

RACHEL ALFREDA NOBEL  
CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I am Rachel Alfreda Nobel, an assistant professor in the O'Neill School of Environmental and Public Affairs. When I was in high school, I became passionate about what I saw as the collision between expanding suburbia and the established farms around MyCity, MyState. In college I explored this clash through economic, social, and psychological lenses, and was motivated not only to analyze, but to help all sides understand each other: empowering people to interact with their environments. Recently, I have narrowed my active research focus from the broad terrain of human-animal-agricultural-natural environment interaction to the specific instance of support animals: or, where did you get that dwarf donkey and why?

*Approximately 25% of candidate statements start with a statement of personal journey, connection, or purpose. Some readers may not be accustomed to this. However, research has shown that many faculty feel that unless they can 'bring their whole person' to their academic endeavors, they feel alienated and unsupported. For those who are NOT accustomed to this, consider this section as part of the person's motivation and persistence for the future.*



*The trade-off with using pictures, images, charts, or diagrams in the candidate statement itself is that they take up space. Use when they help you make your points more clearly (for example, a concept map), or more memorable (donkeys.).*

I am applying for promotion to associate professor, and tenure. My area of excellence is research, and I am also proud of my contributions to teaching and service in O'Neill and at IUPUI.

*Be absolutely explicit. Readers should not have to guess your area of excellence. We also expect colleagues to care about their other responsibilities.*

My research is highly interdisciplinary, informed by many different fields and also engaging students and colleagues across campus. While I have been a key contributor to several different work groups and institutes,

*Anyone who does multi-author works needs to be very clear and convincing about their own individual and unique role.*

my **distinctive achievement** has been to bring a micro-economic and cultural analysis to the issue of support animals. While the popular view of support animals often is that “anything goes” and they “have no real importance,” the support-animal locus is a key instance of human-natural engagement that raises serious ecological, sociological, and economic questions. Psychologists examine why people need support, if it is an animal or not; **my analysis creates a new understanding** of how engagement with—or reaction to—support animals reflects and improves, or damages, human interaction with and appreciation of the natural environment.

In this candidate statement I will first describe my research trajectory and emerging national recognition, centered on support-animal socio-cultural analysis. Some of this will also illustrate my contribution to the teaching mission of O’Neill, as my undergraduate and graduate courses flow naturally into teaching-and-learning research lab work. I will then specifically address my teaching activities. I will describe my service at the school, campus, and university levels, and return to the research focus with my service to both existing and emerging scholarly organizations relevant to support animal and other human-nature interaction themes.

*In drafting, you may want to leave this paragraph on hold until you complete it all. Make sure it ends up being consistent.*

I am especially proud that I have been able to engage underrepresented students in most levels of my work. Our introductory courses at O’Neill have highly diverse students, and I proactively design pathways for these students into higher-level ecological and environmental courses so that the concerns of diverse communities become an organic part of research and engagement. Human-nature interaction is inclusive of all humans, and all aspects of nature. I will discuss diversity and inclusion efforts in each area.

*How you talk about diversity will depend on what your department and school want. Some will ask for a separate statement; others will appreciate notes woven throughout. Making students and colleagues welcome is something that enhances any faculty member’s contributions. Notice, however, that Dr. Nobel does not follow through very well later in the statement.*

### Research: Area of Excellence

I advance knowledge about support-animal interaction in two main facets: one which targeting the individual and personal interaction angle and one targeting the economic and social angle. While these are situated within two different disciplines, I believe they are interrelated—that they do not occur in isolation but the personal influences the social, and the economic influences the individual.

With respect to the personal-individual interaction research, my dissertation of 2018 was a qualitative study of interviews conducted with 34 support-animal users and 12 psychologists who consulted with individuals requesting support-animals (not those treating the interviewed users).

*In most departments, you will be expected to go well beyond your dissertation. “From this data” is the key phrase—you are using this as a starting point.*

From this data, I formed a team consisting of an O’Neill graduate student, and Dr. Haakon Canute within IUPUI’s PsyD program and a graduate student there, to recruit patients who were interested in support animals. Dr. Canute was the lead author on J7 and J8 [links to CV] *Use a numbering system and links—double-check the final draft to make sure all numbers and links are accurate and active. While e-dossier documents may link to each other, that will not help external reviewers.*

which examined personal and family dynamics within this decision-making. I led my part of the team in expanding interview topics to explore how these individuals related to the natural world in general. My most important publication from this stream is “Simply Animal Lovers Who Want a Pass? Personal and Environmental Motivation in the Support-Animal Selection Process,” *Annals of Psychology*, 2021. [KEY ITEM # 1] [J2 on CV].

*To help external reviewers, embed links to open-access copies of the key items.*

The key finding was that those who already imaged themselves as animal-oriented, struggled more significantly than those who were non-pet owners, non-nature-oriented, when the idea of a support animal was suggested. They felt a stigma that obtaining a support animal was or would be seen as a merely personal preference, rather than a psychological need. In that sense, having a support animal actually deterred them from their previous advocacy for the natural environment.

I followed this key publication with data gathered from two distinctly different populations who did not have support animals: general undergraduates, and, local community members—with them, parallel topics of attitudes towards support animals and attitudes towards nature were explored. My team produced five different articles from this work,

*You are expected to identify “three to five key publications”—that is, a small number which you select as being “key.” You can also refer to other work so as to indicate the volume of your productivity.*

of which the key publication is “Nature and Animals: are Support Animals Natural?” *Annals of Personal Ecology*, 2019 (J5). [KEY ITEM # 2] This work was supported initially by an internal IU grant [G3], and last year Dr. Canute and I secured, as co-PIs, a grant from the National Institute of Health, Center for Alternative and Complementary Medicine [G2].

*If grant support is valued or required, be specific about your roles and how internal and external grants work to support the research stream. The size of the grant is not mentioned here: Dr. Nobel is focusing on the prestige of this particular funder.*

The second research facet is a social and economic lens that explores the very under-researched aspect of the provision of support animals, within the agricultural economic niches of boutique/hobby farming and non-traditional animal production. That is, is the “support animal” an actual industry? Where do dwarf donkeys come from, anyway? Who raises support

pigs, snakes, or birds? Are support animals diverted from other use or are they raised specifically for this purpose? It is a political-economic truism

*The word “truism” is used here to avoid having to give a specific citation to an actual quote. Note “capture of regulation.” This is a semi-technical term. Make sure that terms are not too esoteric to be understood by non-specialists. Here, Dr. Nobel has put enough context that non-experts can understand.*

that where an industry exists, special interests exist and therefore lobbying and capture of regulation exist: self-awareness of an “industry” leads to public policy. It is not only persons who want support animals who have an interest in their use, but also those who train and sell support animals who seek to write and control legislation.

I organized a team of three experts to address this facet. The first was Dr. Janeway and her doctoral student team at the School of Informatics and Computing; this team has expertise in mining social media data for advertising and commercial analysis. The second was Dr. JT Kirk at the Kelley School of Business who explores new-business formation especially in non-traditional niches. I contributed the final area of expertise with my own O’Neill team focusing on regulatory effects of environmental and agricultural legislation.

There are so far two key publications from this research stream. “A Family Business: Providing Support Donkeys is in Our Blood” in *Small Business Development* (J3), [KEY ITEM # 3] used Google and Facebook ads to identify 72 active support-animal-suppliers and did a content analysis of how the suppliers presented themselves. There were two significant findings: one is that forty percent of suppliers had more than 2 years of actively producing (breeding or subcontracting breeding) animals specifically for support purposes, and, that eighty percent of suppliers advertised using language that tied support animals to adjectives such as “natural,” “organic” and “green.” This makes the support-animal industry an ally of organic agriculture and other new agricultural interests.

The second publication is “Longitudinal Development of New Agricultural Models” in *Annals of Organic Agriculture* (J4). [KEY ITEM # 4] This used the data from the advertisements, both current and scraped vendor-site data from the Wayback machine, and demonstrated that individuals who are (currently) involved in support-animal production originally derived chiefly from boutique agriculture (e.g. market farms) but over the last two years a growing percentage of entrants have developed out of holistic and naturalistic medicine businesses.

Because this work is primarily economic and small-business oriented, there are fewer funding sources available. I have submitted a National Agricultural Library proposal which is under review.

As part of this work, Dr. Janeway’s team has published two conference papers on methods of business-history-analysis using advertising (I am third author on two of these, J10 and J11), and Dr. Kirk has folded some findings into his existing research on family business formation (I am second author on one article (J6) and third on another (J1).)

*Again, this is a way of emphasizing that Dr. Nobel has produced more than the four key items, as well as demonstrating effective mutually-beneficial collaboration.*

Due to this research, I have already established that support-animal production can legitimately be considered an industry. This has the potential to interact with the personal angle--the observed hesitation on the part of users of support animals—that is, if support animals are so frequent that they are an industry, then someday recipients may see their provision as a normal part of mental health care.

Also due to this research, I have formed productive research relationships with faculty in Informatics—using online data to analyze socio-cultural and business developments (J3, 4, 6); in psychology (J12) and public affairs (J8 and J10)—interviewing users and non-users of particular psychological interventions. I am always attentive to the context within which a phenomenon such as support animal usage occurs—the very micro-context of individual psychological counseling and decision making, the economic context of business development, and the socio-cultural context of acceptability of non-traditional means of interacting with the natural environment.

Not to be neglected is the fact that many companion animals are often simply cute. The public interest around this phenomenon has led to several media stories (CV M2-5 e.g. “Intrepid Researcher Dares to Examine Support Pigs” *Washington Post*), tweets, and re-tweets--of course, some of the resulting impact has been negative, as this can be a very personal issue for some. I hope that in what I control—my own posts, and interviews—I emphasize a scientific, knowledge-seeking, interdisciplinary approach. A great benefit of this ‘pop-culture’ impact is on our undergraduates. So far, I have had five Honors College students do special projects on different aspects of this large and multi-faceted topic (T2-4, 6, 9)

*The goal of scholarship is to have ‘impact.’ Media mentions are not scholarship themselves, but they are an indication of the interest (general importance) of the topic. It may be an indicator of future research topics.*

*Here Dr. Nobel also ties the research into teaching. She could also have talked more about diverse students, as was indicated above but not carried through.*

These key publications (J2-4, 7) have garnered over 325 citations as of January 2021 (source: Google Scholar accessed 1/13/2021). The key publication from my dissertation, which is before my time-in-rank (J22), has achieved over 200 citations on its own, cited by researchers in economics, psychology, and public policy. This gives me confidence that this research stream has sustainable importance within the scientific community.

*You are allowed to mention prior (prior to IUPUI, prior to being in-rank) work—you need to show that it is a building block and part of your reputation, and not depend on it to carry the case as a whole.*

Looking farther out, will a greater acceptance of support animals allow people to envision an integration of animal life into everyday life? If animal life is integrated into the built environment in this way, will it enhance or displace people’s support for natural environments.

I have not yet reached into these research questions but they are growing on the scientific horizon.

In my research statement (folder 1 in the Research/e-Dossier), I go into greater detail on methodologies and partnerships; and in Research Goals (folder 5) I provide a roadmap to external funding sources.

*As you compose, remember you can move bits and details back and forth from the regular dossier to the candidate statement. The candidate statement must be cohesive and have enough detail but it does not have to have every detail. “For examples” strengthen a case but lengthen the statement. Review judiciously.*

### Teaching

My teaching responsibilities have been at both the basic introductory level and the more specialized advanced-student level. Starting in my second year, I have taught ONEL 102 Introduction to Public Policy every fall to a combination of 120 in-person and up to 70 online students, supported by 3 graduate teaching assistants. In spring, my responsibilities have included a rotation of upper-level courses: ONEL 332 Public Policy and Business Development, ONEL 412 Psychological Aspects of Public Policy, and ONEL 481/581 AgroBusiness and Public Policy.

*There is no such thing as a ‘typical’ course load across IUPUI. Readers outside your own department need to know enough details. The CV does list courses and enrollments. Your contribution here is to show what is important about your teaching.*

I have leaned heavily on colleagues and experts from the Center for Teaching and Learning for design and effective delivery techniques for my large course. I have employed mid-term feedback mechanisms. At the end of each semester, I administer a separate anonymous survey with more questions than is possible in Blue, so as to get even more insight into my students—it’s particularly important to distinguish the experiences of majors vs. non-majors and online vs. in-person students. It has been a work in progress but by my fourth year I had a solid Honors section developed as a component of ONEL 102. This has been a very rewarding endeavor. I have done and received peer-reviews from O’Neill colleagues Dr. Strangelove, Dr. Who, and Dr. Picard, especially useful since they also have honors students and research teams. They alerted me to the long-term benefits of identifying promising students who can develop into graduate research and teaching assistants.

Initially I felt that my teaching area of public policy was already sufficiently diverse—public policy inherently touches all people (citizens or not!).—thus by definition it is...should be...inclusive. However, I have recently become aware of the need to employ more critical, rather than descriptive, methods, even in introductory classes where much didactic ground is covered. I intend to focus on modifying my courses accordingly in the years ahead.

*Dr. Nobel might also have referred to student research collaborators, and more on diversity. “Mentoring” can be put either in the research section—you are such a good researcher you can*

*train people to do research—or in teaching—you help students learn by engaging with them in projects and mentoring.*

### Service

At the school, I have participated in two search committees for faculty and one for an academic advisor. I am a member of the Gateway Community of Practice, and for two years coordinated the Social Sciences Subcommunity monthly meetings. I have been a member of the School's Speaker Series committee, and personally arranged for four speakers in 2019 and 2020.

I am involved in a broad array of disciplinary service, because my research is engaged in so many different areas. The most important I feel is the narrowest: the newly-developed Ad Hoc Animal Relations Round Table of the American Psychological Committee.

*It is appropriate to be involved in smaller, more focused, and newer groups—whenever you list or describe something that is not widely known, spend a little more time describing it.*

*“American Psychological Committee” is a fake name patterned after APA ←note, do NOT use acronyms even if you think they are completely obvious.*

This group draws together researchers on support animals, companion animals, and boutique husbandry, and has an affiliate relationship with the Animal Welfare Division of the National Association of Agricultural Research. It is here that my research is most centered, and also where I can make the most distinctive contribution.

I also participate in conferences for the Public Policy Association—2019 session moderator, 2021 poster session judge—and the American Psychological Committee's Alternative Treatment Division—2018 organizing committee; 2019 review committee; 2020 keynote committee. As well, I review manuscripts for seven different journals (listed in CV), and am on the editorial board of *Archives of Animal Welfare*.

### Conclusion

Support animals—dwarf donkeys and the like—represent a place where we can interrogate our relationships to nature and to each other.

I am excited at the opportunities that lie ahead at IUPUI. As an urban university, it serves many communities and individuals with sometimes enthusiastic, and sometimes strained, relations with nature. I have already received some external funding for the most traditional of my pursuits, the examination of support animals' psychological benefits (due to federal funding that explores alternative medicine.). I intend to pursue this but also not be deterred from pressing on with projects regarding the public policy and business development angles. Fortunately, because my research topic is enticing to undergraduates, there are opportunities for student-supporting research funding.

*Opportunities for external funding vary by discipline and by topic. Don't complain, but do describe where there are more limited funding choices. Some readers in traditional areas may assume that “good” research ideas are funded, and “weak” research ideas are not, but that is not true. (e.g. research on gun violence).*

I think and work connectedly. As you view my CV and the co-authors listed, you can see that I switch between different teams: I view myself as the independent catalyst that shows people how new topics can arise from interdisciplinary dialogue.

*Readers will always look to see what **independence** and leadership the candidate has. If the person is seldom first-author, publishes with their mentors (dissertation chairs, etc.), publishes with senior members of their department, only works with one team ←none of these are individually bad, but the more they appear, the more worried the readers are that the candidate 'does what they are told' vs. coming up with independent research.*

*Candidates for full will document leadership and unique contributions. They can refer to work accomplished by other members of their teams as part of their research influence and mentoring.*

In some ways it is more difficult to work collaboratively at IUPUI when it comes to curriculum and teaching, due to the RC economic model---as an economist I must admire its transparency but as a teacher, it stifles some creativity. I do look forward to continually developing my teaching skills so that O'Neill students and others are successful in the paths they pursue.

I believe I have met O'Neill and IUPUI criteria for research excellence with a growing, well-published, well-cited, and interdisciplinary body of work that has excited future researchers and influenced current scholars.

*The words "impact" and "influence" are important for tenure-track faculty. This FAKE statement does NOT reference any particular bit of school (department) criteria. It is important to do that.*

====This person has chosen a 5-page statement with a 2-page area-of-excellence statement.