Personal Statement

I find it a great honor to be part of the University of Virginia. I have just celebrated my 21st year in Charlottesville and can think of no other place that I would rather live or practice medicine. I arrived here for medical school in the summer of 1984 and knew immediately this community would be a difficult one to leave. As a result my entire post-graduate education, and the first 7 years of my academic career as an Assistant and then Associate Professor, have all been completed here. I am indebted to many people at the University of Virginia for providing me the education, resources, and opportunity to successfully help people from around our region, and I realize now more than ever how much I want to give back to this particular educational system to allow the cycle to continue.

During the first few years of establishing my clinical practice, providing optimal patient care was the most important thing to me, and I realize now that I taught almost exclusively by example. Over the past few years I have become much more interactive and multi-dimensional. While patient care is still at the top of my list of priorities, I feel as though I have learned how to incorporate very effectively, the teaching of medicine into my daily clinical practice. Although I appreciate that there is no greater joy in medicine than providing the resources to allow a sick patient to recover from a serious illness, I have come to respect how much satisfaction there is in educating our students. The best part of my practice, I have come to realize, is that I can accomplish both of these goals at the same time! As I interact more and more with our students, interns, and residents, I am amazed at how much they appreciate anything we can give them. A kind word, a sincere interest in their well being and the time to explain even the simplest things, I have found, makes a huge difference in their day. Simply put, I love my interactions with our students and residents more than just about anything else I do. They help me at times find energy during long Mondays in the outpatient clinic, by the excitement they display when seeing new patients and new disease processes. Such instances give me a deep sense of satisfaction and make me realize that I am not only doing good for the patient, but also for the education of that particular student and also for the future of medicine. I feel as though my practice has become one of the most educational for medical students rotating through the surgical service. Very often I have had students that were not on my service actually spend time and participate in my clinic, simply for the educational experience.

In addition to speaking with students about the "facts" of medicine and surgery, I also enjoy the times I spend with small groups of students speaking with them about family life and surgery as a career. I feel I give them a sense of comfort and satisfaction that the career path they have chosen does not mean they will need to sacrifice their personal life in order to complete their education and residency. While I still have much to learn as an educator, I feel I have come a long way over the past 7 years, and I owe most of my growth and maturity to the very people I am educating—our students and residents.

In addition to the enjoyment of being involved with the education of our students and residents, I find the ongoing challenges of clinical and basic science research to be particularly stimulating. The ability to provide the resources for our residents to carry out bench top research and help them improve their critical reading and writing abilities is very rewarding. Investigating the mechanisms and pathophysiology of spinal cord ischemia reperfusion injury, with an eye towards being able to hopefully one day provide better treatment for spinal cord injury, is very exciting for me. The ability to collaborate with basic scientists as well as clinicians from other specialties has been very educational for me and for my residents, and has allowed for great success in these research efforts. I hope to maintain this effort over the ensuing years and will hopefully see these collaborations come to fruition through a clinical trial investigating a new therapy for spinal cord injured patients.

In addition to my basic science research, I have been very fortunate to be involved with many cutting edge clinical programs. I have been instrumental in developing our aortic endograft program, and have been the primary investigator for numerous vascular sealants. In fact, I was able to be the primary basic science investigator for a novel vascular sealant that is now in clinical trials around the world. My research efforts have led me to be invited to serve as a grant reviewer and panel member for the New York State Spinal Cord Injury Program, as well as for the government of Isreal.

I feel very much a part of this medical community. I have much to offer the University and feel obligated to do whatever I can to maintain the success of our medical center and the well being of our community. My family and I could never imagine leaving Charlottesville, and we feel fortunate to have been given the chance to live here for the past 17 years as a family. I feel I do a great deal of good for many people, and would like the opportunity to continue to do so at the University of Virginia.