

GRADUATE SCHOOL

WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU APPLY:

Define your goals

- To find the right program, you need to know what you want to do, specifically. You're expected to explore your interests in college. Grad school is about *defining* them. SuccessWorks can help you if you're not sure.
- Visit prospective schools' websites, read professors' biographies to see how your interests match up, find rankings at Petersons.com, GraduateGuide.com, and GradSchools.com and check out professional organizations.

Get prepped

- **Consider Types of Degrees** – Professional or Research
Professional –Most medical degrees, business, law, planning, public policy, natural resource management, etc... often (but not always) are master's programs ranging from 1-3 years
Research - Usually (but not always), result in a Ph.D. and are typically 4-7 years
- **Standardized Admissions Test** - understand which to take based on program type, Ex. MCAT, LSAT, many programs require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)—certain programs also require the GRE Subject Test. Prep early and make sure you register a few months in advance. Check out Barons and the Princeton Review for prep resources.
- **Focus on Academics** – maintain in good standing, as your GPA will be considered in the admissions decision.
- **Maintain and Build Relationships with Your Professors** - make an appointment to chat about a current project, a homework assignment or your career options. A strong relationship with a professor now means a more compelling recommendation letter later.

Think money

- Figure out how much graduate school will cost. Assess the cost of tuition, fees and living expenses. The competition for graduate financial aid is often intense. Research fellowships and assistantships in your field and your desired programs—make sure to stay on top of all application deadlines.

May-August (1.5 years before start date)

Study Up

- Begin the application process. Find out when applications will be available and when they will be due.
- Study for standardized tests. Imagine trying to study for that test with a full undergraduate workload and social calendar. Make good use of a “quieter” summer schedule.

Narrow it down

- Decide which schools are the leading candidates. Reserve at least one or two back-up schools in the event you don't get into your first choice.
- Request transcripts. Registrar offices are inundated with transcript requests in the fall, so a late summer request will beat the rush and leave some cushion in case a problem arises.

September-November:

Get to work

- Check application deadlines. Deadlines start to come up in the late fall. Create a calendar or excel spreadsheet with the deadlines and required materials for your prospective schools. Note how many letters of recommendations, additional transcripts or resumes are required. SuccessWorks can help you write a resume that is tailored to the school(s) you are applying.

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- Request letters of recommendation. Decide who will write your letter(s) of recommendation. Your decision may hinge on the type of program you want to enter; for example, a professor might have a specialty in the area your prospective graduate school is known for. No matter who you choose, give your professors plenty of time and include additional materials in your request to guide them, such as your transcripts or a draft of your statement of purpose. Send a thank-you note once your professor submits his or her letter!
- Take your standardized test.

How will you pay?

- Search for scholarships and financial aid. Also, check out loan or fellowship options with your prospective graduate colleges.
- Fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. To qualify for federal aid you'll fill out the same form for grad school as you did for college. Keep in mind that all grad students are considered independent for federal aid calculations.

Write Away

- Draft your statement of purpose. If you're having trouble with structure or what to write, ask your career advisor, academic advisor or the Writing Center for assistance. If you feel comfortable doing so, ask for help from one of the professors drafting your letter of recommendation.

December-May:

Send them

- Submit your applications (check deadlines, many applications are due before Spring Semester begins!). Before you drop them in the mail, make copies of all materials in case you have to resend them. Send your applications via certified mail to verify delivery. Many schools send a receipt letter or postcard after they receive your application. If you don't get one from a school to which you've applied, follow up with them.

Keep your cool

- Take a deep breath, slowly exhale. Once your applications have been submitted, things are generally outside of your control. Continue to concentrate on your undergraduate studies.
- Prepare for your admissions interview. Practice beforehand, if possible. SuccessWorks can help you prepare for these types of interviews.
- Keep your eye on your mailbox. Around April and May, you should start to receive admission offers.

Make your decision!

- Inform the school in writing (or via the school's preferred method) that you have decided to attend. SuccessWorks can help you with the decision-making process. Also, take time to inform the schools whose acceptance you have declined.
- If your financial aid doesn't quite cut it, look into alternative loan programs. Remember that each sets its own terms, so compare borrower's terms carefully.

Say thank you

- Send thank-you notes to those who assisted in the application process including professors and advisors — they'll want to hear your quest to enter graduate school was a success!

Get ready to go, you're about to start on an exciting new part of your education and career. Enjoy it!