Graduate School Questions to Ask

Professional and graduate schools, like individuals, are very different. They differ in their philosophies, faculties, curricula, and the type of students they attract. Consequently, selecting the “best” school for you can be very challenging. The following set of questions was compiled to help you in evaluating schools you will visit. This list is by no means complete. It was designed to serve as a base for your own questions. Keep in mind that the interview represents a wonderful time for you to learn, so don’t be shy about asking anyone your questions.

Curriculum

- Are there opportunities for students to design, conduct, and publish their own research?
- Is there flexibility in the coursework (the number of electives) and the timing of the courses (accelerating, decelerating, and time off)?
- Has this school, or any of its departments, been on probation or had its accreditation revoked?
- How do students from this school perform on licensing exams? How does the school assist those who don’t pass?
- What is the faculty to student ratio?
- What’s the retention rate?
- Are there minors available or required?
- What is the average number of years that most Ph.D. candidates stay in the program?
- What kind of practicum/internship opportunities would I have? When would these begin?

Evaluation

- How are students evaluated academically? Is there a formal mechanism in place for students to evaluate their professors? What changes have been made recently as a result of this feedback?

Counseling/Student Support

- What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Are these services also offered to their spouses and dependents/children?
- Is there a mentor/advisor system? Who are the advisors - Faculty members? Other students? Both?
- How diverse is the student body? Are there support services for ethnic minorities?
Facilities

- Tell me about the library, laboratory, and extracurricular facilities (i.e., housing and athletic/recreational).
- Are there computer facilities available to students? Are they integrated into the curriculum?

Financial Aid/Teaching and Research Assistantships

- How are research and training assistantships assigned?
- What is the current tuition and fees? Is this expected to increase yearly? At what rate?
- Would I be likely to get financial aid in my first year? Will the aid increase or decrease over time?
- Are there stable levels of federal financial aid and substantial amounts of university endowment aid available?
- Are there students who have an "unmet need" factor in their budget? If so, where do these students come up with the extra funds?
- Are spouses and dependents/children covered in a student’s budget?
- Is someone available to assist students with budgeting and financial planning?
- Does this school provide guidance to its students, and to its graduates/alumni, on debt management?
- Are there jobs available? Is it possible to work and go to school successfully?

Policies

- Is there a school Honor Code? Is there a grievance process/procedure? Are students involved?

Career Services

- How successful are graduates of this program in getting jobs?

Information from:
http://www.careerservices.calpoly.edu/students/colleges/successful_interviewing.htm

Career Services
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