

What should be included in an informative Statement of Intent Letter?

Graduate student applications contain GRE scores, reference letters and academic transcripts are informative about potential students to the Plant Sciences Graduate Applicant Review Committee. Unless we are fortunate to already know you, or have met you during a visit you made to campus, the committee is likely to struggle to gain any insight into your **creativity, intellectual curiosity, work ethic, research and teaching interests, academic or professional career goals, or writing competency** and we often struggle to make realistic **interpretations about your academic past**. Even if we do know you, an effective graduate student must be a capable communicator; able to convey his or her research interests and why anyone else should care. Faculty reviewing your application will likely be more favorably impressed if you directly address these points in a clear and concise (not to exceed 1000 words) letter, keeping in mind that entrance into graduate school and access to resources is an extremely competitive process.

- What makes *you* a good candidate to receive financial and/or time support from one of our faculty mentors? Why should we invest our time and money in *you*?
- Why UT? Why *our* Department of Plant Sciences?
- With which of our individual faculty would you like to study...and *why*? If you have *already identified* one of our faculty members who has discussed with you a project and/or funds available for graduate studies, it would be important to state why you are a good match with their interests.
 - Stated interest by our faculty in reviewing your credentials is not an offer of a graduate research, graduate teaching or graduate assistantship.
 - *If your application is successful, following the Graduate Applicant Review Committee decision, you will be advised in writing by the Plant Sciences' Department Head. You must formally accept the tendered offer to become eligible to receive assistantship support.*
- What intellectual aspect of Plant Sciences interests you enough to *want* to apply to Graduate School...why *this* field of science? Be as specific as you can.
- What contribution do *you* believe *you* can make to support our research, teaching and extension missions? To the future of Plant Science or agriculture?
- Do you have grades/issues in your past you're not content that your transcripts or references will address? Discuss them here.
- *What are* your long-term professional and life goals? What is *your* "dream job" (and are you willing to work to achieve it)? How might a UT Plant Sciences' MS or PhD degree can prepare you to achieve your goals?

What **not** to include in your letter (keep in mind that applicants have only one opportunity to make a good first impression).

- Typos, misspelled words and slang.
- Excess informality (this narrative is too informal).
- Generalities. We want to really know, specifically what you want to do.