

GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Applying to graduate/professional school is hard work, so it is important to think ahead and plan your application strategy. When thinking about graduate or professional school, you need to consider: your interests, skills and experiences; knowledge of the occupational field; schools offering programs of interest; and admission requirements.

Self Knowledge

- Are you interested in continued study for the purpose of immersing yourself into a subject area for pure knowledge or for employment opportunities?
- Are you burned out academically and need to take some time off?
- Are you postponing the job search by going to graduate school?
- Can you identify your interests, skills, and experiences and describe how they relate to an occupational field?
- Can you balance continued education with other life roles?
- Are you motivated to continue your study for another two or more years?

There are resources available in the Academic & Career Advising Center to help you with the above. Be sure to view the resources available in the Academic & Career Advising Center Library and on the web site. Schedule an appointment to talk with a career counselor.

Field Knowledge

- Do you have accurate reality based information about the field of interest?
- Have you talked with professionals to see if an advanced degree is necessary for entry into the field?
- If an advanced degree is important, are there several options available in terms of programs?
- Would it be wise to work for a year or two to decide which graduate program to pursue?
- Do you have related experience through an internship, externship, or summer job?

Schedule an appointment with a career advisor to help you in finding an internship, externship, or summer job.

Information on Specific Programs

- Have you explored schools, which offer programs related to your field?
- Have you talked with people in the field to get their suggestions on schools/programs?
- Have you consulted with your major professors about their graduate school experience and about the quality of graduate universities? They can also provide excellent guidance in terms of the overall graduate school experience and job market.
- Do you know the admission requirements for schools/programs of interest?
- Have you taken the appropriate graduate admission test (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, and MCAT)?
- Have you reviewed the schools/programs web site to gather information?
- Have you written to get information on the school/program?
- Have you opened a recommendation file for reference letters?

Some resources available through the Academic & Career Advising Center to assist you in gathering specific information on schools/programs include:

- *The Gourman Report--A Rating of Graduate and Professional Programs in American & International Universities*
- *How to Write a Winning Personal Statement*
- Registration booklets for graduate/professional school admission tests (there are also links to this information on the Academic & Career Advising Center's web site)
- Recommendation files for reference letters
- *AMA Medical School Admission Requirements*
- *The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools.*

Applying to graduate school takes time and consideration. The earlier you begin your graduate school search, the smoother the process will be. Be sure to check with each graduate or professional school for exact deadlines because they will vary from program to program.

Factors to Consider for Research

- Areas of specialization within the discipline
- Number of students enrolled in the program (Consider the male/female ratio and average age of the student body)
- Number of full-time faculty
- Distinguished faculty in the discipline
- Areas of specialty of the faculty
- Cost
- Housing
- Location
- Financial assistance: teaching assistantships, research assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, and other financial awards
- Reputation: talk with faculty, review professional journals and scholarly articles in the field of interest to determine who is on the cutting edge of research
- Placement statistics, if available
- Admission requirements: residency, quality point ratio or class rank, academic major and classes completed, references, deadlines, graduate school admission test(s)

Personal Statement

You should be aware that admission committees place significant weight on this portion of the application. Your personal statement should be the requested length, not longer and not shorter as a rule. Never exceed the space provided. While it is clear that you may not extend the limits of the page, there is no recommendation for how much to write; nor are you given much direction about what to say in your statement.

You can use the personal statement to emphasize your qualifications, interest in the field and why you think that you will make a good X, Y, or Z. You can describe your motivation for study or preparation for a career in the particular discipline, experiences which have contributed to your decision and your goals for the future. Before you begin writing, create an outline that lists the main topics you want to discuss. This will permit you to develop paragraphs that are organized and succinct. Be specific and use concrete examples.

Prepare several drafts, refining and editing each version with every rewrite. Allow some time to lapse before reading your first draft, then read it aloud to yourself and listen carefully to what you hear. Be sure that you have written what you meant to communicate. If you stumble over your reading or a phrase sounds awkward, that's a clue that you may need to revise your statements.

Have someone else read your essay and give you feedback. Some of the most valuable assessments of your essay come from questions that are raised when other people read your essay. If your writing is not clear, you are not communicating effectively. And finally, ask a writing tutor in the Writing Center to critique your essay. There are books in the Academic & Career Advising Center Resource Room on writing a personal statement.

Questions to Ask Graduate and Professional School Representatives

- What is your process for the review of applications?
- Is there any advantage to applying early? Does your school have early admissions?
- When do you typically inform applicants about admissions decisions?
- How important is the personal statement in your admissions process?
- What kinds of recommendations are most helpful?
- What joint degree programs are offered?
- How is the program curriculum organized?
- How would you describe the faculty-student relationship/ratio?
- Describe the physical location of the school.
- Describe the on and off campus housing opportunities for students.
- How is financial aid handled at your school? When do you notify the student of financial aid?
- What are the average costs at your school for tuition, and all other expenses?
- What makes your school unique?

General Timeline

Spring and Summer Semester Junior Year

Six Months Prior to Applying

- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- Talk to advisors about application requirements.
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate school admission tests.
- Investigate national scholarships.
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation.

Senior Year

Three Months Prior to Applying

- Take required graduate admission tests.
- Write for application materials.
- Visit institutions of interest, if possible.
- Write your application essay.
- Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.
- Obtain letters of recommendation.
- Take graduate admission test if you have not already.
- Send completed applications.
- Pick up the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.

Spring Semester, Senior Year

Early Spring, Before Enrolling in the Fall

- Check with all institutions before their deadlines to make sure that your file is complete.
- Visit institutions that accept you.
- Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you so that they can admit students on their waiting list.
- Send thank-you letters to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.

Suggested Web Sites

- **Graduate School Rankings**
<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/corank.htm>
- **Comprehensive School Guides**
<http://www.gradschools.com>
- **Peterson's Guides to Graduate and Professional Programs**
<http://www.petersons.com>
- **Financial Aid for Grad School**
<http://www.finaid.org>
<http://www.Fastweb.com>
- **Grad. School Test Prep Information**
<http://www.kaplan.com>
- **Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)**
<http://www.gre.com/>
- **Association of American Medical Colleges**
<http://www.aamc.org/>
- **Association of America Veterinary Medical Colleges**
<http://aavmc.org/>
- **American Physical Therapy Association**

<http://www.apta.org/Education/accreditation>

Academic & Career Advising Center Resource Room

There is graduate/professional school information available for your review in the Academic & Career Advising Center Resource Room. Stop by anytime Monday through Friday, 8:15am to 5:00pm to use the resources.

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