

Dear University Team,

This is my personal statement expressing reasons for pursuing advanced studies in chemistry. My love for science developed as a result of being bribed by my junior high school science teacher, Mrs. Deveaux. When I reflect on the bribe, I laugh to myself thinking, "How could I fall for that?" She bribed a classroom of twenty-eight 12 and 13-year-olds, promising to purchase a cell phone for anyone who received an 'A' on their general science Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) exam; which in the Bahamas is equivalent to a state end of course exam. I was so excited about the possibility of getting a cell phone that I studied like my life depended on it. Ultimately, I earned the grade but never received the cell phone. While I was upset that I didn't get the phone, I was proud that I achieved what I once thought was an impossible feat. Spending so much time immersed in science and understanding how in I acquired a love for scientific inquiry that it inspired me, even so, many years later, to make a direct impact on the world and communities through science and education. I look forward to earning a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from Florida State University so that I can inspire students to connect with science and reach their personal goals just as Mrs. Deveaux did for me. Please accept this personal statement as an opportunity to learn about my professional and educational background, my interest in this program, and long-term goals.

After graduating high school, I left my entire family in The Bahamas and journeyed to the United States to become the first person in my immediate family to receive a college education. In the fall of 2013, I earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Florida Memorial University. While pursuing my undergraduate degree, I had the opportunity to intern at Florida International University with the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry as a Research Assistant. My job was to assist graduate students with their research. I was trained to perform many of the general laboratory skills required in the lab, including maintaining a lab notebook, preparing solutions and dilutions, growing bacteria and protein expression and purification. As a result of this experience, I understand the expectations of a graduate student, what a typical day in the lab looks like and how to work with a team in order to accomplish common goals.

During summer 2013, I worked under the supervision of Dr. Stiffin, the Chair of the Health and Natural Science Department at Florida Memorial University, to conduct my senior research project. I was responsible for designing and carrying out an independent research project. I proposed that compounds synthesized using aldehydes and indanones, because of their theoretical structure, would have biological activity. I synthesized and characterized these compounds and tested them for their antimicrobial and antifungal activities. I spent the summer and my final semester designing and conducting this research and realized how important the implications of this and similar research may have on combating illnesses that plague communities; particularly communities of color. Although my research focused on synthesizing compounds that may have antibacterial or antifungal activity, I feel compelled to pursue research in cancer biology because of its impacts in the African American community. Research by the American Cancer Society shows that African Americans have the highest mortality rate and lowest survival rate for any racial and ethnic group in the United States for most cancers. I have personally been impacted by the devastations of cancer. My junior high school science teacher lost her fight with breast cancer in 2011. My aunt lost her life to ovarian cancer in 2015, and one of my college friends lost both of her parents to cancer while pursuing her undergraduate degree.

I have turned this pain into a mission to conduct innovative research that will one day prevent, treat and ultimately eradicate diseases like cancer. My ultimate goal and purpose for pursuing this degree are to merge targeted cancer therapeutics research and my passion for education by becoming a college research professor. Because of the amazing educational experiences that I've had with teachers like Mrs. Deveaux and Dr. Stiffin, I desire to continue working with young adults in order to inspire them through science education.

After four years of classroom teaching experience, employed as a secondary school science teacher, it is time to return to academic study to further my professional goals. The Biochemistry Ph.D. program at Florida State University has the elements necessary for me to accomplish this goal. Access to state of the art research facilities and professors who are dedicated to innovation in biochemistry are just a couple of qualities that attract me to this program. In addition, the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry provides students with the opportunity to explore various research interests and is concerned with their students' contributing to scientific knowledge (The Florida State University). This is important to me because it will equip me with more research skills as I am planning to do an interdisciplinary research. I am interested in the interdisciplinary research so that at the end the work will be predictive and well explained. It is also important to me because although I want to focus on cancer biology and targeted cancer therapeutics, there is an opportunity to be creative while learning from a diverse group of intellectuals who will challenge me and sharpen my critical thinking skills further. Working with the diverse group of intellectuals will influence my creativity because I will be able to predict and integrate alternative ideas and viewpoints from different works of other researchers which in turn will help me in my research. I particularly look forward to possibly working with Dr. Sang and participating in her lab because of the extensive research that is being done on cancer biomarkers. Much of the research occurring in her lab is parallel with my research interest and Dr. Sang's wealth of knowledge is inspirational. I, too, hope to be an innovator in cancer biology, and I know that this can be accomplished at Florida State University.

My undergraduate and professional experiences have collectively equipped me with a well-rounded set of skills necessary to be successful in graduate school. I am confident that my independence, ability to work well with others, attention to detail and perseverance will serve me well. I look forward to joining this program, learning, and adding to a growing body of research at the prestigious Florida State University.

Works Cited

The Florida State University. "Graduate Curriculum." Department of Chemistry [FSU],
www.chem.fsu.edu/graduate/curriculum.php. Accessed 27 Nov. 2017.

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