planning of before school language sessions, after school math lessons, and early employment, provided a strong work ethic and developed an important framework for my growing years. From the starched Air Force uniforms my father wore, to the symmetrically placed silverware on the table during the mandatory dinner gatherings, I learned the concept of discipline. I advanced this discipline into the field of athletics during high school football. Early on, I learned how to push my body to its limits and acquired the important quality of being a team player. Later, I was chosen as a team captain, and developed the vital role of being a leader, directing other players toward winning a championship.

I pursued a career in medicine after realizing that an engineering career would not provide the necessary challenges. My surgical interests led me to gaining hands-on experience in the field of transplant surgery by working at an organ and tissue procurement organization. During full-time college studies, I tasted the lifestyle and demands of surgery by taking overnight calls, speaking with grieving families, and spending long hours in operating rooms performing sterile surgical procedures. This exposed me to great responsibilities, fine-tuned my qualities of discipline, and developed my sense for precision and delicacy. I learned that through perseverance, hard work, and compassion, I could provide hope to organ recipients and closure to donor families.

Compassion focuses me, and provides calmness when caring for the surgical patient. I entered medical school seeking to provide hope to patients and their families, such as I had experienced as a surgical coordinator. Joining the ASCEND program, a student run organization, I provided one-on-one tutoring and computer cognitive therapy to Alzheimer's patients. I served as the sole caregiver for patients and their families who sought care and compassion amidst the downward progression of the disease. To better
understand dementia progression, I initiated a clinical research project that utilized computer software to slow the advancement of memory loss. This project gave me confidence that through diligent work and compassion, I could contribute to the field of research.

Determination is the third component of my character. I want to pursue the demanding subspecialty of cardiothoracic surgery. My long-standing fascination with the dynamics and electro-physical properties of the heart led me to a prominent researcher in the field of cardiac electrophysiology. Soon I realized that committing a full year of research would prove instrumental towards attaining my future goals. With my background in optical engineering, I contributed novel and creative techniques in studying the mammalian heart. I spent countless hours performing experiments in the laboratory, reviewing my college optical engineering textbooks, and perusing medical literature on cardiovascular electrophysiology. This solidified my aspirations for becoming a cardiothoracic surgeon.

My life experiences have reinforced my desire to become a surgeon and have rewarded me with significant knowledge about myself. I feel that people’s achievements in life are highly dependent on their ability to challenge their limitations and later expand on them. My non-traditional approach to medicine has assured me that I will be able to contribute unique views to the field of surgery and that I will be ready for the challenges a surgical career has to offer. Through discipline, compassion, and determination, I am confident that I will, as Vince Lombardi states, "apply the best of myself to the task at hand."

"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." Vince Lombardi