

## CHOOSING A GRADUATE SCHOOL

- ◆ You need to do your research carefully to choose the school that will best suit your needs and talents.
- ◆ The most important factor should be how well the graduate program of an institution fits your particular interests, academic background, and goals.  
*One way to do research on graduate programs is to talk with faculty members at AC about where they did their graduate work and what they know about graduate programs in their fields.*
- ◆ Determine what various programs' prerequisites are. For a professional degree, work experience or overall academic preparation is often as important as specific coursework.
- ◆ Determine the selectivity of the program to which you want to apply. How many people apply to a given department or program, and how many are accepted? *You must be very honest with yourself concerning your own academic background and intellectual potential.*
- ◆ If your institution did not offer the range of courses as prerequisites for a very demanding graduate program, your preparation for grad school may not be up to the level of other applicants. *(Graduates say that AC really prepared them for graduate/professional programs they are in.)*
- ◆ For a graduate degree, you are applying for admission to a department or specific program. Your application is evaluated and you will be recommended for admission by the department and its faculty members rather than a central admissions office. *\*\*\*Be more than casually familiar with the department to which you are applying.\*\*\* Evaluate their credentials. Ask questions of students currently in the program. Accreditation?*

## HOW TO APPLY TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

### APPLY!

- ◆ Apply to a specific program or department. Your application is evaluated both at the program or department level and at the institutional level.
- ◆ Visit campuses!!!
- ◆ Call the appropriate departments.
- ◆ Visit with the faculty members.

### THE COST OF VISITING YOUR TOP SCHOOLS MAY BE A WISE INVESTMENT!

- ◆ **RULE OF THUMB!** Apply to at least two or three departments that have programs that fit your interests. Don't be afraid to set your goals high if you believe you have the ability to succeed in a demanding program.
- ◆ Apply to several programs in comparable universities that appeal to you.
- ◆ Apply to different types of institutions.
- ◆ Apply to at least one highly prestigious and highly competitive research university as well as a major university with fairly large graduate programs where you feel you have a reasonable chance of being accepted.

### IF YOUR APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED AT SEVERAL INSTITUTIONS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. YOU WILL HAVE CHOICES.

- ◆ Applying to graduate school can be time-consuming, but if you do it carefully and thoughtfully, you improve the chances that a program of your choosing will accept your application. Since application fees range from \$25 to \$50, a thoughtful approach to the process may help you get the most out of the money that you have allotted.

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- ◆ Letters from faculty members are very important because your professors are in the best position to assess your ability to do advanced academic work. Obviously you will want to approach faculty members in whose classes you have done well. You want people who know you personally, hence the importance of talking with your professors, both as you take their classes and afterward, when you seek advice on possible graduate programs.
- ◆ Initiative and independent thinking are the hallmarks of a good graduate student and you need to display these characteristics at the undergraduate level.
- ◆ You can do that by asking intelligent questions in class, discussing your exams with faculty members during office hours, and seeking advice about your future career.
- ◆ Make the application process as easy as you can for the writers of your recommendation letters. *Provide a copy of your resume.*

## STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

- ◆ Determine whether you need to take a test such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or a test appropriate to your professional area, such as the LSAT, MCAT, or GMAT. Not all programs require standardized test scores, but many do. For the GRE it is important to note whether a specific subject test is required in addition to the general exam.
- ◆ The test is not a “make or break situation.”
- ◆ The most intimidating aspect of standardized tests is that they are timed. You have only a certain amount of time to complete each section. Get used to working under pressure.
- ◆ Take a look at <http://www.gre.org>, which will give you guidelines for taking the examination. It includes a practice test and a list of additional test books that you can order.
- ◆ ***Early in the fall is usually a good time to test, receive scores, and meet application deadlines.***
- ◆ ***Don't wait until the last minute!!!***

## TRANSCRIPTS AND GRADES

- ◆ Graduate programs require official transcripts of all college work that you have undertaken. Even one or two courses taken at another institution should be reported via a transcript. Order transcripts from all of your postsecondary institutions early in the fall.
- ◆ Institutions usually set a minimum undergraduate grade point average for admission to graduate school, generally a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (a B average, although some departments might admit students whose grades fall below that average). Your undergraduate grade point average is a strong indicator of your ability to do graduate work, and admissions committees consider it carefully.
- ◆ They will not only look at your grade average but at the quality of the undergraduate institution where you obtained it. They will look closely at the grades you earned in your major, particularly at upper division courses in that subject. Patterns of improvement are important!
- ◆ If your grade point average is not outstanding, do not despair. If it is somewhat below a B average, there is still hope. If it is below a B-, be concerned. You may be able to explain unusual circumstances that affected your grades when you write your statement of purpose. You can stress that your grades improved dramatically (if they did).
- ◆ Be realistic in assessing what your grades actually show about your academic ability and your own self-discipline and motivation.

## APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

- ◆ An application for financial aid will generally come either as part of your application packet or in a separate mailing from a campus financial aid office.
- ◆ ***Read financial aid materials carefully to make sure you meet deadlines and provide all relevant information.***
- ◆ File documents on time. When aid money is limited, institutions tend to use deadlines as a way of limiting the pool of applicants. ***Make copies of everything!***
- ◆ ***Planning ahead is key!***
- ◆ You should find out as much as you can from the department to which you are applying about their patterns of funding graduate students. Professional degree programs generally are more oriented toward loans, with the argument that you will increase your earning power in a relatively short time and be in a good position to pay back the money.

## THE OUTCOME

- ◆ Keep track of the status of your applications, financial aid materials, and recommendations. Successful applicants maintain detailed records of the progress of each application.
- ◆ If you've followed directions then you should have some success!

## GOOD LUCK!!!

## IMPORTANT RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

- ◆ <http://www.gradschools.com/>
- ◆ <http://www.gre.org>
- ◆ <http://www.petersons.com/graduate/>
- ◆ <http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/apply/articles/process/schedule.asp>
- ◆ [http://www.allaboutgradschool.com/netguide/test/gre/application\\_timeline.htm](http://www.allaboutgradschool.com/netguide/test/gre/application_timeline.htm)
- ◆ Career Services has the updated Six Volume Set of Peterson's Graduate Guides in Adams Center Resource Library. Make sure you browse these as you're researching programs!