Demystifying Graduate School

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Outline

- Options after the BS/BA
- What is graduate school and is it right for me?
- What can I do to prepare for graduate school?
- Researching graduate programs.
- How do I apply to graduate school?
Life after college

What is the best choice for you?
After College

- Independently wealthy - Retire
- Internship
- Workforce
- Post-bac
- More School
Four Year Institution “undergrad” BA/BS

Professional Schools
(Medical School, Dental School, Pharmacy, etc.)

Graduate School
Doctorate Program
PhD, 4-6+yrs

Post-bac
1-2 yrs

Post Doctoral Fellowship
1-3yrs

Graduate School
Masters Program
MA/MS, 1-3yrs

LSAT, MCAT, etc.

GRE: subject and/or general

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How do you Decide?
Self Evaluation

What are my strengths/weaknesses?

When am I most happy?

Where do I see my self 10 years from now?

What gives me motivation?

What inspires me? What do I still need to learn?

Which classes am I enjoying the most?
Somewhere between the end of the second year and the end of the third year you must ask yourself:

“Have I prepared myself appropriately and do I have a strong enough record to apply for the graduate or professional program in which I am interested?”

If the answer is “no” it is time to candidly re-examine your career goals, your learning strategies or your educational goals.
Graduate School

*What is this black box?*
Timeline

Typical graduate curriculum

YEAR | 0 | 2 | 6+

Courses
Rotations
Exams
Research
Defense
Can I Afford a PhD???

YES!!!!

• Fellowships
• Teaching Assistantships
• Graduate Student Researchships
What can I do to prepare for a graduate education?

- Maintain a competitive undergraduate GPA
- Develop positive relationships with faculty
- Participate in undergraduate research programs
- Begin talking with graduate students in your prospective field of study
- Do research on campus
- Know the requirements of your career path
How do I research graduate programs?

- Talk to People!
  - Professors, Graduate Students (TA’s), Career Center Advisors, Graduate Division, Department, and Program Advisors
- Internet Research
- Literature Research
Talking to people: What should I say?

- Tell them what you are interested in studying
- Ask them if they can recommend schools or particular programs of study
- Ask them how you can best prepare yourself academically for graduate school
- Ask them what their experience of graduate school was like
Internet Research

- Visit Graduate Division websites at the schools you are interested in
- UCSC http://graddiv.ucsc.edu/programs
- Visit department websites
- Search for professional academic organizations in your field (MLA, AAAS, APA, ASA, etc.)
- Try a Google search using terms such as “choosing a graduate school”
  - http://www.phds.org
  - http://gradschool.about.com/cs/choosingaprogram/a/select.htm
Literature

- Review the literature from your classes.

- What were some of your favorite articles, books, studies?

- Collect authors and citations and then see where those people are working.
Where should I apply?
Remember, choosing a graduate school is *not* like choosing an undergraduate college.

Make your selection based on a variety of considerations, not only the reputation of the university.

Don’t prescreen yourselves out
Factors to consider when choosing schools ....

- Intellectual environment (grad students, faculty, collaborative, interdisciplinary)
- Reputation of department, faculty
- Financial and professional support for graduate students.
- Social environment (esp. among grad students)
- Demographics of students…% minorities…% women
Factors to consider when choosing schools (cont.)

- Are you interested in multiple professors’ work?
- Faculty publishing record.
- Sufficient library, laboratories, research infrastructure.
- Average time to PhD
- Retention
- Size of the program and the school.
- Location (geography relative to family/significant other, climate, city characteristics, available extracurricular activities)
- Housing, transportation.
What to do next?

- You should apply to 5-10 schools
- Find online application materials and email the department with any questions you have.
- Ask for a fee waiver.
- Contact faculty with whom you are interested in working.
  - Tell them you are interested in applying to their program.
  - What research are they currently conducting?
- Contact students in the program
  - Have them share their own experiences/satisfaction.
The Application Process
When should I apply?

- **Spring of Junior Year** (Information Gathering)
  - Begin researching graduate programs
  - Visit websites, order catalogs and publications
  - Research examination test dates and fees

- **Summer after Junior Year** (Materials Preparation)
  - Identify specific department deadlines and requirements
  - Get research experience
  - Begin preparing application materials (letters, statements, etc.)

- **Fall of Senior Year** (Application Submission)
  - Decide where to apply
  - Complete application materials and submit by required deadline (s)
  - Register and take the required examinations (GRE, CBEST, etc.)
What are the components of the application?

- Application Form
- Statement(s) of Purpose
- Letters of Recommendation (3)
- Exam Scores (GRE)
- CV
- Transcripts
- Application Fee (ask for a waiver)
RESOURCES

UNIVERISTY OF CALIFORNIA-Continue the Journey
http://graduate.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/

UCSC CAREER CENTER-Guide to Graduate School Application-
includes timeline for application preparation
http://careers.ucsc.edu/student/
ConsiderGraduateorProfessionalSchool/overview.html

UCSC LETTER SERVICE
http://careers.ucsc.edu/student/resumecoverltr/
RecommendationsandReferences.html#interfolio
Additional Advice

- Make a spreadsheet
- Get apps in early
- Find out approximate notification date
- Don’t be afraid to follow up with calls and email
- Take a light load in Fall senior year to apply
- Take a light load in winter senior year to visit schools.
- Get ready to move.
If you are up for the challenge….

- Find 10 graduate schools you are interested in.
- Choose one graduate PhD program at each school and research it.
- Find all deadlines, requirements and application information that you can.
- Find out about diversity programs for graduate students at each institution.
- Prepare a spreadsheet about your findings.