Preparing for Graduate School

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Purdue University, The Graduate School
www.gradschool.purdue.edu

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What is Graduate School?

• Provides in-depth, specialized training
• Requires original research and/or scholarship
• Impacts society in relevant ways
• Develops intellectual relationships
• Requires intense commitment, passion, drive
### Types of Advanced Degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Professional Degrees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Direct Ph.D.</td>
<td>• DVM/VMD</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Master’s first</td>
<td>• JD</td>
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<td>• MD</td>
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<td>• Etc.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Professional/Terminal Master’s</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Thesis</td>
<td>• M.F.A</td>
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<td>• Non-thesis</td>
<td>• M.P.H</td>
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<td>• Etc.</td>
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Why Graduate School?

Average Earnings in 2006:

- Bachelor’s Degree: $56,788
- Master’s Degree: $70,358
- Doctoral Degree: $103,944

Why Graduate School?

• Attain your personal goals
• You have a passion for learning and/or research
• You want to specialize in an area or become an expert and generate new knowledge
• Employers prefer or require an advanced degree in your profession
• Professional growth and advancement
Is Graduate School for Me?

Ask yourself:

• What are my short and long term goals?
• Will an advanced degree help me obtain these goals?
• Am I choosing graduate school because I feel there are no other options at this time?
• Am I willing to invest the time, effort, and expense required for graduate study?
When Should I Go to Grad School?

• Immediately following your undergraduate degree
  – Your professional goal requires an advanced degree to even begin
  – You’re unsure that once you leave school, you’ll want to or will be able to return

• After you’ve worked full-time or taken time off
  – Employers may pay for you to go to school
  – Your program of interest requires/prefers experience that you don’t currently possess
  – You’re burned out
Researching Graduate Schools

Talk to:
- professors
- professionals in your field of interest
- current graduate students
- advisors

Use a variety of sources:
- professional organizations and conferences
- research publications/professional journals
- career centers
- graduate school guides
- major publications
- university Web sites
Understanding the Admissions Process

- Admissions committees are made up of faculty
- Typically base their decisions on the following factors:
  - Statement of purpose
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Standardized Test Scores (GRE/GMAT)
  - TOEFL or IELTS (international students)
  - Grade Point Average (GPA)
  - Transcripts
  - Previous work experience
  - Research experience (REU & SRO)
  - Curricular activities
  - Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV)
Action Item: Standardized Tests

- Tests include:
  - GRE ~ GMAT ~ LSAT ~ MCAT ~ TOEFL or IELTS
- Register early
- Schedule the exam 12-18 months before you intend to start graduate school
- Helpful Web sites:
  - www.ets.org
  - www.gre.org
  - www.Number2.com
Action Item: Statement of Purpose

- Write a one or two page statement:
  - What are your specific goals for graduate study?
  - Why do you want to pursue this discipline?
  - How have you been prepared academically?
  - What experience has helped you prepare?
  - What are your goals beyond graduate study?
  - Answer specific questions required by each school
Tips for Writing Your Statement of Purpose

• Demonstrate your points by providing concrete examples, including specific outcomes
• Be positive
• Be specific
• Demonstrate mutual benefits
• Have your statement reviewed by professors
Action Item: Recommendation Letters

- Make requests courteously and obtain approval
- Provide the person writing the letter with a copy of your statement of purpose and resume/CV
- Allow ample time for them to complete letters
- Let them know when you get accepted!
Action Item: Transcripts & Test Scores

- Order transcripts from your current school early, so that they will be received near the same time as your application.
- Check to see if transcripts can be mailed immediately after fall term grades are recorded.
- Order test scores to be sent to each school (If you did not do so at the time of the exam.)
Action Item: Submit the Application

- Complete a draft of each application first
- Type all paper applications
- You may be required to include a resume/CV
- Proofread, proofread, proofread!
- Mail all materials well in advance of deadlines
- Make copies of everything and print copies of electronic applications
Choosing a Graduate School

Arrange campus visits:

– Make appointments to meet with faculty and/or the admissions office
– Talk to current students
– Some schools may be able to pay your travel expenses
– Gather information about the community and housing options
– Arrive on time and be prepared
Choosing a Graduate School

Make a list of potential schools and compare:

– Quality of programs
– Research and scholarly opportunities
– Reputation of the school, its programs, and faculty
– Program job placement rates and information
– Financial assistance
– Student services
– Location’s cost of living
Funding for Grad School

More Than 80% of Purdue’s full-time grad students are funded!

- **Grants are free money**
  - you don't have to work or repay the funds
  - fellowships are the most common type of grant

- **Graduate assistantships are the most common funding**
  - you receive a stipend and your tuition is waived
  - other benefits may apply
  - assistantships include research, teaching, or administrative/professional positions

- **Loans are also available**
  - federal government and other financial institutions
  - complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
Funding for Grad School Cont’d

• Funding sources:
  – A college, department, or program
  – The Graduate School/Office of Graduate Studies
  – Other organizations, such as government agencies, foundations, and professional organizations

• Eligibility requirements and application processes vary

• The majority of funding is available in the fall semester
Check out what Purdue has to Offer

✓ Agriculture
✓ Consumer & Family Sciences
✓ Education
✓ Engineering
✓ Health Sciences
✓ Interdisciplinary Programs
✓ Liberal Arts
✓ Management
✓ Nursing
✓ Pharmacy
✓ Science
✓ Technology
✓ Veterinary Medicine

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Best of luck!