

Personal Statement for Tufts University

Prompt: Indicate why you are interested in this program and how it might help your career/future plans. Describe your background, current situation, and future goals.

I believe that food and nutrition play a vital role in enhancing quality of life, but are frequently neglected topics when considering contemporary public and community health. I grew up in a family that valued growing and cooking quality food, and I naturally inherited a deeply engrained desire for fueling my body in the best way possible. Ever since I found out I had insulin resistance as a child, I have been adamantly interested in food and how it relates to the human condition. Additionally, after personally experiencing sports-induced anemia during my teenage years, I learned that specific nutrients are crucial for psychological, social, cognitive, and physical well-being. Thereafter, my intention was to study the chemical processes that occur after eating and the complex, fascinating way food provides human bodies the energy and nourishment needed to function. A growing world population has made the modern food system fixated on quantifying and improving the efficiency of food production, but I believe this has adversely affected the nutrient density of the American diet, affordability and access to healthy food, treatment of workers and animals, and the environment. My goal is to become a registered dietitian and utilize my knowledge of nutrition and its relation to public health to alleviate some of these issues through education and action.

Two summers of scientific research at outside universities, experiences in my own university's chemistry labs, and service as a General Chemistry lab TA have greatly expanded my working knowledge of various scientific techniques and instruments, improved my analytical skills, and enhanced my ability to draw scientific conclusions. Also, during my time at Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU) I have been able to explore the intersection between chemistry, food, nutrition, and cooking with two Directed Readings courses: The Biochemistry of Nutrition and The Chemistry of Cooking. These specialized classes allowed me to combine my multiple academic interests and further cultivated my intrigue about the combination of food and science. I am confident in my technical and academic qualifications, but I also take special pride in my abilities as a multitasker, communicator, and leader. Being a student athlete at a small liberal arts school compelled me to develop my interpersonal skills, actively seek leadership opportunities, and learn how to balance my responsibilities and activities.

Although I was primarily interested in the biochemical reactions involving food as a freshman, this interest has evolved into an ardor for both the food system and nutrition education. I have discovered how my scientific interests apply to broader global issues through my liberal arts education, which has drastically sharpened my perspectives about my true passions. The first thought-provoking experience that refined my future plans occurred freshman year while I was taking part in the Bite! Sagan National Colloquium. I was able to hear from several prominent speakers about how food plays an important part in social justice issues, health problems, sustainability concerns, national identity, and the simple pleasures of day-to-day life. The semester-long lecture series opened my eyes to the multi-disciplinary nature of food and how intimately it is connected to all aspects of life.

Secondly, pursuing travel experiences and putting classroom knowledge about food traditions, systems, and supply chains into practice while at OWU has caused me to revise how I wish to make a difference in the world. I took a qualitative research class as a freshman, which included two weeks of observations in Italy, to examine the food traditions and memories of

those in the surrounding Delaware, Ohio community and compare aspects of the American and Italian food systems. As a junior, I was able to further expand upon my previous qualitative research in Italy by collaborating with a faculty advisor and another student; together we wrote and were awarded an OWU Theory-to-Practice Grant. The main purpose of our project was to investigate the dynamics of a short food supply chain (SFSC) in several settings to gain a better understanding of its underlying function, structure, and constructed meaning. Exploring topics across cultures prompted me to think in global terms and identify that common themes such as food justice, security, and sustainability are prevalent in food production and distribution systems all over the planet.

Finally, the work I've done with the non-profit organization *Local Matters* has been the most life-changing and career defining experience I've had as an undergraduate. I helped develop a satellite Cooking Matters program at OWU and served as a culinary instructor for three semesters, educating food insecure adults from the community about planning and cooking nutritious, appetizing, and affordable meals. During my time as an instructor, I was able to combine my own expertise in nutrition and biochemistry with the lesson plans provided in the Cooking Matters curricula to succinctly convey important health information. My involvement with Cooking Matters has been extensively rewarding and worthwhile; it has shown me that a positive difference can be made in a population's food security and wellness within just a few weeks. I enjoy it so profoundly that I have decided to cultivate my enthusiasm with further schooling and a career in community nutrition education. I aim to work specifically in food insecure areas because they are most in need of general nutrition education and basic access to affordable yet nutritious foods.

The extraordinary opportunities and experiences I've had as an undergraduate allowed me to apply the information I learned in class and gave me diversity of thought to formulate new ideas for creating a healthier society through food and lifestyle changes. Thus far, my encounters with Tufts University have been nothing but positive and intellectually stimulating. The Nutrition Interventions, Communication, and Behavior Change program, coupled with a completion of the DPD, would grant me a unique set of skills, including a scientific understanding of nutrition, the capacity to analyze and decipher the literature, and the capability to transmit this knowledge in a clear and comprehensible manner. Completion of this exemplary program, along with a registered dietitian certification, will lend me the knowledge essential for ensuring more people have the resources available to them to use inexpensive, nutrient-dense and delicious food to fuel and improve their lives. I would love to earn a Master's degree and develop the expertise necessary for a future in food and community nutrition education at such an impressive and inspiring university.