

C&IS PhD Statement of Purpose Guidelines

A statement of purpose is required of applicants to doctoral programs at The University of Alabama. The university Graduate School provides general recommendations for statements of purpose concerning length (1-2 pages) and substance (treatment of your background, reasons for pursuing the graduate degree program, and goals after graduation; <https://graduate.ua.edu/prospective-students/apply-now/supporting-documents>). For applicants to the PhD degree program in the College of Communication & Information Sciences, it may also be useful to entertain the following considerations.

1. In discussing your background, you should mention experiences, interests, activities, and/or achievements that helped shape your personal goals and subsequent endeavors (including your education). The answer to this question will help the admission committee understand your motivation for doctoral study.
2. You should bear in mind that the PhD program in Communication and Information Sciences particularly supports study and research in four academic units and seven disciplinary concentrations (see <https://cis.ua.edu/cis-doctoral-program>). If your reasons for pursuing the PhD in Communication & Information Sciences relate to study or research in any of these areas, you should mention this fact. Likewise, if there are specific faculty members in the College of Communication and Information Sciences with whom you would like to work during your graduate education, this should be mentioned as well (for faculty list, see <https://cis.ua.edu/people/graduate-faculty>). Your statements here will help the admission committee assess the fit between your interests and the strengths of the program in its curriculum and faculty.
3. The PhD is a research degree, so you ought to discuss your research aspirations as part of your statement. In this connection, you should briefly discuss the questions or problems that animate your interests in graduate education and disciplinary research. With reference to these questions or problems, what are your research goals? What subject areas and research methods do you perceive as relevant to these goals? Is there a research project that you would like to undertake while you are a doctoral student in our College? What scholarship or studies would inform this project? What information would be the focus of your research, and what approach to that information would produce the results of your inquiry? Finally, how would this project advance your knowledge concerning the questions, problems, or goals that define your research program? Your responses to these questions will help the admissions committee assess your readiness for advanced training in disciplinary research.
4. When you discuss your goals after completing the PhD degree, it would perhaps be useful if you described how you think achievement of your goals will be facilitated by graduate education in the College of Communication & Information Sciences at The University of Alabama. Your answer to this question will help the admission committee to consider whether our College PhD program can successfully prepare you to achieve your professional or career goals.
5. As regards formatting and style, you should include (a) “Statement of Purpose,” (b) “PhD in Communication & Information Sciences,” and (c) your name somewhere in the heading of your essay. Standard expository style will be appreciated in the essay itself. You may single-space or double-space your essay.