

Continuing Your Education: On to Graduate & Professional School

Your decision to apply to graduate school is a tough one but it's really just the first step! Often times it can be difficult to narrow the field. Here are some helpful hints and resources to aid you in your graduate school process.

ADVANTAGES OF A GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

- A richer, full, intellectual life.
- Will increase your career options.
- Maintain competitiveness in an increasingly competitive field.
- Benefits of a major university (study abroad, publish work, etc.).
- Increased income opportunities.
- Reduce chances of unemployment.

WHAT'S YOUR GOAL FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL? GATHER INFORMATION

Ask Yourself: Why do I want to go to graduate school? What do I want to study? What do I want from a program? How will I accomplish and pay for graduate school?

Talk to as many people as you can and do the research to learn as much as you can about schools/programs you are considering. Talk to *professors, alumni, current students, professionals of the field*; all can give you a different perspective.

IDENTIFY & RESEARCH SCHOOLS

- ❖ Think about applying to “safe” schools (those you know you can get into), “probably/maybe” schools, and even some “reach” schools (those schools you feel "I might just make the cut" or "It can't hurt to try, right?")
- ❖ Read faculty writings to get a feel for the universities where they teach.
- ❖ Consider the rankings of the schools- Is the school a good fit for you? Do they offer what you're looking for? How competitive is it?

PLANNING- STEPS TO TAKE

- ✓ **Obtain Application Materials-** Every school is different so find out what the requirements are for the schools in which you are interested. Apply 30-90 days early for a better chance at getting in.
- ✓ **Complete Necessary Standardized Entrance Exam(s)** - Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), etc. Try to take the test as soon as possible so you can check it off your list early!
- ✓ **Research Financial Aid Options-** Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This may help you determine what school you should choose based on affordability. Graduate, teaching, or research assistantships are a great way to gain experience and get some of your tuition covered. Fellowships/grants and loans are another way to pay for your further education.
- ✓ **Prepare a Resume and Letter of Intent/Personal Statement-** Some schools will require a resume, but nearly all will require a statement of purpose/intent. Here you would state what your objectives and career goals are, why you are interested in graduate school and why you think you're a good fit.
- ✓ **Request Letters of Recommendation-** Two/three letters from professors or employers will be necessary so think about those with whom you have good relations. Approach them early so they have time to finish it before the deadline.

- ✓ **Visit the Colleges/Universities you're Interested in-** It's important to visit the school to check out the campus and see if it's a good fit

3 WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF STAND OUT:

1. *Write to professors in the school-* ask for clarification of the program, comment on something they've written (Read their work FIRST!), or propose an interest in an area for further study.
2. *Visit the program-* meet with professors (read some of their work) and with current students in the program (they're usually very honest about the program).
3. *Submit outstanding work samples-* have your professors approve them and use their names in it. Get it proofread!

SELECTING A PROGRAM

This can be the toughest part. You must consider your own needs, expectations/goals, and educational values.

- ☞ What is the program's emphasis?
- ☞ Does the program offer the opportunities you are looking for?
- ☞ What career areas do graduates of the department enter?
- ☞ How large is the department/classes?
- ☞ What are the total costs?
- ☞ What areas of research have the faculty focused?
- ☞ How long does it take to finish the program?
- ☞ Where is the school located?
- ☞ Will it be a good fit for you?
- ☞ What financial aid is available (graduate assistantships, scholarships, etc.)?

Graduate/Professional School Candidate Selection

Guide:

- Grades
- Test Scores
- Essay
- References
- Work sample
- Interview

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

Websites:

Peterson's guides- www.petersons.com
Princeton review- www.princetonreview.com
www.gradschools.com
www.gradsource.com
www.gradschool.about.com
www.ulinks.com

Books: "Educational Rankings Annual"
"The Gourman Report"

Financial Aid: www.fastweb.com
www.finaid.org
www.fafsa.ed.gov (FAFSA)

Other: Career Services website/resources center; College Catalogs/websites; Faculty/staff; Alumni of the school; campus visits; program/department at the school of interest