Road to Graduate School

Graduate School Basics

Good reasons for going to graduate school include:

- You have done your research and know you want to work in a field or at a level that requires post-graduate study prior to entry
- You are very certain that you are ready to devote time to discipline-specific study to develop expertise, qualify you for advancement, or enhance earning potential
- You are passionate about your choice and know where you want graduate school to take you
- If you can't get funding, you are prepared to undertake loans to finance your graduate education, and return to a student lifestyle

Reasons not to go to graduate school:

- You want to avoid looking for a job because you don't know what you want to do
- You've heard that the job market isn't great, so you want to delay looking for a job
- You want to extend the joys of the undergraduate years and avoid entering the “real world”

You should start preparing as appropriate for your program of interest. All times indicated below are approximate. You should study deadlines for specific programs carefully since they may vary significantly depending on the program to which you apply.

Summer
Write a draft of your statement of purpose. This is the most important part of your application and can be the deciding factor in the admissions decision. It will be evaluated for quality of writing as well as for clarity of professional goals.

Browse through college bulletins and department brochures.

September
Meet with faculty members to discuss your statement of purpose and ask for letters of recommendation.

Sign up for standardized tests (paper/pencil test times vary, computerized testing is offered every month) such as the GRE and GMAT.

Request fellowship information and applications from graduate schools and programs.

Career Center Calendar
Check www.cpp.edu/~career for current dates, times and locations for Drop-In Advising, workshops and career events.

“Drop-In Advising”
Brief, 10-15 minute sessions with a Peer Advisor who can provide you the tools and resources to be successful. No appointment necessary!

Monday-Friday: 11am-3pm

Summer Hours:
Please call office for Summer hours 909-869-2342
October
Take standardized tests (check your special discipline as test dates vary).

November
Order transcripts and ask if your records office can send a transcript with your fall quarter grades in time to meet the program deadlines.

Complete applications (first create a draft). Give your recommenders (references) the forms to fill out and the addresses to which they should send their letters. It is helpful to them if you provide copies of your statement of purpose.

February
Contact programs about the possibility of visiting. A personal visit can often enhance your chance of being accepted. Departments will sometimes help with travel expenses.

April
If you are applying for need based financial aid programs, you may have to file a copy of your federal income tax return.

Prepared by Council of Graduate Schools - http://www.cgsnet.org

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Everyone finds it difficult to write a personal statement; however, don’t get discouraged. With strong forethought and clear presentation, you can write a powerful essay that will dramatically increase your chances for admission.

Excellent guidelines are available to help you write a good personal statement at:
http://uga.berkeley.edu/apa/personalstatement
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html

After you have written your first draft, have it proofread for mistakes or awkward phrases. The Writing Center, located in the Learning Resource Center, (Library 2nd floor), is a good resource for general proofreading. During drop-in hours, at the Career Center (see reverse side), a Career Counselor can review your personal statement for organization and content.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation are required for almost every graduate school application and are a very important part of the application process. Usually grades and test scores factor in most heavily; however, your letters of recommendation could be the deciding factor in the admission process. Strong letters of recommendation can strengthen your application and if there are deficiencies in your application, they can help to outweigh them.

Some basics to consider:
- Provide them with stamps, etc…
- Ask faculty to tailor the letter for you (“Would you feel comfortable writing a strong letter of recommendation?” “What would you be able to say about me?”)
- Give faculty 4-6 weeks advance notice
- Waive disclosure, but know what will be in letter
- Ask for 1 more letter than required
- Remember to give them a Thank you card for assisting you

For detailed information about securing strong letters of recommendation, visit http://career.berkeley.edu/Grad/GradLetter.stm

CURRICULUM VITAE

A CV or Curriculum Vitae is:
- Your life history
- Your job history
- Your achievements (publication, research, etc.)
- Your skills

For more information, visit the Career Center or http://www.cvtips.com

Valuable resources and web sites
www.petersons.com
www.collegenet.com
www.gradschool.com
www.review.com
https://www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college/
www.usnews.com/sections/education
www.utexas.edu/world/univ
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