

Statement of Purpose – University of Victoria

In the field of education, nothing happens without leadership; it is the driving force behind the entire process. This belief fuels my ambitions to pursue graduate studies in Leadership Education at Stanford University. I am Jane Smith of Saudi Arabia, and from my childhood onwards I have known the importance of leaders in all areas of life, be it family, politics, art or education. My experiences throughout life have shaped my inspiration to study to become a leader. It is my hope that I will be able to bring to my home country the skills I learn at Stanford University, and that I will be able to spearhead the efforts to improve the education system in Saudi Arabia.

I was born and raised in Riyadh, the capital and largest city in the country. It is a cultural, economic and educational hub, and I feel privileged to have grown up there. As one of the oldest of 11 children in my family, leadership is something that comes naturally to me. My five brothers and five sisters are an inspiration to me, and I try my best to set a good example for them in my education and my life choices.

During my bachelor's and master's degrees, I had a number of professors who influenced me. First, my research supervisor Pamela was absolutely vital to my success. She was also my textiles professor and her kindness and helpfulness served me well during my degrees. Second, my child education professor Anne encouraged me to do my master's degree and helped me to find a balance between school life and family life. Lastly, my sculpting professor Katie was a big support and provided me with much advice throughout my two degrees. I attended sculpture exhibits with her and gained a lot of practical knowledge from her in both art and life. During my undergraduate program, I worked as a research assistant, setting up class materials, gathering and organizing research and preparing presentations for the professor's curriculum.

After completing my bachelor's degree, I decided to go back to school for my master's degree. I chose Art Education as the program I would pursue. It was an intense program, as I took 20 courses over four semesters and two years; I also completed a lengthy thesis

on the usage of non-traditional tools in artistic painting, which I found to be a fascinating topic.

After my master's, I worked as a preschool teacher, working on both the educational side teaching children rudimentary skills, as well as the administrative side, planning activities and organizing lunch time for the pupils. Additionally, I worked in admissions for the school, an administrative experience which is very applicable to my future studies. I am also a certified secretary, having completed a certification program while at university. This is another valued practical experience which will serve me well going forward.

Though I enjoyed my time in the master's program, it was well before I graduated that I realized my future studies would shift away from the art world towards a more practical endeavor.

I am a leader. Though I love art, I know now that my calling in life is to lead the charge in improving education not only in Saudi Arabia, but in the United States as well. Through my strong voice, positive and proactive attitude, and my ability to influence others, I know that I can be successful in my goals. I possess strong organizational skills; I have continually been chosen as a class leader either explicitly or implicitly. My peers come to me when they need educational or life advice. It is these attributes which make me a leader, and it is my drive to provide leadership in the field of education in Saudi Arabia which has compelled me to apply for the Ph.D. in Education Leadership at Stanford University. The type of expertise I will develop in the program is severely lacking in Saudi Arabia and I hope to rectify this problem. My long-term goal is to attain employment at King Saud University in an administrative role where I can provide top-down leadership which will improve the educational experience of students, professors and administrators alike.

Upon admission to the Education Leadership program at Stanford University, my research will be mainly statistical in approach. My goal is to construct a curriculum that teaches me the necessary planning tools and methodology as well as quantitative and

qualitative research processes. To accomplish this, my research will involve interviewing students and administrators, retrieving government statistics and drawing possible correlations and inferences. One of my primary aims is to determine the viability of American leadership procedures for Saudi Arabian universities.

My hope is to study under the guidance of Dr. Sadie Johnson while at Stanford University. Her work in international comparative education and policy matches perfectly with my goals and interests. Her experience with education in China, the United States and Canada gives her a unique perspective which I will learn much from. I see much of myself in Dr. Johnson, and I hope to repeat what she has accomplished in education leadership and policy in China and the United States, in my home country of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing a “modernization” of education not unlike that of China in the 1990s. I hope to synthesize the experiences of Dr. Johnson in China and the United States with my experiences in Saudi Arabia, enabling me to affect the policy shifts I think are necessary in the Saudi Arabian educational system.