

Helpful hints for writing your Statement of Intent (SOI)

Students are often unsure of what to include in their statement of intent (SOI). The most important objective of the SOI is to inform the graduate admissions committee of the things that are not directly evident from the other parts of your application. Below we list a number of points that you are encouraged to consider when writing the SOI.

Avoid generalities

Applying to graduate school is very different from applying to college for your undergraduate (UG) degree. In particular, the SOI is *not equivalent* to the UG application essays. By applying to graduate school it is understood that you are interested in physics and passionate about science (otherwise you should not apply), and you *do not* have to state this explicitly. Instead the SOI is your opportunity to let the admissions committee know about specific information concerning the areas listed below.

Research experience

Have you done research as an undergraduate? If so what did you do and what did you learn from the experience? We don't expect groundbreaking original research, but we do look for experience outside a classroom environment. After all there is a distinct difference in the mindset for the two.

Research interest

Are there any particular areas that you would like to pursue in graduate school and why? Are you interested in experiment/observation or theory/modeling? This does *not* have to be the same area that you worked in as an undergraduate. While continuing in the same field is certainly acceptable, we urge you to consider this question a more broadly. After all, maybe you worked in a certain area simply because your UG institution offered research in a limited number of areas or you got accepted to a certain REU project. You should also know that the research area(s) that you discuss in your SOI are not binding, so there is no risk to being honest about your interests.

Why Notre Dame

What caused you to decide to apply to Notre Dame? Maybe you already know a faculty member that you would like to work with. Maybe there is a particular research group that piqued your interest, or other aspects of the physics graduate program that made you think that we would be good fit for you. This can also be for more personal reasons such as location, friends in the program, or a positive REU experience as an undergraduate.

Anything in particular you would like the admissions committee to be aware of

Include anything relevant that was not captured by other parts of the application. For example, this could be certain grades or test scores that you would like to address. You are encouraged to keep this factual and brief.