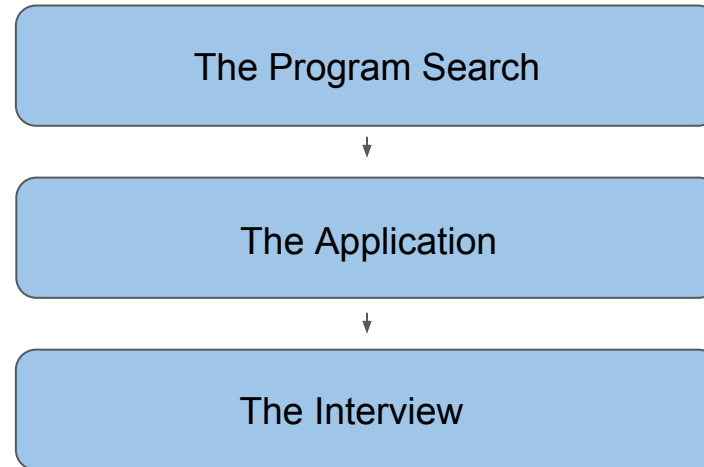


APPLYING TO **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

L@s GANAS RESEARCH DAY
3/16/2019
LILLIAN PEREZ

Overview



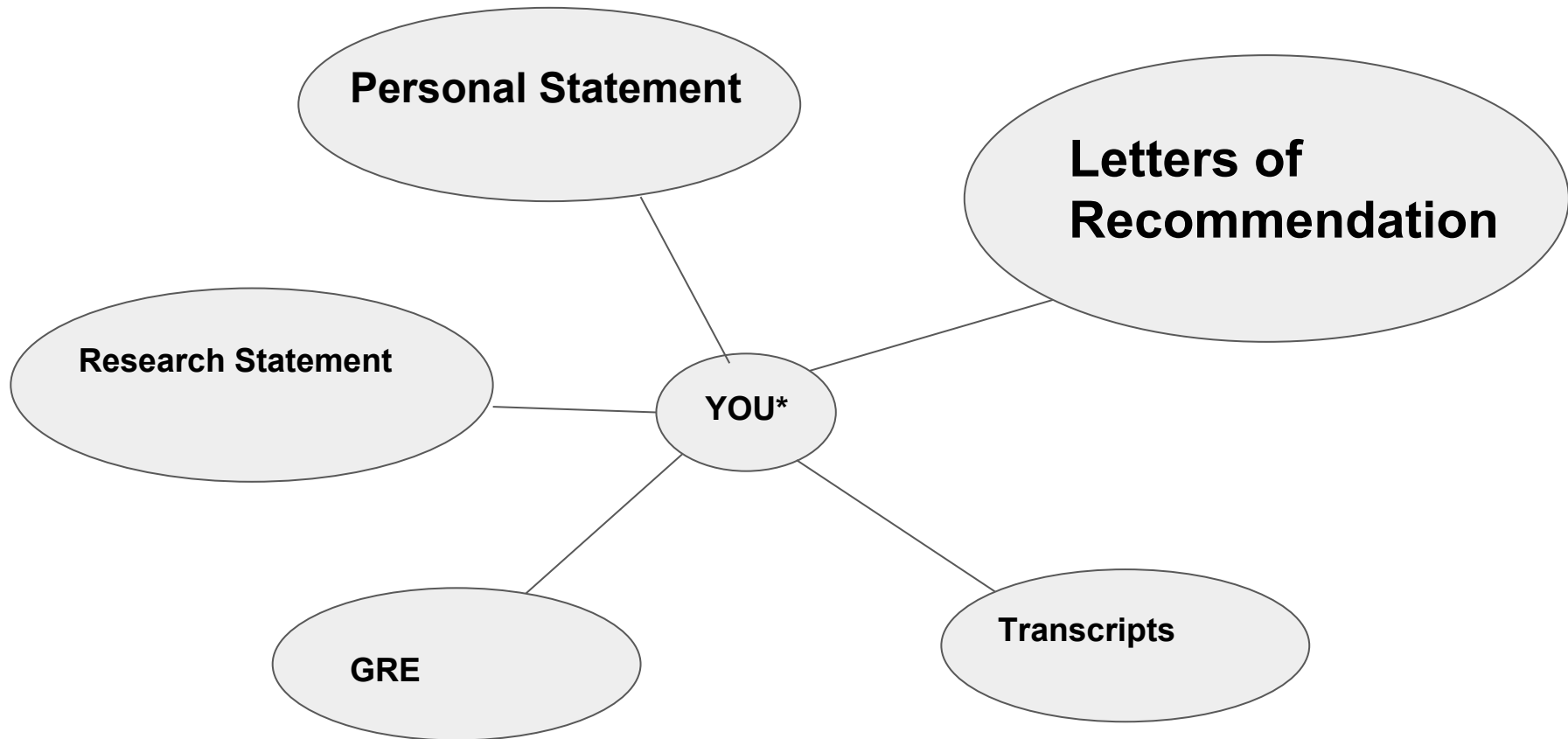
The Application



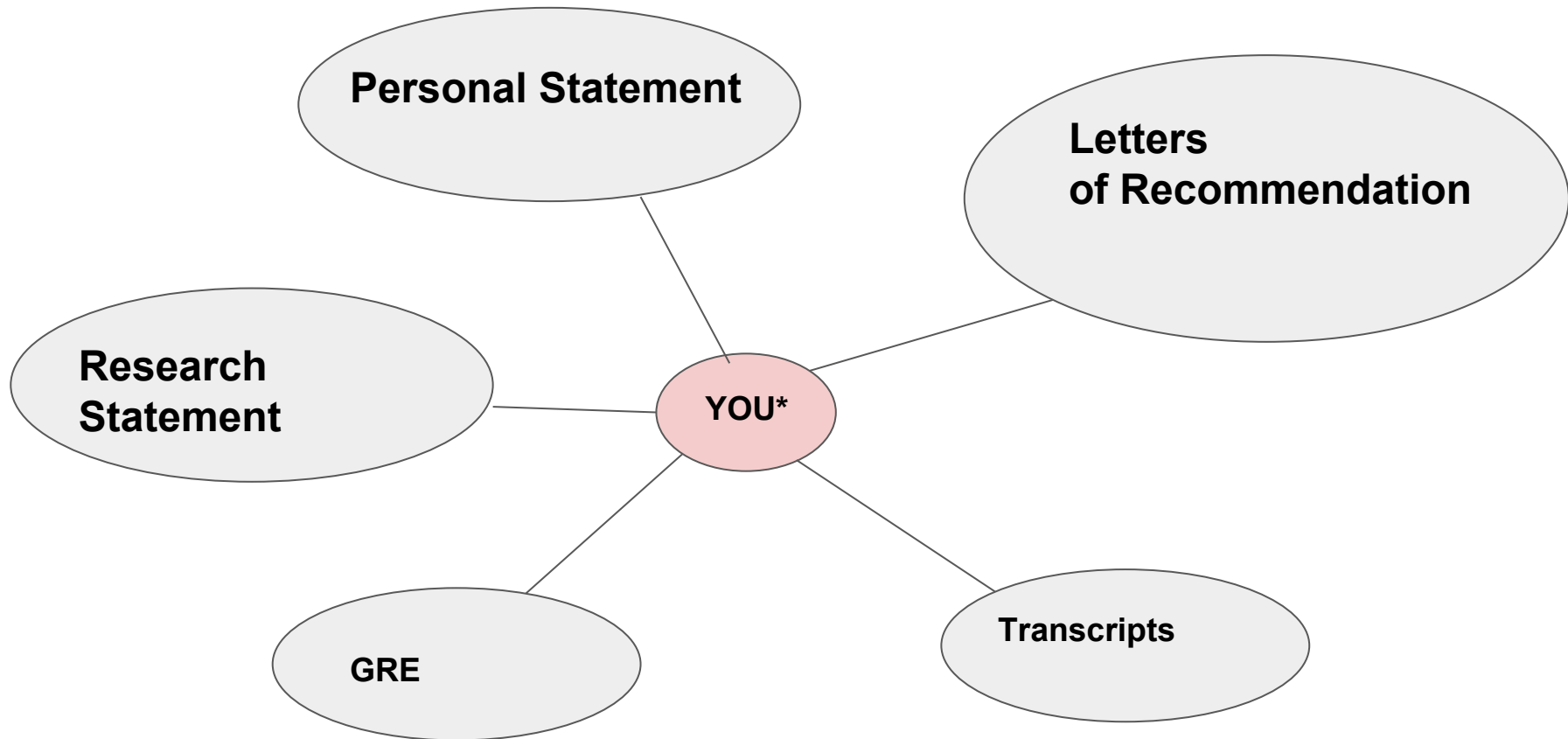
Application Components

1. Transcript
2. GRE Scores*
3. Letters of Recommendation
4. Personal Statement
5. Research Statement

Application Components



Application Components



Personal qualifications and strengths

**You* are applying, so *you* have to convince the program that you qualify.*

Personal qualifications and strengths

- Describe two strengths (behavior, personality, attitude, work ethic):
 - Positivity
 - Persistence and determination
 - Curiosity

- What experiences prepare you for graduate school?
 - Summer research experience
 - Independent study
 - Literature review experience

I want to go to graduate school

but ...

Personal Limitations

“but...

- “I have a low GPA”
- “I’m not a good test taker, my GRE will show it”
- “I have to retake Chemistry,... and I probably won’t get an A still”
- “I really like science but, I SUCK at science!”

OR

- Personal, family-related, or medical obstacle

Personal Statement

Background (motivation, goals)

Preparation (qualifications)

Limitations (overcoming obstacles)

*program-specific rationale
for applying*

Sample Personal Statement

Education has always been an important foundation upon which I build my goals and dreams. Without education, I would not be able to achieve my greatest ambition: to help children develop to their fullest potential. Throughout my life, my teachers and professors have helped me gain insights into our ever-changing world and also introduced me to the field of Psychology. These educators have helped me to pursue studies in Psychology and find a career match that best suits me. Throughout this process, I have known that graduate school would play an integral role in furthering my education and helping me achieve my goals. I feel that my academic work and field experiences have prepared me to engage in graduate studies in Psychology at Western Michigan University. I am fulfilling a goal I set for myself four years ago.

As an undergraduate, I immersed myself in the resources at Bradley University and especially in its Psychology Department. As a result, I have received numerous academic honors and have been given additional opportunities to work directly with professors on research projects. I performed research my senior year on impression formation, and will present the results at the annual Research Symposium upon concluding the study. This spring, a professor, who has contributed greatly to both my education and interest in behavior analysis, has asked me to work with her using behavior management techniques helping an autistic child. This will be a great opportunity to broaden and apply my academic knowledge.

It was Justice O.W. Holmes who said, "your education begins when what is called your education ends." Outside of my formal education, I have worked for the past four years with children of all ages. I had my first encounter with behavior analysis two years ago while I was a counselor at a summer camp, and I realized then that I wanted to make a career in this field. One of my campers, Brandon, was diagnosed with ADHD. I worked with his psychologist and his mother to learn the "stoplight" technique, which I have continued using on other children with whom I work. The experience helped me realize how much progress can be made with children that are diagnosed and treated effectively.

I have also spent the past year working for Catholic Social Services where I have gained experience working in a social services agency that helps families in crisis situations by providing counseling and other assistance. My work experiences have desired me to help children with developmental disorders progress to their greatest ability.

Education has always been an important foundation upon which I build my goals and dreams. Without education, I would not be able to achieve my greatest ambition: to help children develop to their fullest potential. Throughout my life, my teachers and professors have helped me gain insights into our ever-changing world and also introduced me to the field of Psychology. These educators have helped me to pursue studies in Psychology and find a career match that best suits me. Throughout this process, I have known that graduate school would play an integral role in furthering my education and helping me achieve my goals. I feel that my academic work and field experiences have prepared me to engage in graduate studies in Psychology at Western Michigan University. I am fulfilling a goal I set for myself four years ago.

Personal Statement

Questions to get you started:

- Why are you interested in the particular opportunity or institution to which you are applying?
- What are your academic or research interests?
- How did you become interested in this field or research? * here expand on the positive steps you took to pursue this interest
- What kind of activities or experiences have you had that have contributed toward your interest in, preparation for, or understanding of this field or research area?
- What are your aspirations?

**Institute for broadening participation
Pathways to Science**

Research Statement*

- Not usually required
- Supplemental document to describe your research background
 - Research question
 - Relevance
 - Your role in the project
 - Your technical skills
 - Anything tangible produced from this work

Letters of Recommendation

Why do these matter?

- Someone else, with academic credibility is writing on your behalf
 - Faculty, experts in their subject
 - Research mentors that helped you grow
- Describes your strengths in the context that they know you
- Your recommender may have a network at this institution

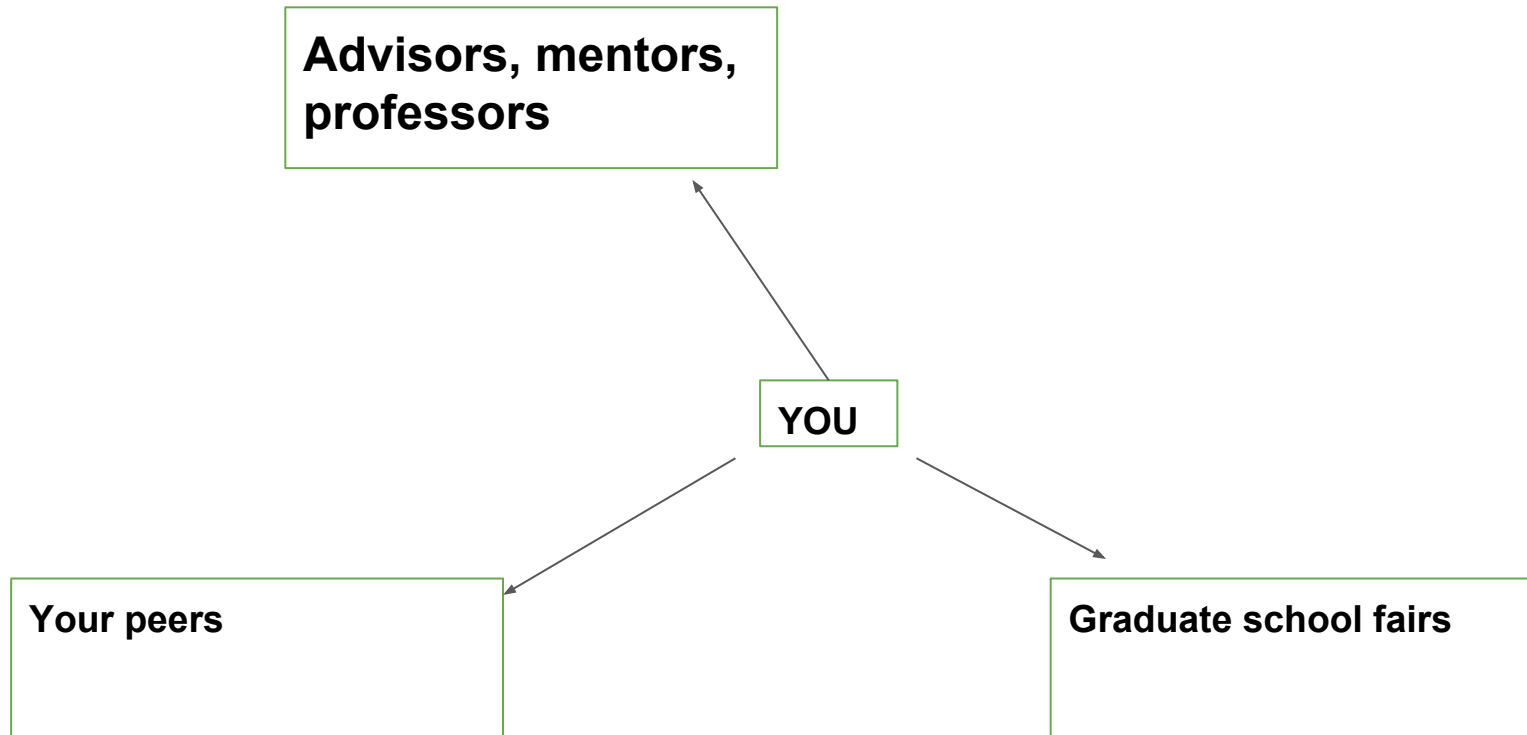
Letters of Recommendation

How do you get good letters?

- Preferably, ask someone you are close to.
- Ask ahead of time!
 - 2 weeks is the minimum (out of courtesy)
- Provide a list of the programs with deadlines
- Supplement with a summary of yourself
 - Resume
 - Extracurricular experience that has impacted you
 - ½ page description of your motivation and goals
- Be extremely grateful, and show it

Program FIT

How do you start the search?



Factors that drive your search and help narrow your list

1. Reputation and rankings
2. Environmental climate
 - a. Literally
 - b. Figuratively
3. Prospective faculty mentor
4. Funding

The Interview

The Interview

1. Campus visit
2. Graduate student lunch or dinner
3. Attendance to a lab meeting or journal club*
4. Back to back meetings with at least 3 faculty from the program/department*

Meetings with faculty

Preparation is key

Keep in mind the faculty that you are most interested in working with

- Show you have done your homework
 - Mention something you read about their research publications
 1. Clarity
 2. Future directions
- Be vocal!

Meetings with faculty

Questions you will be asked:

- a. Why choose this program?
- b. What are your specific interests?
- c. What is your research experience?

Questions you can ask:

- d. How did this current research direction develop?
- e. Have students worked closely to develop their research question with the PI or have students usually walked in to help an ongoing project?
- f. How often do students present at conferences or publish?
- g. What is their mentorship style?
- h. They were graduate students at some point, how did they make their decision?

Graduate student networking

Ask away, but be polite!

1. Do they feel they receive sufficient mentorship support from their program, and specific PIs?
 - a. In what ways?
2. Has funding ever been an issue in the department?
3. What aspects of the program are their favorite and most effective?
4. What were their goals when they started in the program and have those goals changed?

Additional reading

[What is graduate school](#)

[Should you go to graduate school](#)

[The gentle guide for applying to graduate schools](#)

[Getting strong letters of recommendation](#)

[Search graduate schools](#)

[2017 Life Science salary](#)