GREETINGS & WELCOME TO THE BIG TEN+ GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPO!

I am excited to welcome you to this year’s Big Ten+ Graduate School Expo, the premiere event of its kind, showcasing graduate educational opportunities in engineering, mathematics, the sciences, technology, and other disciplines.

I would like to also take this opportunity to welcome you to Purdue University, your host for this event. Purdue’s beautiful campus, as I trust you will see, is home to more than 8,000 graduate students in more than 80 programs. With students from all 50 states as well as more than 120 countries around the world, our environment is diverse and welcoming. We are proud to have you here.

My hope is that you take advantage of the many opportunities offered to you throughout the Expo. I encourage you to ask many questions over the next two days, learn from the schools in attendance, participate in the workshops, and network during social activities. Begin to picture yourself at various graduate schools, and think about which program is ideal for you.

Again, welcome to Purdue University and enjoy the Expo.

M. J. T. Smith, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School, and Birck Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Purdue University

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS
GENERAL INFORMATION

**Attire:** Wear your name badge at all times – it will be needed to enter all Expo activities. Recommended attire for Sunday’s activities, including the Welcome Dinner, is casual. Attire for Monday’s Expo events is business casual (dress pants or skirt and shirt or blouse; suits are fine, but not necessary).

**Parking:** Parking is available in the Grant Street Parking Garage, located east of the Purdue Memorial Union (PMU). Parking is free on Sunday in the Wood St. garage (behind) Rawls hall and for guests of the Union Club Hotel. Parking passes may be picked up at the check-in table in the Purdue Memorial Union, Room 118.

**Restrooms:** A women’s restroom is located outside the South (recruiter) entrance of the South Ballroom. Men’s and women’s restrooms are located across the hall from the North Ballroom. See the map of the Purdue Memorial Union on page 21.

**Forget something?** A convenience store is located on the first floor of Stewart Center (STEW), just west of the Purdue Memorial Union. A copy shop, BoilerCopyMaker, is located on the main floor of the Purdue Memorial Union.

**Refreshments (Recruiters Only):** On Monday in the Terrace Room (just outside the South Ballroom’s South entrance), during the Grad School Fair, refreshments will be available.

**Wireless Internet:** Wi-Fi is available for registered guests and recruiters. Information about connecting to guest Wi-Fi can be found in your information packet that you received upon check-in. Recruiters may also use an existing Eduroam account.

**Airport Shuttles:** Transportation to and from the Indianapolis International Airport is provided for a fee by the Lafayette Limo or Star of America shuttle service. Both services depart from the east entrance of the Purdue Memorial Union. Visit [www.lafayettelimo.com](http://www.lafayettelimo.com) or [www.soashuttle.com](http://www.soashuttle.com) for schedule and fee information. Shuttle service to and from the Chicago O’Hare Airport is provided for a fee by Express Air Coach. Express Air Coach departs from the Purdue University Airport, Main Terminal. Contact 765-743-3120 or [www.expressaircoach.com](http://www.expressaircoach.com) for schedule and fee information. **Reservations are strongly recommended for all of these shuttles.**

**Evaluation:** Please take a few minutes to tell us about your experience at the Big Ten+ Graduate School Expo to help us improve the experience. Evaluations should be handed in on Monday at the registration/check-in table in the Purdue Memorial Union, Room 118. Parking passes may be picked up when you return your evaluation form.

**Questions?** Check with registration/check-in staff or with individuals wearing a Purdue Graduate School shirt. They will be happy to assist you.

**Photos and Videos:** Your attendance at Big Ten+ Grad Expo events grants permission to Purdue University to reproduce the photos and/or videos taken for the purpose of publication, promotion, illustration, or advertising in any manner or in any medium. Please notify an event organizer if you have questions.
For more than 125 years, Purdue University has been a public land-grant university here in Indiana. Here are some interesting facts about your host for the Big Ten+ Grad School Expo.

**The Boilermaker Special (school mascot):** The locomotive design of Purdue’s official mascot celebrates the University’s renowned engineering programs. The first Boilermaker Special was presented in September 1940 and has been used to announce campus events ever since.

**Boilermakers:** The moniker for the University’s athletics teams has become a popular reference for all things Purdue. A reporter first used the name in 1891 to describe the year’s winning football team and quickly gained approval from students.

**Fountains:** Beautiful water fountains adorn Purdue’s campus. A popular student tradition is to make a “fountain run” where students run through the fountains.

**“The Cradle of Astronauts”:** This is a popular term for Purdue due to its role in the United States space program. 23 graduates of Purdue have been astronauts, including the first man to walk on the moon – Neil Armstrong – and the most recent – Eugene Cernan.

**“The Cradle of Quarterbacks”:** 15 former Purdue athletes have gone on to play in the National Football League, accumulating more starts and throwing for more yards than those from any other school.

**Notable Alumni:**

- Neil Armstrong, NASA Astronaut
- Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, Pilot of US Airway flight 1549 (Miracle on the Hudson)
- Amelia Earhart, Aviator
- Michael L. Eskew, Chairman and CEO of UPS
- Orville Redenbacher, Popcorn Business Leader
- Brian Lamb, Co-Founder, Chairman, and CEO of C-SPAN
- Drew Brees, Quarterback of New Orleans Saints
- Donald Thompson, CEO of McDonald’s
- Herman Cain, Former CEO of Godfather’s Pizza, 2012 Presidential Candidate
- David Crosthwait, African-American mechanical and electrical engineer
- Jerry L. Ross, NASA Astronaut
- Eugene A. Cernan, NASA Astronaut
- Gebisa Ejeta, 2009 World Food Prize Winner
- Ei-ichi Negishi, Nobel Laureate, Chemistry (2010)
- Kevin Gurney & Otto Doering, Nobel Laureates, Peace (2007)
- Herbert C. Brown - Nobel Laureate, Chemistry (1979)
QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE EXPO

It is important to maximize your time during the Expo. Make a plan and set a few goals you want to accomplish during the Expo. Review the program and make a list of the workshops you want to attend and the institutions with whom you want to meet.

Because there are different types of representatives at the Expo, not all representatives will be able to answer your specific questions. Even if they aren’t from your exact program of interest, they should still be able to tell you about the campus and community. Consider asking these questions:

**Program:**
- Do you have the specific program I am looking for? The terminology may be slightly different.
- When is the application deadline?
- How long will it take to complete the program?
- Is this program ranked?

If an institution sent a representative from the specific program in which you are interested, ask about professors’ and graduate students’ research areas and projects. See if there are projects that interest you. You could also ask about job placement rates and what types of jobs graduates obtain.

**Funding:**
- What type of funding do you typically offer graduate students in my program of interest?
- Is funding offered to both master’s and Ph.D. students?
- Is funding guaranteed for the length of my program?
- What kind of insurance and other benefits are included with the funding package?
- Will my tuition and fees be remitted (waived)?

**Community:**
- How big is the institution? How many graduate students does the institution have?
- Is the campus rural, suburban, or urban?
- What is the cost of living? (This is an important question because you want to see how far you can stretch your funding!)

Remember to ask a lot of questions—and write down the answers! Getting the right information at the Grad Expo will make your application and decision making process easier. **Good luck and enjoy the Big Ten+ Grad Expo!**
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Please use pages 20-21 for maps that identify specific locations. Workshop descriptions are on pages 8-9.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
**Student Registration and Check-In**  
Purdue Memorial Union (PMU), Room 118

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm  
**Workshops**, Rawls Hall (RAWL)  
• How to Obtain Solid Letters of Recommendation (RAWL 1062)  
• Researching Graduate Engineering Programs Using the ASEE Profiles (RAWL 1057)  
• How to Make Yourself Stand Out When Applying to Grad School - Panel (RAWL 1086)

3:00 pm – 3:15 pm  
**Refreshment Break**, RAWL 1011

3:15 pm – 4:15 pm  
**Workshops**, Rawls Hall (RAWL)  
• Writing Your Personal Statement (RAWL 1057)  
• Graduate School Application Process - Panel (RAWL 1086)  
• Researching Graduate Programs (RAWL 1062)

4:15 pm – 6:00 pm  
**Afternoon Activity** (See registration packet for location and details)

6:15 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Welcome Dinner** (Dress is casual)  
*Engineering Students*: PMU North & South Ballrooms  
*Interdisciplinary Programs, Science, and Technology Students*: Outside in the tent directly West of STEW, on the Memorial Mall

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm  
**“Rack and Roll” Bowling & Billiards Social**, Purdue Memorial Union (PMU)  
(Go down the stairs by the East exit – the exit facing the Grant Street Parking Garage)
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Please use pages 20-21 for maps that identify specific locations. Workshop descriptions are on pages 8-9.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2016

7:30 am – 11:30 am  Student Registration and Check-In
Purdue Memorial Union (PMU), Room 118

7:30 am – 9:30 am  Recruiter Check-In, Purdue Memorial Union (PMU) Room 118
Please use south doors to ballrooms.

7:30 am – 8:00 am  Students Only Continental Breakfast (STEW 206)

8:00 am – 8:30 am  Purdue Express Performance

8:30 am – 9:25 am  Keynote Address, Stewart Center (STEW - Fowler Hall)
“Navigating Graduate School: Policies, Processes and Politics”
James L. Mohler, Ph.D., Purdue University

9:25 am – 9:30 am  Break

9:30 am – 12:00 pm  Graduate School Fair, PMU, North and South Ballrooms & Lounge Areas
Students: Please enter through the South doors. Doors will open promptly.

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  Lunch
Students: Lunch will be located in the tent directly west of STEW on the Memorial Mall.

Recruiters: Lunch is on your own. The $10 lunch voucher in your registration packet may be used at any restaurant on the lowest level of the Purdue Memorial Union (one floor down).

1:15 pm – 2:15 pm  Workshops, Stewart Center (STEW, 2nd Floor)
• Graduate School Application Process - Panel (STEW 214)
• Life as a Graduate Student (STEW 218 C&D)
• Career Planning During Graduate School (STEW 218 A&B)

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm  Break

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm  Workshops, Stewart Center (STEW)
• How to Make Yourself Stand Out When Applying to Grad School - Panel (STEW 214)
• Paying for Graduate School (STEW 218 A&B)

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm  Reception with Engineering Faculty (for prospective engineering students & guests)
PMU East/West Faculty Lounge, 2nd Floor
How to Make Yourself Stand Out When Applying to Grad School - Panel Discussion (Offered Both Days)
(Recruiters from attending institutions)
Some graduate programs have hundreds of applicants. In such a crowded field, how does your application make its way to the top? Gain useful insight and advice from our panel of highly talented recruiters on ways to make your graduate school application shine. This panel discussion will be informal and have plenty of time for questions from those in the audience.

Life as a Graduate Student
Graduate Student Panel Discussion
A panel of current graduate students from Purdue University will discuss their experiences and give you a first-hand account of what you can expect if you choose to go to grad school. Topics will include work-life-academics balance, when and why they chose to pursue an advanced degree, and provide advice for undergraduates who want to prepare for graduate studies.

Paying for Grad School
Cyndi Lynch (Purdue University)
This session will cover the basics of how to fund your graduate education along with strategies for success. We will discuss how to identify funding opportunities and how to develop successful applications.

Career Planning During Graduate School
Amruta Inamdar, Ph.D. (Purdue University)
Start planning for your career early on during graduate school! The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University will discuss how students can maximize their time during school to develop a competitive professional profile. The presentation will also discuss the range of services we provide Purdue students and alumni (including reviewing applications to grad school).

Getting Great Letters of Recommendation
Audeen Fentiman, Ph.D. (Purdue University)
Letters of recommendation are required for almost every graduate school application and are an essential part of the application process. This workshop will discuss how many letters you should obtain, who and when you should ask for letters, how you can approach potential letter writers, and what information you should provide the individuals writing your letters of recommendation.

Graduate School Application Process - Panel Discussion (Offered Both Days)
(Recruiters from attending institutions)
What goes into a graduate school application? How do I even start preparing and staying organized with so many things to consider? If you haven't started the application process yet, this panel discussion with highly-talented recruiters will address those questions and more. This panel discussion will be informal and have plenty of time for questions from those in the audience. Bring a few questions to ask and learn from the experts!

Researching Graduate Programs
Amanda Mendez (Stevens Institute of Technology)
Are you just getting started selecting graduate programs? This workshop will help you identify a program that is a good fit for you, assist you in the search process, and help you plan a timeline for a course of action. The presentation will include topics from the time graduate school becomes an option to determining which school to attend post admission.
Researching Graduate Engineering Programs Using the ASEE Profiles
Bruce A. Lindvall, Ph.D. (Northwestern University)
This workshop will teach participants to look up detailed information about M.S. and Ph.D. programs at the engineering schools listed in ASEE Profiles. Enrollments in programs, full-time and part-time status, gender and ethnicity, and international and domestic breakdowns can be very useful for prospective students as they want to learn about the student body make-up. Size and diversity of faculty, research expenditures, and other data points can be gleaned from the ASEE Profiles. An Excel file is handed out so that participants can learn how to record comparable data points. Discussion will take place so students can learn how these can play into the decision-making process of where to submit graduate school applications.

Writing Your Statement of Purpose
Susan Cates, Ph.D. (Rice University)
This workshop is a discussion-style presentation covering four general topics about the graduate or professional program application personal statement. The four sections will cover (1) the structure and recommended components of the statement, (2) examples from good and not-so-good statements, (3) the pros and cons of making the personal statement specific to the school or program to which you are applying, (4) consistency with the personal statement during the interview process. Students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss their particular areas of interest.

GREAT MINDS
MULTIPLIED

At Worcester Polytechnic Institute, graduate students conduct research that matters in the real world.

Discover WPI—a premier university for graduate studies in science, engineering, and business.

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Navigating Graduate School: Policies, Processes and Politics
James L. Mohler, Ph.D.
Purdue University
Associate Dean of the Graduate School &
Professor of Computer Graphics Technology

James L. Mohler is professor of Computer Graphics Technology (CGT). He has served in the following administrative roles at Purdue over the last 10 years: Senior Research Scientist of Multimedia and Web Development in Information Technology at Purdue (2002-2003); Director of the ITaP Informatics Group (2003-2005); Assistant Department Head, CGT (2008-2009); Associate Department Head, CGT (2009-2011); Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs (2011), Associate Dean of Academic Affairs & Diversity (2011-2015); Interim Director of the Division of Interdisciplinary Technology Studies (2015, Jan-Oct). He is currently serving as Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Dr. Mohler is a Faculty Scholar, a member of the Purdue University Teaching Academy and a past faculty fellow for the Discovery Learning Center. Dr. Mohler is a member of Purdue’s ADVANCE team and has served as a Diversity Catalyst. Dr. Mohler is also a Guest Professor at the Harbin Institute of Technology in the People’s Republic of China. Dr. Mohler has authored, co-authored, or contributed to over 21 texts related to computer graphics and media development and over 71 articles for refereed, reviewed, or trade publications. He has been the recipient of 1.5 million dollars in grants.

Special Performance by the Purdue Express

The Purdue University Black Cultural Center’s Purdue Express is a performance-based touring company. The group partners with Purdue’s Office of Admissions, Multicultural Program Directors and Purdue Alumni with the goal of enhancing diversity within Purdue’s student body. The performance will feature Purdue students as cultural ambassadors in a high-energy 30-minute stage performance. The presentation will highlight Purdue’s cultural and artistic diversity to inform students about the history of Purdue, academic majors, campus life and diversity initiatives.
The Big Ten+ Graduate School Expo is one way to research graduate schools; you will be able to meet with dozens of prestigious schools throughout this event. As you continue to refine your search, be sure to consider some of these other avenues for identifying potential graduate schools:

- Professors and advisors
- Professionals in your field of interest
- Current graduate students
- Professional organizations and conferences
- Research publications/professional journals
- Career centers
- Graduate school guides and major publications
- University websites and other online resources

NOTE: Some guides only include schools which pay to participate, and some rankings are controversial in their methodology. Make sure you do not put too much weight on one guide/list.

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A CAMPUS VISIT

Visiting a prospective graduate school’s campus is a great way to identify whether or not that school is a “fit” for you. It is important to think about questions to ask when you’re on campus so you will have a realistic understanding of what that school will be like.

Questions for Potential Advisors:
- What projects are you working on currently? (Learn the professors main areas of research)
- What are your expectations of your graduate students?
- How many graduate students have you mentored?
- What is the average length of time it has taken your last few graduate students to graduate?
- How many grad students do you have now?

Questions for Current Graduate Students:
- What is it like working for _________?
- What’s your favorite thing about the program here?
- What’s your least favorite thing about the program here?

NOTE: Keep in mind you may get very different answers from a brand new first year student than you will get from a 5th year student in the middle of writing a dissertation.
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PMU East Main Lounge Area - Across from Ballroom Entrance

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2016 Big Ten+ Graduate School Expo

14
GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE WORKSHOPS

The schedule on pages 6-7 lists the variety of workshops offered. This is your opportunity to learn from a range of experienced speakers how to make yourself a more competitive applicant. Make sure you read the full descriptions on pages 8-9 of this program, and come to the sessions ready to learn.

Here are some ways to get the most out of the Grad Expo workshops:

• **Identify ahead of time which workshops you want to attend.** Mark which sessions you want to attend so that you don’t waste time between sessions trying to decide where to go next. Note: Some panel discussions may be offered both days.

• **Bring a pen and paper...and USE THEM!** Pretend you are taking detailed notes for someone else, and you are much more likely to capture the important points of the talk. Notes allow you to precisely review the entire conference and have a resource to refer to later. Don’t assume that you will remember.

• **Personalize the information.** Think about how the information being presented directly relates to you. How can you apply it? Personalizing the information in this way makes it more memorable and more useful.

• **Ask questions**, even if you’re afraid it might be a “stupid question.” Don’t miss your chance to make yourself a better graduate school applicant. The Grad Expo is meant to be a learning experience. It is a time to get your questions answered. If you have questions, chances are someone else does too.

  • If you have several questions after the workshop but don’t have time to ask them right then, **request a time to meet with the speaker** before the end of the Expo. Most speakers will have a booth at the Graduate School Fair and there is also an open lounge area on the first floor of the Purdue Memorial Union where you can sit and talk further.

  • **Ask for business cards**, and ask if it is okay for you to contact them with questions after you have thought more about their presentation. Even if you are not sure exactly why you may want to follow-up, get their contact information. You never know when a question might arise down the road that the presenter could answer for you, or when a presenter could help you make another connection.

  • **Make a short note on the back of any business cards you collect** about the person – what topic did they present, what might you want to follow up with them on? This will help you remember later who each person is.

  • **Thank the speakers.** Introduce yourself, shake their hand, and thank them for their assistance.
ADVICE FOR YOUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The statement of purpose should be 300-500 words concerning your purpose for undertaking or continuing graduate study, your reasons for wanting to study, and your research interests, professional plans, and career goals. You also may explain any special circumstances applicable to your background and elaborate on your scholarly publications, awards, achievements, abilities, and/or professional history.

Because your Statement of Purpose is an important part of your graduate school application, you will want to make sure it is the best you can write. The following exercise will help you customize your Statement of Purpose by highlighting your relevant experience and focusing on why you wish to pursue a graduate degree at Purdue. This exercise can help you identify the most important elements you will want to include.

• First, list 2-3 qualities unique to your program of interest. Identify interdisciplinary opportunities and areas of specialization. What are the available academic, research and training facilities that will assist you in pursuing your degree?
  - Next, name the faculty that interest you and briefly identify their research projects.
  - Then, in 3-4 sentences, describe your research interests. Follow this by explaining how your professional goals can be achieved by pursuing your research interests in your program of choice. Mention the unique qualities and faculty members you identified in steps 1 and 2; show how they coincide with your interests.

Enhance your statement by considering the following:

• Have you had experience outside the classroom? If so, describe some of the details. Be sure to mention how it will help you in graduate school.
  - Do you have any challenges that you would like to explain to the Admissions Committee (e.g., poor grades in a given semester, a low standardized test score, etc.)? Don’t dwell on anything negative, but sum up the situation in a sentence or two and explain what you learned from it. Show how you have since improved or realized success.
  - Showcase your abilities. As a graduate student, what will you be able to contribute to your graduate program? Give evidence of your strong work ethic—mention jobs held or organizations supported while earning a high GPA. Give concrete examples. Be illustrative.
  - If providing a resume or curriculum vitae (CV) is allowed, don’t hesitate to reference it, but do not restate all of its contents in your statement of purpose. For example you could say, “As you’ll note in my enclosed CV, I have received several academic honors, which include the Young Investigator award at Institution X. Receiving this award was a shining moment for me as it served as recognition for long nights in the lab researching tomato viral stains.” After this sentence you should describe your research. Remember that you are telling a story, not simply listing a multitude of facts.

Here are a few additional tips to remember:

• Pay close attention to the directions as they vary across institutions and programs.
• Be unique. Talk about interesting and relevant experience. One way to do this is to talk about a subject in your field about which you are passionate.
• Write with skill. The Statement of Purpose may be the only writing sample you provide, so editing and organization are imperative. Be sure that you proofread your statement and have others, such as professors, teaching assistants, advisors, and peers read it. Ask for constructive feedback as well.
• Be clear and specific. Instead of providing broad generalizations such as “my research internship provided valuable experience,” write, “By transcribing interview protocols and coding the data, I gained a deeper understanding of how teenage mothers make attributions.”
• Give yourself enough time to write the Statement of Purpose, to get feedback from a variety of people, and to make the necessary revisions.
• Be yourself; avoid using too much jargon and too many big words that aren’t a part of your daily vocabulary.
• Do not be “gimmicky.” Do not try to make yourself stand out by being overly clever in your statement. The people reviewing your statement may not think you are taking the statement seriously. Your statement of purpose is a professional statement about your reasons for applying to graduate school and should be written professionally.

Please note: this information is a compilation of general guidelines that we think will help you write your statement of purpose. Your program may request additional information or recommend an alternative exercise to writing your Statement of Purpose. You should always defer to the instructions provided by your prospective program. You can find specific Purdue graduate program requirements here: http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/prospective/gradrequirements/. Good luck!
On my first day of graduate school, some of the older students took the newer students out after class. As the night was drawing to a close, one of my more experienced colleagues announced to the table, “Take a good look at these faces; you won’t see them smiling and outside of the department again until the end of the semester.” At the time, I wasn’t so much intimidated by that declaration as I was excited.

You see, one of the perks of graduate school is the work. That may sound odd, but presumably the reason someone goes to graduate school is because of a deep and abiding passion for a subject, and graduate school allows you to entertain that passion to an obsessive degree. Nose buried in a book or hovering over a laboratory bench, the graduate student devotes some number of years to happily plumbing the depths of the discipline, learning all there is to know. But therein lies the problem. There’s no such thing as all there is to know, and the student who attempts that goal is headed toward disillusionment and burnout.

Graduate school isn’t simply a continuation of college; it’s an apprenticeship. As you are beginning your career, you also need to figure out how this career will fit into your life, not the other way around. This means that as you develop your expertise in your area of study, you need to also develop your acumen as a friend, a family member, a colleague, a member of the community, and in the numerous other roles a human being inevitably fills while breathing oxygen. Learning how to respect the entirety of your life and not just your work is not a distraction from graduate school; it is part of your graduate school experience.

Whether the goal is an academic position or a future in industry, graduate school will set you up with the expertise you need to get started in your career, but that’s it. It will not be the end of your career. It will not fulfill your life’s desires, and it is unreasonable to expect that you can neglect your future goals and the life you want to live during your years of graduate school and yet be capable of taking them up again after you cross the commencement stage. So if you find that your face has not been seen smiling outside of your department in quite a while, understand that that is not a part of graduate school. In fact, you are neglecting the great potential of graduate school to help you grow into the full person you want to be.
AFTER THE EXPO – WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Here are some suggestions you should think about now that you have attended the Expo:

1. Sort through all the information you gathered from the Expo. Visit the websites of programs that interest you. Review your notes and see if there was anyone you met with whom you would like to follow-up. Were there any “next steps” that workshop presenters or representatives at the Graduate School Fair recommended?

2. Finalize a list of schools and programs to which you want to apply. While you are researching schools, make a list of why you want to apply to that school specifically. This may be asked on an application, and this list will also help you narrow your selections.

3. Find out what standardized tests you will need to get into the program and schedule those tests. Be sure to give yourself enough time to study.

4. Update your résumé and determine who you will ask to write your letters of recommendation. Give them plenty of advance notice.

5. Start working on drafts of your statement of purpose. Make a list of your research, teaching and professional or internship experiences. List the experiences and what you learned. Every program and every application is different. To help yourself stay organized, create a file for each program to which you plan to apply. Keep all your application materials in that folder, including:

- A checklist of the application requirements
- Contact information for the program and the graduate school
- Any notes about contacts you make
- Copies or print-outs of your application and statement of purpose
- A list of people you asked to write recommendation letters – and check them off as the letters are completed and received by the graduate school

FUNDING – AN OVERVIEW

The financial cost of an advanced degree may be daunting, but most universities offer funding to a high percentage of their admitted graduate students! If you can secure funding, you will likely receive full or partial tuition coverage, health benefits, and a monthly stipend to help with the cost of living. Here are the three main types of funding that exist:

- Fellowships: may be through the government, an independent organization, or the university. Most universities have a database where students can search for opportunities. Internet searches are another great tool in locating potential fellowships.

- Assistantships: may come in the form of a teaching, research, or administrative/professional assistantship. Your graduate school application will likely have an option to request that you be considered for one of these positions. It is also a good idea to contact your program of interest well in advance of the application deadline to discuss funding opportunities within the department.

- Loans: may be an option in some situations. You may be able to qualify for federal or private loans to cover your educational expenses or to supplement a fellowship or assistantship.

If you receive a fellowship or assistantship and your tuition is covered, that’s great news! However, you also want to be sure that your monthly stipend is enough to cover your cost of living, which can vary considerably depending on where the institution is located. Do your homework! Money may be tight no matter what opportunities you secure, but keep in mind that your hard work will pay off!
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To Chicago, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and South Bend:

Exit the Grant Street Parking garage and turn right. Proceed 3 blocks to Salisbury Street and turn left. At the first stop light, make a right onto the ramp down to River Road. Turn right and proceed to the 2nd light (State Street).

Turn left (east) onto State Road 26 (State Street) and proceed 4 miles through Lafayette to I-65.

To Champaign, Crawfordsville, St. Louis, and Terre Haute:

Exit the Grant Street Parking garage and turn left. Turn right on Grant St. Turn left on Northwestern Ave. At second light, turn left on Stadium Ave. Turn left on McCormick Rd. Turn right on SR26 W. At light, turn left (south) on on U.S. 231. Proceed on to I-74 (Crawfordsville) or I-70 ( Cloverdale).
CAMPUS MAPS

PURDUE MEMORIAL UNION

STEWART CENTER
SECOND FLOOR
7 STEPS TO A STELLAR GRAD SCHOOL APPLICATION

- By Lin Lan for HerCampus.com

What a relief it was when you got that “fat envelope” in the mail three years ago signaling your acceptance into college! Now it seems like you’re going through that excruciating process all over again for graduate school, except this time, it’s a lot more competitive and financially draining. You can’t go in with an undeclared major like you did before—now, admissions officers want to know that you’re focused, you’re professional and you know exactly what you want to do. To help you through the process, here are seven steps for nailing every application!

1. Finalize your list of schools.
Researching schools can be overwhelming, but asking questions is usually a good place to start. Debra Kelly, the director of The Career Center at The College of New Jersey, says many universities have online chat sessions where you can speak to administrators and alumni from a specific program. Stanford University and the University of Pennsylvania are just a few examples of schools who have done this.

If you’re looking for more personal advice, Kelly suggests using your network. “You’d be surprised what could happen if you just said [to people you know], ‘Oh, I’m thinking of going to [this] university but I don’t know much about it; I wonder who I could talk to,’” she says.

Once you know which programs are best aligned with your interests, you can start narrowing down your choices. Here are a few practical questions to ask grad school faculty that will help you decide if a school will meet your needs:

• What will my class schedule look like?
• How many years does the program take?
• How does the living cost of this city compare to others?
• Can I enroll part-time if I need to work?
• Can I find a job at the university?

Finding a job at your university can provide great financial support, because many schools will cover your tuition if you’re an employee. That’s what Erin McGee, a M.A. in human rights candidate at Columbia University, is aiming to do when she starts school this fall.

Since graduate programs are very specific, you might find yourself filling out fewer applications than expected. However, there’s no reason to worry, because it means you’re focused on the ones that are right for you!

2. Mark your deadlines.
We all know that once classes start, the temptation to procrastinate will hit hard (there are so many House of Cards episodes on Netflix to watch, after all). Here’s where you really need to do your research, because application deadlines can fall anywhere between January and March.

Kristi Ramos, senior assistant director of New York University’s Graduate School of Arts & Science, says it’s important to remember that the deadline isn’t just for the online application, but also for the other components, such as recommendations and test scores.

“One common mistake is that students don’t register to take the GRE until very close to the application deadline,” Ramos says. “Students should take their tests at least four to six weeks before their deadline, if not sooner.”

If staying organized isn’t one of your strengths, plan out your application process on its own calendar to minimize distractions. Start by marking the hard deadlines for each application, then set personal goals, such as dates for finishing essays. Color-code each university’s deadlines so it’s easier to track your progress. Lastly, remember that other people need time to write your recommendations, so be sure to consider their schedules as well!

3. Study for the GRE.
While taking the GRE early is vital, the hard part is getting that stellar score! The GRE, or Graduate Record Examinations, has a general test, which costs $195. It’s comprised of verbal reasoning, analytical writing and quantitative reasoning (in other words, reading, writing and math). The difference between the SAT and the GRE is that the GRE is administered on a computer, your score is valid for five years and you can take it every 21 days for up to five times every 12 consecutive months. There are also subject tests at $150 each for students applying to programs in the sciences, English and psychology.

Hannah*, who will be a Ph.D. candidate in physical sciences at Stanford University starting this fall, says she paid special attention not to make any careless mistakes in the first few sections of the test, because the GRE is adaptive. That means your performance at the beginning determines the difficulty later on. If you get harder questions, you’ll likely get a higher score.

To get the best score possible, Kelly suggests making use of a variety of resources, such as test-prep classes, books and online materials. Start with the free practice questions that Educational Testing Service, or ETS (the GRE testing agency), provides online for the general test and the subject tests. There are also test-prep books such as Kaplan and The Princeton Review. Many of these organizations, such as Kaplan, also provide free evaluations based on an online practice test you can take, as well as test-prep courses. While these courses may be a little pricey, ranging from $500 to $2,000, Kelly says since the test itself is already a huge investment, taking a course to be as prepared as possible is something students should consider.

Programs put different values on test scores; the sciences weigh them more heavily, while the humanities tend to [Continued on page 27]
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The Grad Student @legogradstudent · Jul 26
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consider other factors, Ramos says. Whatever program and budget you’re working with, the important part is to give yourself plenty of time to figure things out and study hard!

4. Ask for recommendations.
Most schools will request at least two letters of recommendation, preferably from professors who have been impressed by your academic skills and work ethic. Kelly suggests setting up a meeting with a professor by sending a professional email expressing your interest in graduate studies (be sure to attach your resume!).

“The reason why you want to have a conversation with them is that you want to know if they’re going to give you an excellent recommendation, not just a [medicore] recommendation,” Kelly says.

If you’re applying to a field that’s different from your undergraduate major, Kelly suggests asking academic advisers, coaches or supervisors from organizations you joined. However, if you have professors or academic-related people who can give you recommendations, it’s still best to focus on those, because graduate school admissions officers are primarily trying to evaluate your academic potential.

5. Do some graduate-level work.
To get a sense of what graduate school will actually be like, consider writing an honors thesis or taking some graduate courses senior year. An honors thesis is an extensive paper usually written during senior year for which work under the guidance of a faculty adviser (often a professor you’ve had a course with) to research a topic in your field. At the end of the year there’s a defense, where you present your research in front of a panel of professors who will evaluate your work. It can be an achallenging process, but it’s the perfect opportunity to get a feel for what you’ll be doing in graduate school. Also, if your professor’s impressed by your work, writing a thesis is a great way to secure a stellar recommendation letter!

Most schools require students to submit thesis proposals before the fall, so check with your department to see if there’s still time. Take the same steps Kelly gave for securing recommendations: Set up a meeting to express your interest in writing a thesis.

If a thesis isn’t a commitment you can fit into your schedule, Ramos suggests taking a few graduate courses senior year. “A lot of students take a few graduate courses as a non-degree student [to] show that they can handle the coursework,” she says.

Not only will these courses demonstrate your academic skills to admissions officers, but they’ll also help you decide if staying in school for another two, three or even more years taking these courses is something you realistically see yourself doing.

6. Write your personal statement.
Some schools might ask you to submit both a personal statement and a statement of purpose, one for life experiences and one that’s purely professional. Whatever the format, make sure you proofread your work! Ramos says more often than you’d expect, students write the wrong school name in the essay. When Hannah wrote her essay, she took care to be clear and concise because she was applying to a research program, which values students who can articulate themselves well.

[More on this topic in the article on page 16]

7. Establish a rapport with the faculty in every program.
Unlike college admissions, where decisions are made by a central office, graduate students are admitted by the specific department that they’re applying to. The upside to this is that there are more opportunities to get to know the specific administrators, students and professors in your field. If you’re waitlisted, the best way to get off a waitlist is to act professionally early on and continue to show your enthusiasm for the program throughout the process.

“When a student is in touch with a department, they should be on their best behavior and have excellent questions before they call and start asking things that might be easily available on a department’s website,” Ramos says. Here are some questions you could ask to avoid sounding like you haven’t done your research:

• I’ve read these articles you wrote, and I was surprised by ____. Could you tell me a little more about your work in this area?
• As a double major in college, I want to combine my interests. How would someone with my background fit into this program?
• I’m interested in working at ____ organization someday, and I noticed that you did some research there. Could you tell me about your experience?

Just like with your personal statement, it’s always good to share your story because it makes your questions unique and personal, and it’ll help professors provide better answers if they know where you’re coming from.

To summarize our advice in two words: Start early! Graduate school is all about finding the right fit. The application process is different for everyone, so give yourself plenty of time to do some serious research as well as soul-searching!
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