

Getting into Graduate School



Jeff Stocco

Center for Servant Leadership

April 2014



How can the CSL help?

- Advice on essay/candidate statement, resume, and application
- Information on programs
- Ratings of graduate programs
- Help with sorting out your options
- Appointments with Jeff Stocco



Q: What is a graduate program?

A: Specialized knowledge,
concentrated study in one area

- Two types of degrees
 - Professional degrees
 - Research degrees
- Two levels
 - Master's
 - Doctoral



Master's degrees

■ Professional degree

- Specific set of skills
- Applied, “practical”
- Particular profession
- (e.g. education, business, engineering, fine arts, nursing, social work)
- Typically, includes internship or fieldwork

■ Research degree

- Experience in research
- Typically, a step toward a doctorate



Doctoral degrees

■ Professional

- MD for medical practice
- JD for law

■ Research

- 5-7 years of full-time study
- classes and seminars (2-3 yrs)
- Written and oral exams (“comps”)
- Research project, dissertation (1-2 yrs)



Choosing a graduate program

- Size and location
- Fit with your particular interests
 - Specific areas of study (i.e. potential faculty grad advisor)
- Gustavus faculty recommendations
- Ratings, rankings (e.g. Best Graduate Schools, US News and World Report)
- Selectivity
- Career prospects (“placement”)
- “Major” field, or other?



Specific Major Required?

More programs that accept a wide range of majors

- International Affairs
- Law
- Linguistics
- Media Studies
- Ministry/Theology
- Museum Studies/
Education
- Naturopathic Medicine
- Non-profit Management
- Philanthropic Studies
- Public Administration
- Public Health
- Social Work
- Sports Management
- Student Affairs
- Technical Writing
- Visual Arts



Specific Major Required?

Some programs that accept a wide range of majors

- Advertising/Public Relations
- Architecture
- Arts Administration/Affairs/Policy
- Broadcasting
- Business Administration (MBA)
- Planning (City, Regional, Rural, Urban)
- Conservation
- Counseling
- Design
- Education (& Ed. Admin.)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Environmental (Health, Mgmt, Policy, Education)
- Health/Hospital Admin.
- Hospitality Management
- Human Resource Mgmt.
- Industrial/Labor Relations
- Information Studies



Well, then, how do you decide?

- Evaluate your strengths
- Evaluate your career objectives
- Visit schools
- Visit web sites
 - Entrance requirements
 - Profile of a successful applicant
- Talk with current students and alumni
- Career prospects (“placement”)
- Full-time vs. part-time?
- How many schools?



Deciding: Is it right for you, now?

(University of Washington)

- • Know why you're going
Reasons, expectations, realistic appraisal
- • What are the costs and benefits?
Short term and long term positives and negatives
- • Choosing a Program
Dream schools, good possibilities, safeties



Applying to Grad School: What's required?

- Application form (online, paper)
- Essay or Personal Statement
- Transcripts
- Test scores (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT)
- Letters of recommendation
 - Waiving your right to view your recs?
- Portfolio or Audition (if applicable)
- Financial Aid application materials



Essay, Personal Statement - Tips

(from Get Into Graduate School, Kaplan)

- Make it ***Persuasive***

- Make it ***Unique***

- Tailored to each graduate program
- Respond to each school's specific questions

- Make it ***Personal***

- Are you ready for such a decision? (if applying to attend immediately after Gustavus)



Letters of Recommendation - Tips

- Make an **appointment** with your professor
- **Gather forms**, essays, resume/CV
- Supply stamped, addressed envelopes OR web sites/links for electronic forms
- Provide clear, **step-by-step instructions**, including **timeline/deadlines**
- **Follow up w/ writers** weeks before deadline
- Send writers **thank you notes and updates** when you have news!



Timeline for Applying

(assuming matriculation the fall after graduation)

- **Spring semester of junior year**
 - Talk with your advisor about your plans
 - Focus on type of program and start gathering information
- **Summer before senior year**
 - Draft personal statement
 - Browse guides and web sites for programs
- **August – September**
 - Meet with faculty
 - Ask for letters of recommendation
 - Register for and take entrance exams
- **October/November**
 - Take entrance exams (at the latest)
 - Request application materials from your desired schools
 - Chart timelines for desired schools
 - Order transcripts



Timeline for Applying (continued)

- November
 - Complete application forms (online, printed apps)
 - Give your recommenders all the info they will need
- November / December
 - Submit applications
- February
 - Contact (and possibly visit) programs
- March / April
 - Receive acceptances/rejections and offers of financial assistance – make a decision!



Financing Graduate School

- Awarded on Academic Merit
 - Somewhat limited at master's level
 - Assistantships
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Project or Program
 - (possible: residence hall, advising)
 - Fellowships, Scholarships
- Need-based (institution, state, federal)
 - Parental income generally not a factor
 - Student employment, loans, grants



Resources

■ CSL

- Peterson's Guide to Graduate Study (6 vol)
- Guides to writing essays/personal statements
- Test Prep guides

■ Internet

- <http://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx>
- <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/top-graduate-schools/applying>
- <http://www.gradschools.com/>

Questions?

