During my freshman year at St. Petersburg College I made a discovery that changed the path of my life. Mrs. Lamport, my Composition II instructor, required our class to write a term paper on our career goals. At first I thought this would be an easy assignment, given my interest in psychology. However, my research for the paper led me to read about legal psychology, and shortly thereafter I came across information that detailed the University of Texas at El Paso’s doctoral program in Legal Psychology. The more I read about both legal psychology and the UTEP program, the more I became interested in and excited about this area of psychology.

I was further inspired to pursue a degree in Legal Psychology by a guest speaker in my Abnormal Psychology course. Dr. Jill Horman was a Pinellas County court-appointed psychologist, and she spoke to my class about competency evaluations. The ensuing discussion of her role as a psychologist in the legal system further strengthened my resolve to vigorously pursue a degree in this area. I immediately became fascinated with forensic assessments and wanted to learn more about all aspect of providing psychological information to the courts. I spoke with Dr. Horman about my interest and she suggested I volunteer for Project New Attitude, a rehabilitation program for male inmates of the Pinellas County Jail in Clearwater, FL. While there I assisted in counseling inmates and acquired insights into criminal thinking. After completing this experience, I was even more certain that I wanted to specialize in research dealing with evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programs.

Based on these life experiences and with these professional objectives in mind, I
became a volunteer with Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) of Clearwater, FL, an advocacy program developed to aid and promote the best interests of children in my area. My duty as a GAL was to make recommendations on the best interests of a three-year old child. This practical courtroom experience afforded me an intimate view of how the legal system functioned. During this time I maintained my 3.8 GPA while taking some of the more difficult courses in psychology, research, and statistics.

After engaging in several practical experiences in the area of legal psychology and understanding the demanding research expectations of both Legal Psychology and UTEP’s graduate program, I believed it was necessary for me to engage in supervised research with a mentor who would be able to aid in the progressive attainment of these expectations. Dr. Christopher Cronin at St. Leo University acknowledged my determination to prepare myself for graduate school and agreed to supervise my research in an advanced directed study course.

Dr. Cronin and I worked on a study that would be ecologically valid and beneficial to professional psychology. Dr. Cronin and I examined feigning of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the effects of coached malingering using the Impact of Events Scale (IES). We are presenting our research at the Florida Academy of Sciences and the Southeastern Psychological Association’s annual meetings this spring. The experience I gained with Dr. Cronin helped me realize how susceptible psychological assessments could be to malingering, especially when used to supplement courtroom decisions. This research experience has been invaluable to the solidification of my interests in clinical and legal psychology.

The opportunities at University of Texas at El Paso parallel my interests in Legal Psychology and are precisely what I am looking for in a graduate program. UTEP’s facilities and potential population samples are specifically what I need to pursue my anticipated research. Further, my research interests are particularly close to those of Dr. James Wood, in
that I am interested in forensic assessments and testimonies of sexually abused children. Specifically, I would like to work with the validity of assessments and their practical use in court. I would also like to investigate the detection of false/true testimonies of children who have been sexually abused. The work of Dr. William Lucker’s prevention programs has also piqued my interest. I would be interested in further pursuing research work on the effectiveness of drug prevention programs in youths and adults with regards to resiliency and recidivism.

Attending University of Texas at El Paso would afford me the opportunity to pursue my ultimate career objectives in Legal Psychology. By working with Dr. Wood, Dr. Lucker, and other faculty in the program, I believe that I will gain the knowledge, skills and abilities to complete my professional goal that is to work in an applied research setting.
Example #2

Career Objective

Provide a statement describing your special field of interest and the objectives of your educational program and professional career.

The field of interest that best fits my career aspirations and objectives is counseling psychology. Persons practicing counseling psychology help facilitate the growth and development of others by helping people utilize existing resources and skills to find new ways to help themselves. This is accomplished through the use of empirically based approaches and interventions designed to provide people with new insight into their problems so that they might be able to develop new solutions to preexisting difficulties. Thus, counseling psychologists facilitate growth, development, and problem solving in their clients and possess and utilize attributes such as effective communication skills, intellectual integrity, empathy, genuineness, and perseverance in interaction with client populations.

I came upon this conception of counseling psychology after completing a rigorous training regimen in general psychology, abnormal psychology, social psychology, sociology, sensory and perception, experimental psychology, and neuropsychology at Indiana University. I began to notice how many of the specialties of psychology, especially that of abnormal and clinical psychology, focused on the inherent psychopathology in the individual seeking therapy. My conception of psychology was vastly different, as I preferred focusing on the growth and development of the client. After further exploring the field of psychology, I came upon the conclusion that counseling psychology best fit my personal conception of psychology and psychotherapy. Thus, I sought enrollment in a master’s program in counseling psychology and was eager to apply my undergraduate background in psychological science to actual counseling situations.

I enrolled in the masters program in counseling psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi and have been afforded an in-depth examination of such tenets of counseling
psychology as the cultural bases of behavior, counseling theories, group psychotherapy, marriage and family therapy, assessment and diagnosis, vocational development, consultation, research design, and statistics. More importantly, my enrollment in this master’s program has allowed me to gain practical counseling experience in a university setting as well as an opportunity to apply my personal conception of counseling in actual counseling situations. I have done this through a supervised internship at the counseling center on campus. During my internship I also assisted Dr. Frank Julian in his research on using the MMPI with the student population.

My purpose in taking doctoral coursework in counseling psychology is to further develop the knowledge and skills I need to become a professional and competent counseling psychologist. I am eager to integrate my education, research, and work experiences, along with the counseling skills and techniques I have learned through previous graduate training, into a solid knowledge base which I can apply to future endeavors as well as the pursuit of my career aspirations. Through doctoral training I hope to become proficient and competent in counseling, research, supervision evaluation, and teaching so that I might build a broad training experience which I can apply to my professional activities throughout my career and career development.

I view the counseling psychology program at Texas A&M University as a means to synthesize my past experiential learning with the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and training needed to excel in my chosen professional field. I am confident that the doctoral training program at Texas A&M University will facilitate the further enhancement of my skills and experience which will subsequently allow me to pursue my ambitious goal of practicing psychology as a profession, especially with the work Dr. Jane Holmes is doing on empathy. I am enticed by the potential of being able to work with her as she explores the role of empathy and the counseling psychologist.

In terms of my career aspirations and the objectives of my professional career, after doctoral training I intend to pursue a predoctoral internship at either a university counseling center or a community mental health facility. I believe such a setting will afford me the level of
training and supervision necessary to achieve a well rounded experiential background, as well as an opportunity to pursue my research interests and career goals. Upon completion of my internship, I plan to seek a position in academia at a four year institution. My ultimate career objective is to become a tenured professor of counseling psychology in an APA-accredited counseling psychology department.

I anxiously await the opportunity to meet with members of the faculty to discuss my qualifications, ambitions, and the potential of a successful relationship between myself and the doctoral training program at Texas A&M University.
Example # 3

Autobiographical Profile

I began my journey towards professional practice in psychology after two significant incidents occurred in my life shortly after I began my undergraduate training. First, an esteemed high school teacher (Kathleen Damon) with whom I was very close lost her mother very suddenly to a tragic illness. In the wake of her death, Mrs. Damon had a great degree of difficulty coping with this devastating loss. By Mrs. Damon's account, I was able to effectively help her work through this difficult time and cope with her loss. Secondly, during a vacation from college, it became apparent that my parents were experiencing marital difficulties and were very close to separating. By conversing with them and facilitating a more objective conception of the problem, my parents claim that I was able to help them avert a potentially unfortunate situation. These two incidents helped me to solidify my career objectives and focus my energies on an education in counseling psychology.

I believe that I possess a few strengths which will serve me well in the acquisition of my career aspirations. The first is the ability to remain objective and treat clients with unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy. A second strength is my ability use my knowledge of multiculturalism to the advantage of the client. By remaining objective and tending to the specific cultural needs of my clients, I will be able to most effectively meet their needs. A final strength is my ability to grasp new concepts quickly and easily. I am able to learn new material quickly and utilize it most effectively in my natural environment. In terms of limitations, a few immediately come to mind. First, I sometimes tend to overestimate the abilities of my clients. Due to my belief in human nature and the desire of the human being to persevere, I may sometimes over estimate the potential of my clients and their immediate ability to function. Another limitation centers around a lack of experiential training with clients. Being that I am in a master’s program and have only experienced one practicum, which was with a local non-profit agency with limited clients, so I view my number of direct client contact hours as an
area in which I have the most potential for development.

In terms of my career aspirations, after receiving doctoral training and participating in a predoctoral internship at either a university counseling center or a community mental health facility, I will seek the opportunity to conduct research and train future counselors in a university setting. My desire to become a tenured professor in an APA-accredited counseling psychology department is a way in which I can best utilize my acquired knowledge to benefit the science and profession of psychology.

I began to pursue these goals after I became intrigued by the science and profession of psychology while enrolled as an undergraduate. After completing a B.S. in psychology, I was eager to apply my undergraduate education to actual counseling situations and enrolled in a master's program. Although my enrollment in a master's program has allowed me to acquire practical counseling experience and education, it is personally evident that further training is necessary to develop the experiential and educational background essential to achieve all of my career aspirations. In my quest for career fulfillment, I am committed and devoted to nothing short of attaining a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and seeking a tenure track position at a four year university. That said I am very excited about the opportunities the Counseling Psychology program at Capella University offers. The work of Dr. Joanne Fleming in student learning online versus in the classroom is very appealing to me, as someone who wants to be an educator.

My primary goal for my doctoral training is to more fully develop and integrate my knowledge of and experience with research and counseling into my therapeutic style and level of professional development. To this end, I seek continued supervision and training that is challenging and growth-oriented, and continued exposure to the multiple functions of the professional psychologist (counselor, researcher, supervisor, and teacher). My goal, then, is to acquire a broad training in counseling psychology which will allow me to become a competent and professional counseling psychologist as well as provide the foundation for a lifelong career in psychology. I hope to attend Capella University to meet these goals.