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## Samples

Here is a nice exposition of a specific academic project, leading to publication. Do you have a paper that you could submit for publication before you apply to graduate school? Your professors can guide you in this process.

Always name your advisers and mentors.

When you have identified specific professors at the targeted graduate program who could be mentors to you, mention them by name.

## #1 "From Working Poor to Elite Scholar" (continued)

As a student, I feel that my success lies in the fact that I approached my studies as if I were a professional (historian, not student, that is). I always enrolled in the most challenging courses and worked with professors I felt were the most qualified in my areas of interest. Never did I settle for an A- or B+. If I got one, I would ask what I could do to improve—and ultimately, I utilized the advice to strengthen my work. My personal academic milestone occurred while I was completing a research seminar on historical methods. This required course was taught by an Americanist—Dr. Julie Worth, director of the [school withheld] history department—so our research topics were limited to American sources. I was able to work within my main interest, which is marginalized women, while using the primary sources of *The New York Times*. The resulting paper, “Biologically Unsound: Women, Murder, and the Insanity Plea in the Progressive Era” examined the preponderant use of the insanity plea for women who went outside their “innate nature” and murdered, regardless of the circumstances which drove them to kill. Although the topic was outside my focus, which is European history, this paper was selected for publication in the Phi Alpha Theta journal, *The Historian*.

My focus as an undergraduate has always been with an eye toward graduate school and a career as a professional historian. Aware of the rigors of graduate study, I have not only completed an undergraduate language requirement in Spanish, but I am also currently enrolled in an accelerated French course. In addition, I have become active in the historical honor society, Phi Alpha Theta, including serving as chapter president. During my tenure our chapter hosted the Phi Alpha Theta Regional Conference, the largest regional conference in the nation. With the help of faculty adviser Dr. Judith Gaillard, I created the conference sessions, chose appropriate student commentators for those sessions, and gave a keynote speech. The experience taught me that I have a flair for organization as well as mediation. Under my leadership, our chapter also published its first journal, and hosted a variety of campus activities. This year I am working with the Computer Society in order to establish a Web site for students who need help succeeding in history courses; we are going to call it the Clio home page. My position as an authority figure both in classroom work and within these various organizations has awakened a desire to embrace teaching, for I enjoy sharing the excitement of education with my peers, as well as helping them achieve their own academic success.

I feel that my life experiences as well as my commitment to education would be an asset to Cornell’s doctoral program in history. Cornell has an exciting interdisciplinary program that is exceptionally impressive. In particular, Dr. Rayna Wilhelm’s specialty in Tudor-Stuart social and cultural history complements my own interest in studying the experiences of English pre-industrial women. This combination will provide the strong background I desire in order to shape my future research interests. I feel that Cornell is a premier institution for an aspiring Ph.D. candidate and as such, a very competitive program. But I know I have the tools and the determination to excel in such a stimulating and challenging environment.