

Graduate School Application Success

James Westhoff
Director of Career Services
203 Peabody
westhoffj@husson.edu
992-4909

Agenda

- Financial Aid
- Why go to Grad School
- Bad Reasons to Attend
- What is Graduate School
- Finding and Choosing Programs
- Application, Tests, and Interviews
- Application Timetable
- Common Barriers to Getting In

Financial Aid

- Most financial aid is through the graduate school department itself. (i.e., Graduate Assistantships)
- Very few grants or scholarships at the graduate level
- Must also do the FAFSA if you need loans. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov to find this **free application**.
- Go to www.finaid.com to find other financial aid options, but most are for undergraduate.
- Parents income does not effect your FAFSA for graduate school. It is just about your income.

Why Go

- You have a clarity of purpose in career, professional, and personal goals.
- You understand how a graduate degree fits with your career goals.
- You understand what a graduate degree will do for you (i.e., professional license, marketability, to advance in a field, to teach in higher education, to become an expert in a field or issue).

Bad Reasons to Attend

- You don't know what else to do.
- To avoid going to work.
- To please others that want you to go
- Because you have good standardized test scores

What Is Graduate School

- Specialized study in one area
- Master's Degree— Generally 2 year program either academic or occupationally oriented (If you do academic generally preparing to go to PhD).
- Doctorate— 4 or more years being trained to pursue independent, original research in a specific area of a field.
- Generally, a long-term commitment to a field of study and endeavor.
- Professional Schools—Law School, Medical, MSW

Finding Graduate School Information

- Directories: Peterson's Guide, Gourman Report, U.S. News & World Report.
- Grad School websites
- Consult with your faculty about programs
- Professional Associations provide information sometimes.
- Consult with students and faculty from programs you are considering.

Choosing A Program

- Good advisor in your specialty
- Classes in your specialty
- Application pre-requisites
- Research quality of facilities (i.e. Library, Technology)
- Accessibility of faculty
- Faculty and program reputation
- Environmental Factors (location, school, personal)

Preparing A Stellar Application

- Strong Personal Statement
- Recommendations by key faculty
- Research done during your undergraduate program
- Written and Oral communication skills
- Leadership Activities
- Standardized Test Results: GRE, MAT, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT.
- Grade Point Average
- Take Graduate Classes as guest student

Do An Interview with Program

- You may have to request an interview. Some programs require them now.
- Research programs thoroughly.
- Be able to articulate your goals and why you want to be there.
- Ask questions to clarify what you want to know about program.
- Be confident, direct, and show you know your goals.
- Send thank you notes immediately.

Application Timetable

- In general, start the process about 1 ½ years before start of program.
- 1 yr. 3 months: Take tests and request letters of recommendation.
- 1 year: Get letters of recommendation and complete applications. Generally, applications are due in November and December of the year before you want to start. Be sure you know deadline, if any.
- 6 months: Verify receipt of all of your materials with schools and stay in contact a few times.

Common Application Barriers

- Missing the deadlines.
- Poorly written application essay.
- Not meeting admission criteria.
- Incomplete application by not checking to make sure everything is received.
- Inadequate follow-up on application.
- Lack of supporting activities or research.
- Unclear personal and career goals.

Any Questions

- Meet with me.
- Meet with your professors.
- Think about it very hard
- Have fun making the decision