IS GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR YOU?

Things to Consider:
- How genuinely interested are you in this field?
- How will a graduate degree improve your career prospects?
- Will grad school help advance your career?
- How will you pay for it?
- Is it worth your effort?
- How is being a graduate student different from being an undergrad?
- How well have you performed academically as an undergrad?

FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROGRAM

There are many factors to consider when choosing the right graduate program for you. Here are a few items (not listed in order of importance):

- Reputation
- Faculty
- Curriculum
- Special programs
- Academic support
- Intern/Externships
- Student services
- Financial considerations
- Student organizations
- Geographic location
- Surrounding community
- Size of school
- Placement
- PT/FT programs
- Joint degree
- Diversity
- Ranking
- Other personal items

PREPARING FOR ADMISSION

There are several items to keep in mind when preparing to apply to a graduate school. Be sure to check EACH program for their application and procedures since they may DIFFER from program to program. SOME items to consider:

- Watch application deadlines!
- Apply to program and university (if applicable)
- Coursework preparation
- G.P.A.
- Standardized test score
- Transcripts
- Personal statement
- Letters of Recommendation
- Co-curricular activities
- Research experience
- Any supplemental information
- Contact department if have any questions

The type of graduate program you select determines how you frame your personal statement or essay. Admissions committees in academic departments are most concerned with your dedication to the discipline and the probability of you making a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in your chosen field. Admissions committees in professional schools are interested in what you have already accomplished in the world of work, and what you hope to learn from graduate study that will assist you in the future. The statement should be a concise well-written essay about your background and your reasons for pursuing graduate study in the field or profession you have chosen. Admissions committees place particular importance on the personal statement. It provides the committees with a sample of your writing skills and your ability to present ideas in clear, coherent language.

Your statement should indicate:

- How knowledgeable you are in your major field;
- How your undergraduate studies and other experiences (e.g., work, community involvement, co-curricular activities, significant family experiences, research, etc.) serve as a foundation for graduate study;
- How and why you intend to build on this foundation of knowledge and apply your graduate training to social or theoretical problems;
- Your motivation and a commitment to the field of study;
- How your background and experiences combine to make you a unique applicant.
GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Here is a suggested timeline for graduate school applications. Use it to guide you as you prepare for the application process so you can be fully prepared.

WINTER/SPRING QUARTER – JUNIOR YEAR
- Start researching/visiting schools (gradschools.com, etc.)
- Begin writing your personal statement
- Identify writers of your letters of recommendation
- Gain co-curricular experience to diversify your application
- Open a letter of recommendation file on Interfolio
- Register and take appropriate entrance exams (GRE, MCAT, GMAT, LSAT, etc.)
- Register with appropriate service: LSDAS (if law school applicant), AMCAS (if medical school applicant); typically start applying by June 1st but date changes each year

SUMMER
- Research/visit schools
- Work on your personal statement
- Identify writers of your letters of recommendation
- Gain co-curricular experience to diversify your application
- Begin sending for graduate school applications
- Make checklist and schedule for each application
- Complete and submit medical school applications (if applicable)

FALL/WINTER QUARTER – SENIOR YEAR
- Register and take appropriate entrance exams (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc.) (if haven’t already)
- Complete applications and submit
- Finish personal statement
- Collect letters of recommendation
- Attend appropriate graduate school forums/events
- Apply for awards
- Submit financial aid applications

SPRING QUARTER – SENIOR YEAR
- Secure Financing
- Submit tuition/housing deposits upon acceptance to school in which you enroll

GRAD SCHOOL INTERVIEW -- ARE YOU PREPARED?

Not all graduate school programs require you to attend an interview. However, Preparation is key to a successful graduate school interview. Visit the Career Counselor for more information on specific fields. The interview prep module in SCOTLink is easy to refine your interviewing skills. Start practicing today by logging on to SCOTLink at careers.ucr.edu.

The following are general interview questions:
1. Tell me about yourself. (Describe your academic background, any experiences (not much detail) and why you want to go to grad school.)
2. How did you choose UCR and your major? (Show your decision making for major area and college.)
3. Why this university? (Again, decision making.)
4. What courses and activities have you done to prepare yourself for graduate school?
5. How will you fund your graduate education? (How much time will you have to study.)
6. What do you know about our graduate program? (Display you want this program.)
7. What area of specialty do you have? (Display any experiences, courses, etc.)
8. Why graduate school, why not get practical experience first?
9. How would your recommenders describe your strengths? Your weaknesses?
10. Describe a challenging time during your academic work at UCR that you had to overcome.