

Rhodes Scholarship Personal Statement

I still remember the damaged smiles of the abandoned, elderly residents at the St. Vincent de Paul house in Curitiba, Brazil like it was yesterday. Their weathered faces lit up as the junior team of Clube Atletico Paranaense and I climbed out of the bus to spend the day with them. I was just seventeen and barely spoke Portuguese, but I immediately wanted to be able to help these people. So I sat and listened to their stories, smiled and laughed with them and tried to learn from them. The smiles on their faces at the end of the day told me I had made a difference in their lives. My passion for helping people was solidified at that moment, but the impact of the experience was just beginning.

Experiences such as this have influenced my ideas about what I can do to help people. When I think about my future, my thoughts often drift to my grandfather, a French history professor and my idol as a young man. His pensive, calm demeanor and wisdom garnered respect even from strangers – qualities I aspire to. I wonder if one particular experience sparked his interest and life's work as a French historian (he had wanted to be either a Davis Cup tennis player or an archeologist growing up); I never had the chance to ask. I suspect his passion for modern French history came from a scholarship he received to study in France in 1932. I suspect from this opportunity he decided he could best serve the world by passing along his passion for learning and knowledge to his students. When I reflect about my grandfather's life, I wonder where and how I can benefit others through my passions.

My intellectual passion leading up to college was the human body and medical science. My scientific passion remains strong to this day, but during my time in Brazil I also fell in love with Brazilian culture and people. I had traveled to Brazil to improve as a soccer player, but left with a thirst for the Portuguese language and all things Brazilian. This thirst led to the study of a very different subject than most college students interested in medical school, Portuguese. Though some argue that my choice will negatively impact my medical school aspirations, I believe simply makes me unique. A teacher once told me "knowledge entails expression;" the ability to speak Portuguese is a skill that will give me the opportunity to help people like those I met in Curitiba. That is very important to me even if it meant I had to compromise some of my desires for more scientific studies as an undergraduate.

Compromise is part of being a scholar-athlete (I played on the men's soccer team); course choices were often limited by practice and scheduling issues. However through athletics I have developed a strong work ethic, dedication, and time-management skills. As a direct result of being an athlete, I have been able to pursue all of my passions-science, soccer and helping people. Further, soccer has helped me develop strong communication skills that enable me to work with others towards a shared goal. Such skills will be invaluable in my future endeavors and essential to success, which is why I view playing collegiate sports as an investment I made in myself. Soccer is part of my life; I love to play, it keeps me healthy and opens doors.

Playing soccer for the Cape Cod Crusaders in Boston for a summer gave me the chance to intern with a radiologist at Brigham & Women's Hospital. Working on a scientific study in the medical profession helped reaffirm my interest in imaging technology, radiation treatment, and medicine as a whole. While I was at Brigham, I shadowed numerous doctors in various words of the hospital, and observed in nearly all of the imaging groups. This experience also raised questions that I want to answer for myself. With so many opportunities for something to go wrong in our bodies, how and when does radiation stimuli push us over that edge? What measures can be taken to prevent such harm and how can we treat such damage? These are ongoing questions that scientists researching various forms of cancer and pathways of oncogenes ask, and the questions I wish to investigate.

The knowledge obtained from answering such questions will help me instill trust and hope in my patients. Reading for Master of Science degrees in Diagnostic Imaging and Radiation Biology at Oxford will be a vital experience towards this destination. Imaging technology is frequently used to provide less invasive care, and through studying radiation biology I will be able to answer questions about when and how things go wrong. Oxford has recently dedicated a brand new building for Radiation Oncology and Biology (the Gray Institute), and Radiation Biology is being offered for the very first time at Oxford this fall. This constitutes an environment for the study of these two subject areas that is ideal: brand new facilities coupled with a clear focus and investment in this research.

After this tremendous opportunity, I plan on attending medical school followed by a position at a research hospital with a large Portuguese-speaking population. One day I hope to inspire a new generation through teaching, and develop a medical mission to a Portuguese-speaking country.

Though I did not make the connection at the time, the elderly individuals in Curitiba struck a deep chord in me. One individual quoted a popular Brazilian phrase, “Eu sou Brasileiro e eu desiste nunca” (I am Brazilian and I will never give up). This quality of determination is a sentiment I use to motivate myself internally in everything I do – an inner drive that will power me into a bright future as I continue to mature and learn. (965 Words)

I certify this is my own work.