# Sample Personal Statement: Graduate School

I graduated from Wellesley College five years ago with a B.A. cum laude in sociology. After graduation I worked as an assistant to an executive at a publishing firm. The position was interesting and I did a lot of problem solving for my employer, but it did not seem as if it would lead to anything. I was a glorified secretary, and I wanted to do something more. Last year I went to Perth, Australia, a country I had always wanted to visit. I found the air just as clear and the spaces just as wide open as I had anticipated.

For some time I have realized that I wanted a new career. I have put much thought into this and have decided to apply to the program in urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I feel that the computer skills I acquired at school and work, along with the statistics and demography I learned in sociology, will be a great help in urban planning.

I see urban planning as a discipline that achieves beautiful results and makes communities better places to live. The planner deals with many groups of people with differing values, and tries to attend to their interests, while also serving the community as a whole and preserving the land and the countryside.

When I have traveled I’ve seen how our culture has gone awry, in the smog haze, the strip malls, and the desert towns that look like scabs. I sometimes think we are coming close to destroying our world. I don’t think that our rapaciousness makes us happy. It’s impossible to believe that the commuters choking the freeways want to be there.

I think it’s inertia and the lack of planning that keeps us stumbling along the same paths. I see urban planning as a possibility for change, a discipline that uses the knowledge we have to strive towards a new relationship with each other and with the earth. I’ve seen this firsthand in the traveling I’ve done to Los Angeles, where I worked as a sales clerk in a photo shop and also as a volunteer at the Museum of Contemporary Art, and in France, where I spent months living with a French family and learning to speak French.

My goal is a job working on urban and community planning in the public sector or in private consulting. I hope to work to help to create a more sustainable urban environment. The University of Illinois is particularly attractive to me, not only because of your program, but because of the location and your department’s involvement within the region. I like the fact that your faculty members are engaged in research and public service and I look forward to taking courses with them in environmental studies, community development and transportation and preservation planning. The Midwest is my home and I see its unique aspects. It combines big, sprawling cities like Chicago with small towns amid beautiful fertile country, and I want to study in the environment where I will work.