



Alan Brantley

2018 Stanford Application Personal Statement

Status: Accepted

Please provide a statement that addresses your reasons for transferring and the objectives you hope to achieve. You can type directly into the box, or you can paste text from another source.

When people ask me my major, I tell them; Math. When they ask me what I want to do, I tell them; write books. Mild surprise is the typical response. I am not your typical math major, and about as far from traditional as possible. When I arrived at Fullerton College 4 years ago, my history was certainly undistinguished. My scholastic accomplishments consisted entirely of earning my GED in 2002. Not surprisingly, my math skills were virtually non-existent. When I enrolled as a math major in 2014, I was placed where left off in the 9th grade and right where I wanted to be; pre-algebra.

At first, I couldn't perform basic mathematical operations. But I knew that I wanted to learn math, as much as possible and as completely as possible, and I have been dedicated to that endeavor since the day I finally decided to do something with my life. When I arrived, I couldn't multiply a number with a decimal or add a fraction. Now I can calculate the acceleration due to gravity on the Earth's surface. Or, I could write a program to do it for me! That's pretty cool. For a physics or computer science major, those things would likely be regarded as trivial. But to me, they're doorways into a world I never thought I would have access to. It's little things like these highlight how far I've come.

The intellectual path that guided me to seek an education in the natural sciences was born of the frustrating realization that fluency in English was insufficient to understand the nature of the universe as described by modern science. It was as if one needed advanced degrees to understand that the heck they were saying. So, that's precisely what I set out to do.

But my work as a Supplemental Instruction Leader and Growth Mindset Student Ambassador have added another layer to my ambitions. As an SI leader, I don't only help students with content, but also with strategies to learn and grow. I am passionate about this, and get no greater pleasure than convincing someone they have the ability to learn something they thought they never could. As a Growth Mindset Student Ambassador, I'm given more opportunity to talk and learn about learning. These experiences have impacted me in profound ways, as a learner, and as a human being. I always knew that if I were ever successful, in anything, the first thing I would want to would be share the secrets of my success, so others may find their own success, and more easily than I did.

My goals are the same as they were in the beginning; I want to write books. My idea, my hope, is to learn and master my chosen STEM subjects so that I can one day write about them in ways that make the concepts accessible to a wider range of people. I hope to one day express complex ideas in ways that even children can understand, and even enjoy. I believe that an approach such as this could dramatically improve interest in STEM subjects, especially in children. If our young ones today are as proficient with math and science as they are with computers and video games, imagine what our society's future might look like.

Beyond that, my desire is to go out into the world and make a difference. To inspire and be inspired, and simply to do. There are so many things I want to do with my life, if I accomplish only a fraction of them, I will have done well and made an impact.

One of my biggest dreams is to one day open my own school. What on Earth might I have to accomplish from now until then to make something like that happen? Honestly, I can't say. But I know the first thing I have to do is learn this math.