Is Graduate School in Your Future?

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WHEELOCK
COLLEGE
Why Enroll in Graduate School?

According to Peterson’s Graduate Planner, with a graduate degree you will:

- Have greater earning power ($)
- Advance your career
- Enhance your education about topics that you want to explore in more depth
- Have opportunities to participate in funded research
- Have an opportunity to work on advanced projects
- Accept an academic challenge
- Realize that you are suited for graduate school
  - Encouragement from undergraduate professors
- Have higher potential for future promotion in your chosen field
Key Elements to Consider

**Questions in Decision Making Process**

- What are your educational and professional goals?
  - Will graduate school help you accomplish your professional goals?
- How has your past educational and work experience aided in your decision?
- What program of study would be the best match for your needs and professional goals?
- What characteristics and values would you like a program to have?
- How can you make a comparison between graduate programs?
- When should you be thinking about applying?
- What are the financial considerations?
Graduate School Timeline

According to Peterson’s Guides to Graduate Study (General guidelines)

- First Year, Second Year of College
  - Exploration
    - Understand your interests, values, abilities, and goals
    - Explore different academic disciplines
    - Get involved in co-curricular activities and internships
    - Explore different career options

- Third Year (Fall and Spring) of College
  - Research
    - Conduct research on different occupations and graduate school options
    - Talk to advisors and professors about schools and application requirements
    - Get additional experience for graduate school, for example, research experience, internships, R.A. position, etc.
Graduate School Timeline

- Third Year (Summer) of College
  - Obtain Information
    - Obtain application and financial aid materials
    - Begin writing personal statements and your resume
    - Take graduate admissions tests

- Fourth Year (Fall) of College
  - Apply to Different Schools
    - Request letters of recommendation
    - Request transcripts be sent to graduate schools
Choosing the Right School

- Key Considerations: Make a list of desirable traits including the following criteria
  - Determine the fit of the program with your career goals
  - Availability of practical/professional experience
  - Review success of graduates in your intended discipline
  - Program purpose and goals
  - Success of graduates in obtaining professional positions
  - Size of classes
  - Faculty: student ratio
  - Faculty reputation
  - Diversity of faculty
  - Diversity of student body
  - Availability of Financial Aid

(Adapted from PATH: A Career Workbook for Liberal Arts Students by Howard Figler)
Choosing the Right School

- Identify what you are seeking most in a Graduate Program
  - Begin Researching Programs
    - Resources
      - Graduate School Guide
      - Graduate Majors
      - Institutional Profiles
      - Graduate Test Dates
      - Paying for Graduate School
    - Online Resources
      - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) Comprehensive Information
      - [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com) Comprehensive Online Directory
      - [www.gradschoolfairs.com](http://www.gradschoolfairs.com) Calendar of National Graduate School Fairs
    - Talk to Wheelock Faculty and Professionals in your intended field
Choosing the Right School

• Prioritize your list of Desirable Traits
• Keep in mind your Specific Criteria
  – Contact programs that you are interested in
    – If possible, visit schools to get a better idea of the campus environment, faculty, and program
      – Meet with Graduate Admissions Officers
      – Ask for permission to audit a class
      – Request to speak with a current student in the program
      – Talk to an alumni in your intended career field
    – Is the school a good fit?

• Be aware of Application Requirements
  – Deadlines to register for GRE, MAT, etc.
  – Remember to ask for letters of recommendation in advance from individuals who know you well
Choosing the Right School

• Application Requirements
  – Letters of Recommendation: normally 2 - 3
  – Consider Faculty member, Advisor, Practicum supervisor, or other Professional reference
    – Give recommender as much information about you as possible
      – Current Resume
      – Copy of Personal Statement
  – Personal Statement
    – Start early, reflect on your experiences – why graduate school?
    – Tell your personal story and thoroughly answer the question(s)
    – Have essay reviewed by the Writing Center and CCD

• Keep Track of Application Deadlines
  – Apply EARLY!
    – Remember: Graduate Schools will be reviewing several hundred applications
    – You want Graduate Admissions Officers to have a fresh view of your information
Graduate School Application

- Include a **Cover Letter**
  - Tips
    - Discuss some different points not reflected in your resume
    - No longer than 1 page
    - Include some research you have conducted about the graduate program
    - Briefly indicate why you are interested in attending their particular program

- **Resume** may be required
  - Tips
    - Do not use “I”
    - Be consistent throughout your document: set up, spacing, check grammar
    - Highlight your Accomplishments: Education, Licensure/Certifications, Internship/Practicum, Leadership roles, Volunteer Experience
    - Have resume reviewed by CCD or another objective party
    - Sample Resumes: go to [www.wheelock.edu/ccd/](http://www.wheelock.edu/ccd/)
      - See “Applying for a Job” and click on “Resumes” (scroll down to samples)
How to Finance Graduate School

- **Possible Funding Sources (Peterson’s Graduate Planner)**
  - **Financial Aid**
    - FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid
    - www.fafsa.ed.gov
  - **Scholarships and Grants**
    - www.studentscholarshipsearch.com/graduate-school (free scholarship guide for college students and other resources)
  - **Graduate Assistant Positions** – may waive the tuition fee
  - **Full-time University Employee**
    - Working Full-time at a University and attending school part-time
    - Many universities will pay ½ to all of your tuition costs
    - Institutions may have a waiting period before this benefit starts
  - **Research Grants/Positions**
  - **Employer Education Programs**
    - Companies may pay partial or full cost if education is related to work
  - **Family Loans**
  - **Savings**
    - Working for a few years prior to attending graduate school
Are you considering enrolling in a Wheelock College Graduate Program?

In order to apply for federal financial aid, you must complete the following:

1. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at www.fafsa.ed.gov
2. Wheelock College Graduate Application for Financial Aid (on website)
3. Federal Tax Returns (if needed)

* All students who apply for a program are considered for grants and scholarships. Some awards (Community Scholarship and Graduate Assistantship) do require additional application materials.

Receiving a Financial Aid Package:

Once you have been admitted and your required materials have been received by the Office of Financial Aid, an award package will be mailed to you.
Conclusion:
- Consider if graduate school is the right choice for you.
- Research and evaluate different schools and determine specific criteria you value most in a program.
- Visit different schools if/when possible and talk to Graduate Admissions Officers, current Students, Alumni.
- Make sure that the program will be a good fit for you and your professional goals.
- Be aware of application requirements and deadlines for each school.
  - Prepare for GRE, MAT, etc.
- Make your essays reflective of your personal experience. Think about how the program will fulfill your professional goals.
- Consider how you are going to finance your graduate education.
  - Investigate financial aid at different graduate institutions.
  - Research all available funding sources.
- Begin your adventure!!!