

Personal Statements: PhD in Public Policy & Management
Ohio State University (John Glenn College of Public Affairs)

Prompt: *Indicate your academic and career goals, your interest in the John Glenn College of Public Affairs, and how your education and work experience qualify you for admission. There is no length requirement for the personal statement. In addition to indicating academic and career goals, doctoral applicants are required to describe their research interests and how these research interests fit with the interest of the Glenn College faculty.*

As someone who spent his early life planning to study biology, I took a long time—until the gap year between high school and college, precisely—to realize that the answers to the questions that interested me most lay not in the natural, but rather the social sciences. I was the young child who innocently wondered about the acute poverty that existed on the streets of Lahore, the pre-teen puzzled by his father's concern over the 2008 Karachi stock market crash, and the cynical teenager who wondered whether the government was any use at all amidst intense political polarizations. My interests lie now not in how people function in their natural environment, but in the decisions they make within society, how these affect others around them, and how better decisions, both large and small, can be made. My undergraduate work in economics and politics has given me a basic framework for better understanding the social problems that have always interested me, and I believe that studying public policy at the graduate level will give me more tools to map out solutions to these issues. My career goal is to conduct research on public policy matters, particularly labor market and economic development issues, whether as a part of the government, a private think-tank, or a university, and to have the freedom to continue to learn about the world around me.

My interest in this field largely grew out of my internship experience at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives (IDEAS) in the year between my high school graduation and entering college. I was tasked with proofreading the literature review and bibliography for a research paper entitled "An Investigation into Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Punjab", and what could have been a boring and menial task piqued my interest in the process of researching, writing, and publishing academic papers. Although many of the paper's analytical methods were far over my head at the time, I learned about the potential real-world impacts of statistical analysis and also realized the true breadth of the public policy field. I left IDEAS with a newfound dedication to pursue my own independent research as I continued my academic career in college and beyond.

Ohio Wesleyan University gave me both the skills and the opportunity to explore my academic interests that developed during my time at IDEAS. *Research Methods in Economics* with Dr. Goran Skosples first taught me to perform some of the analyses that I had read about and thus enabled me to do my own research for the first time in my final paper, "Largest Recipients of Foreign Direct Investment: The Determinants". While learning to use Microsoft Excel's regression analysis, working through the difficulties of collecting large data sets, and correcting for violations of linear regression assumptions (specifically homoscedasticity), I was able to put forth a model that helped explain the enormous inequalities in the amounts of FDI received by different countries. *Labor Economics* and *Public Finance*, both taught by Dr. Robert Gitter, were two of my most influential college courses largely because of their focus on the operation of the government and its relationship to those it represents. I thus drew on my experiences in these courses when completing my second academic research paper, this time for my Econometrics course. This time

working with IBM's SPSS, I wrote my term paper entitled "A Look at the Key Determinants of the Participation of Females in the Workforce". Using national cross-sectional data, I was surprised to find that wages and salaries were not as impactful determinants of female labor force participation as were the racial composition of a state and levels of higher education. From a public policy perspective, this suggests that, if we as a country wish to have more women participate in the labor force, then we ought to combat racial discrimination and rising tuition costs, rather than focusing solely on increasing women's wages. These results demonstrated to me the complexity of public policy issues, and also confirmed both my ability and desire to continue doing work of this nature.

Ohio State University's unique blend of public policy and management, along with its esteemed faculty, set it apart from other universities. It is crucial for professionals in this field to have both the rigorous policy analysis skills and administrative expertise, and I know that I would be able to gain both through an education at OSU. I am also particularly excited about the opportunity to work with both Dr. Robert Greenbaum and Dr. Katie Vinopal. Greenbaum's paper "The Impact of Terrorism on Italian Employment and Business Activity" (Greenbaum et al.) encapsulated the labor economics issues that I am interested in studying in this program. Much of my interest in studying public policy stems from my upbringing in Pakistan, and Greenbaum's paper provides helpful insight and methodology for conducting a replica model on a smaller scale with Pakistani employment and businesses. Vinopal's "Re-Conceptualizing Gaps by Socioeconomic Status in Parental Time with Children" (Vinopal and Gershenson) also struck me as relevant on many levels: personally as an immigrant hailing from a middle class family in a developing nation, professionally as someone interested in studying the causes of socioeconomic gaps, and as an American permanent resident living in the currently mercurial sociopolitical climate.

There is so much I must learn and so many answers that I seek. I am eager to bring my questions, dedication, and discipline to The Ohio State University; I only hope that you are willing to supply me with the skills and tools needed for me to get to my answers.

I look forward to your response.