Sample Personal Statement

I sometimes joke with people that my ideal job is to one day be the CEO of Apple Computer. While in some ways I'm just trying to be cute, there is also some truth to the ambition (but please don't tell Steve Jobs about my plan.) My ideals were hatched back in high school when I participated in the state's Governor's School for Information Technology and thus was exposed to a wide variety of topics that were previously foreign to me: UML, HCI, and even computer ethics. During that time I became convinced that IT was the field for me and discovered focused academic goals that have guided my path ever since.

As a small beginning towards achieving my big plans, from the moment I arrived at college, I became involved in the Information Technology (IT) program in every way possible. I was one of only two freshmen to become involved in the IT Student Government and I eventually earned a spot as a weekly columnist for the university's newspaper commenting on issues related to computers and society. Later I became involved in the university's Mac Society – an organization of about 40 devoted students from various fields who design and share IT projects and actively promote the use of Mac computers on campus (our facetious logo notes that we "don't do Windows.") For the last three semesters I have served as President of this organization.

Although IT has certainly been the focus of my education and activities, I realize that it is important not to go through life with blinders on. For that reason, I have taken a set of general education courses that pique my other interests. This set of courses includes art, astronomy, biological science, and political science. While each course is in itself worthwhile, I find myself fascinated by the interdisciplinary implications. For instance, my astronomy professor made extensive use of computer simulations that he creates to help illustrate how stars are born and to give the class a virtual fly-through tour of the universe. Such exciting lessons drive me to move forward in my education and discover ways that computers can be used even further in a wide variety of fields. Put simply, I love being actively involved in my own education.

Looking forward to graduate research, I have spent one semester and one summer on two research projects. In the first, under a professor's guidance I co-created a project involving agile methods – a new approach to software development. I collaborated on a literature review of the latest case studies and expert opinions, and the result was my first research paper, which later took second place in the form of a poster at the university's Undergraduate Research Fair. Secondly, I completed a summer internship at the nearby city hospital, where I developed an application for quantifying liver fibrosis on biopsies. In consultation with several doctors from the Gastroenterology Section, I wrote a paper detailing our highly successful results and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the project to those doctors completing their residency programs at the hospital. These experiences helped me to refine my research, writing, and speaking skills, which I greatly look forward to continuing through graduate study.

My specific interest in the program at Mythic University has been further galvanized by e-mail and phone contact I have made with Dr. John Teacher, whom I hope to work with as my graduate advisor. We have discussed plans for me to work on a project that will involve an empirical study of user explanation requirements from cognitive models – essentially human-computer interaction for intelligent agents. For

example we might show a video of simulated airplanes on a display to non-expert users and provide various explanations for the plane's behavior via text, synthesized speech, etc., with the goal of determining which format users find most helpful.

As I look ahead to this project and the possibility of working with Dr. Teacher and others in Mythic University's Information Technology Management program, I feel the same excitement that I did way back in high school while attending Governor's School. Driven by those ambitions, if I fail to take over Apple Computer some day, my backup plan is to spend a few years as a software engineer at Apple and to eventually work my way toward a law degree. If I do obtain my Juris Doctorate, I'm interested in the increasingly nuanced and complex field of internet law. Continuing on my ever-widening yet full-speed-ahead path, I am especially grateful for this opportunity to be considered by Mythic University as I work vigorously towards fulfilling my ambitions.