THINKING ABOUT GRAD SCHOOL?

November 11, 2017

Graduate Programs: Education, Fine Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, Liberal Arts, Public Affairs, Public Health, and related studies

Professional Programs: Business, Law, Medicine, and Pharmacy

www.purdue.edu/gradschool/midwestgradsummit
On behalf of The Graduate School and Purdue University, I welcome you to the Midwest Graduate and Professional School Summit. The Midwest Summit is an academic initiative to connect students with opportunities to explore the graduate education.

At the Midwest Summit, you will make new friends, explore new possibilities for your future, and learn how to put together a competitive graduate school application. Take advantage of the workshops that are offered about choosing the right program at the right school, options you might have for funding your graduate studies, or how to write an impressive statement of purpose. Most importantly, ask questions – the experts are here to help you.

While you are here, why not take a walk around our beautiful campus, home to nearly 9,500 graduate students studying in more than 80 graduate programs. You will see a diverse mix of students from all 50 states and 115 countries. We are glad you are visiting, and I hope you can see yourself as a graduate student here someday.

Have fun at the Midwest Summit!

Linda J. Mason, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
Professor of Entomology
Purdue University

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS
Attire: Wear your name badge at all times – it will be needed to enter all Summit activities. Recommended attire is business casual (dress pants or skirt and shirt or blouse; suits are fine, but not necessary).

Parking: Free parking is available in the Wood Street Garage, located south of the Rawls Hall (RAWL). Additional parking is available in the Grant Street Parking Garage, located east of the Purdue Memorial Union (PMU). For Grant Street Garage parking, passes may be picked up at registration/check-in in the East Foyer of Stewart Center (STEW).

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.

Evaluation: Please take a few minutes to tell us about your experience at the Midwest Summit to help us improve the experience. Evaluations should be returned to the registration area after the grad fair. Parking passes may be picked up when you return your evaluation form.

Photos and Videos: Your attendance at the Midwest Summit 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 Midwest Graduate and Professional School Summit.

**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 laureate
- Ei-ichi Negishi, Nobel Laureate, Chemistry (2010)
- Kevin Gurney & Otto Doering, Nobel Laureates, Peace (2007)
- Herbert C. Brown - Nobel Laureate, Chemistry (1979)
- Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, 2017 World Food Prize laureate

WELCOME TO PURDUE UNIVERSITY
QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE MIDWEST SUMMIT

It is important to maximize your time during the Midwest Summit. Make a plan and set a few goals you want to accomplish during the Midwest Summit. 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 Midwest Summit, 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 Midwest Summit will make your application and decision making process easier. Good luck and enjoy the Midwest Graduate and Professional School Summit!
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2017

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm  Campus Tour
Purdue Graduate Student Center (PGSC)

5:00 pm – 7:30 pm  “Food and Games” Night, Hosted by Purdue Graduate Student Government
Purdue Graduate Student Center (PGSC)

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm  Purdue Men’s Basketball Game (vs. Southern Illinois University) * Applicants Only

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2017

8:30 am – 10:00 am  Student Registration and Check-In
• Stewart Center (STEW), 1st Floor East Foyer

10:00 am – 10:45 am  Workshops, Stewart Center (STEW)
• Presentation 1: Preparing for a Career with a Master’s or Doctoral Degree (STEW 311)*
• Presentation 2: Personalizing Your Graduate School Application (STEW 313)
• Presentation 3: Where’s the Money? Tips for Funding Graduate Programs (STEW 314)*

10:45 am – 11:00 am  Refreshment Break, Stewart Center (STEW 218)

11:00 am – 11:45 am  Workshops, Stewart Center (STEW)
• Presentation 4: Finding the Right Program and Making a Strong Application (STEW 311)
• Presentation 5: GPS for Graduate School (STEW 313)*
• Panel: Q&A Session for Business, Law, Medicine, and Pharmacy Programs (STEW 206)

Note: * indicates that workshops are recorded and will be available at the Midwest Summit Facebook.
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2017 - Continued

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  **Lunch**

*Students*: Lunch will be located in STEW 218.

*Recruiters*: 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).

*You may also eat with the students in STEW 218.*

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm  **Graduate School Fair**, Stewart Center (STEW, 3rd Floor)

*Students*: Please enter through the East door of the Stewart Center.

• Professional Programs (STEW 310)
• Graduate Programs (STEW 302 - 306)

4:15 pm - 5:00 pm  **Reception with Sponsoring Colleges** (for prospective students & guests)

• Purdue University College of Education (BRNG 1284)
• Purdue University College of Liberal Arts (BRNG Lobby)
• Purdue University Krannert School of Management (STEW 213)
• Purdue University Interdisciplinary Graduate Program (STEW 278)
WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

1. Preparing for a Career with a Master’s or Doctoral Degree  
   - Amruta Inamdar, Ph.D. (Purdue University)
Start planning for your career early on during graduate school! Dr. Inamdar of The Center for Career Opportunities (CCO) 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 the CCO provides Purdue students and alumni (including reviewing applications to grad school).

2. Personalizing your Graduate School Application  
   - Ashley Flinn & Sara McLachlan (University of Southern California)
Graduate application is all about personalizing from personal statement, letters of recommendation, and finally to the interviews. Ms. Flinn and Ms. McLachlan from Leventhal School of Accounting at the University of Southern California discuss why and how to personalize your graduate application, using detailed examples of each cases. The presentation will also introduce some “seal the deal” tips for the acceptance.

3. Where is the Money? Tips for Researching Scholarships and Funding for Grad Programs  
   - Cyndi Lynch (Purdue University)
Funding is one of the critical factors why students hesitate to pursue their graduate education. Sometimes, it is one of main reasons why students choose their second-pick school with funding over their first-pick program without funding. This session will cover the basics of how to fund your graduate education along with strategies for success. Ms. Lynch, Director of Fellowship at Purdue Graduate School, will discuss how to identify funding opportunities and how to develop successful applications.

4. Finding the Right Program and Making a Strong Application  
   - Ryan Taughrin (SUNY Buffalo)
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 Mr. Taughrin, Assistant Director of Graduate Recruitment at the University of Buffalo, on ways to make your graduate school application shine. The presentation will also discuss why you should and shouldn’t apply for graduate school, and what should be considered when applying for graduate schools.

5. GPS for Graduate School  
   - William Peck, Ph.D. (Purdue University)
GPS for Graduate School: Students Share Their Stories is a resource book consisting of ten chapters written by graduate student authors and two academic professional staff members. The book was edited by Mark J. T. Smith, Ph.D., former Dean of the Graduate School at Purdue. As a co-author, Dr. Peck will discuss his involvement and advice for prospective students. There will be plenty of time for Q&A. This is your chance to hear straight from a graduate student perspective.
WHY CHOOSE GRAD SCHOOL?

“My IU McKinney law education and experiences coupled with my Engineering degree from Purdue University have opened doors that I never thought imaginable. This combination has allowed me to pursue my interests in the legal and business worlds and at the same time apply my technical background each and every day. A very fulfilling dream come true.”

– Pervin Taleyarkhan, ’13, Associate Legal Counsel, Whirlpool Corporation

IU McKinney offers:

• Hundreds of externship, entertainment, and employment options in downtown Indianapolis.

• Connections to a network of alumni working across the U.S. and around the world.

• Flexibility to earn a J.D. with full-time or part-time study, including day, evening, and online courses.

mckinneylaw.iu.edu
The Midwest Graduate and Professional School Summit is one way to research graduate schools. As you continue to refine your search, be sure to consider 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 / University websites and other online resources

**NOTE:** Some rankings are controversial in their methodology. Make sure you do not put too much weight on one guide.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A CAMPUS VISIT**

Campus visit is a great way to identify whether or not that school is a “fit” for you. It is important to think about right questions to ask 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)
- How many graduate students have you mentored?
- What is the average length of time it has taken your last few graduate students to graduate?

**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 1st year student to a 5th year student.

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**THE CASE FOR ONU LAW**

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At the Ohio Northern University Pettit College of Law, we’ve created a unique program where you can develop the skills to make a difference, regardless of where you want to go with your law degree.

We are small but filled with big opportunities. We have a legacy of excellence with an eye on the future. You bring the promise and dedication, and we’ll bring everything else you need for a lifetime of success.

To learn more, visit law.onu.edu

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*PETTIT COLLEGE OF LAW*
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 of this program, and come to the sessions ready to learn.

Here are some ways to get the most out of the Midwest Summit 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 Midwest Summit 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 Summit. 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.
GRADUATE SCHOOL FAIR MAP & INDEX

STEWART CENTER 302 - 306

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOTH #</th>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Boston College - Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Central Michigan University - Graduate Admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Concordia University - School of Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>DePaul University - Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Eastern Virginia Medical School - Department of Pathology and Anatomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>George Washington University - School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Georgetown University - McDonough School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Georgetown University - McCourt School of Public Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Indiana University - School of Public and Environmental Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indiana University - School of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Indiana University - McKinney School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Indiana University - School of Medicine - Department of Anesthesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>LIM College - Graduate Admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Marquette University - Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Michigan State University - College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Michigan State University - Division of Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>North Park University - School of Business &amp; Nonprofit Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University - College of Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOTH #</th>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Northwestern University - Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ohio Northern University - College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Ohio State University - Graduate and Professional Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>PricewaterhouseCoopers Business Training (Shanghai) Co., Ltd - You Plus Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40, 41</td>
<td>Purdue University - College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, 15-17</td>
<td>Purdue University - College of Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58, 59</td>
<td>Purdue University - Krannert School of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Purdue University - School of Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Purdue University - Polytechnic Institute - Center for Professional Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Purdue University - Public Health Graduate Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Purdue University - Interdisciplinary Graduate Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Purdue University - Graduate Diversity Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Queen's University (CA) - Smith School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ross University - School of Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Roger Williams University - Graduate Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Seton Hall University - School of Diplomacy and International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Temple University - Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Trine University - College of Graduate and Professional Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Trinity School of Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## STEWART CENTER 310

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOTH #</th>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tufts University - Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy (Nutrition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>University at Buffalo, The State University of New York - College of Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>University of California San Diego - Rady School of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>University of Chicago - Booth School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>University of Chicago - Graduate Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>University of Chicago - Urban Education Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>University of Cincinnati - Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Chicago - Liautaud Graduate School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Chicago - College of Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - College of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Graduate College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - The iSchool at Illinois (School of Info. Sciences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - School of Labor and Employment Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>University of Kansas - Graduate Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>University of Louisville - School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>University of Michigan - Health Informatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>University of Michigan - Ross School of Business - School of Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>University of Michigan - School for Environment and Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>University of North Texas - Toulouse Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>University of Notre Dame - Mendoza College of Business - Master of Science in Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>University of Notre Dame - Mendoza College of Business - Master of Nonprofit Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh - Katz Graduate School of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>University of Tennessee - College of Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>University of Southern California - Leventhal School of Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin Milwaukee - Graduate School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OFFERING MORE THAN 15 MASTER’S DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

- Architecture
- Forensic Psychology
- Law
- Criminal Justice
- Historic Preservation
- ...and more

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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!
**GRADUATE SCHOOL IS ABOUT MORE THAN GRADUATE SCHOOL**

- By William Peck

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 MIDWEST SUMMIT – WHAT TO DO NEXT?

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

1. Sort through all the information you gathered from the Midwest Summit. 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!
Special Considerations for Application Deadlines

- Application deadlines vary! Be sure to note each program’s application deadline. This timeline is based on a January 1 deadline.
- If you find more than one deadline for your program of interest, use the earliest deadline to set your timeline; this is most often the one you must meet to be considered for fellowships and other financial assistance.
- Access more resources at https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/prospective/preparing/.

Summer Before Senior Year

- Identify your goals and consider whether or not graduate school is right for you.
- Write a draft of your personal statement.
- Research program options and requirements by browsing through graduate program guides, university websites, and other resources.
- Research fellowships and other types of financial assistance. Consider government agencies, philanthropic organizations, the schools you apply to, and professional organizations or honor societies as potential sources of funding.
- Register for required standardized tests.

August-September

- Meet with faculty members in your department to discuss your personal statement, possible programs to consider, and potential fellowships and other funding sources.
- Determine the schools to which you will apply.
- Get organized. Create a file for each school you will apply to and keep all related information in the appropriate file.

September-October

- Take standardized tests and request that your scores be sent to the appropriate schools.
- Complete your personal statement and have it reviewed at the CCO.
- Requests letters of recommendation from faculty: provide a copy of your personal statement and résumé/curriculum vitae to each professor. Give your recommenders the appropriate information to submit their letters. Many recommendation letters can be submitted online and your recommenders will receive an email with instructions when you list them on your online application. If your school requires hard copy letters, give your recommenders the appropriate address.
- Order transcripts from all post-secondary institutions and request official copies be sent directly to the schools to which you are applying.

November

- Complete application forms. (Do a draft first!)
- Mail application materials (if not Web-based) one month in advance of the application deadline. Pay close attention to the instructions; all documents may not go to the same address.
- Remind your recommenders of when they must submit your letters of recommendation (i.e., the application deadline of each program – consider telling them a deadline one to two weeks earlier than the actual deadline in case something falls through at the last minute).
- Make copies of all application pieces for your records

December

- Check with schools to verify that your letters of recommendation, test scores, transcripts, and other required documents have arrived to complete your application by the deadline.
- Remember that many offices will be busy at the end of the semester, so do not wait until the last minute.

February-March

- Schedule campus visits to locations in which you are interested. Some programs may have planned visitations for admitted students; inquire about this.
- Prepare questions for each school to gain more information about academic programs, student life, and professional development opportunities.
- Conduct informational interviews with students in the programs to which you have applied to gather their perspective.

April

- Mail acceptance forms and, if required, deposits.
- Notify schools that you will not be attending.
- Send thank you letters to the writers of your letters of recommendation. Let them know where you’re going to school!

- By Lee Gordon, Director, The Office of Graduate Admissions, Purdue University
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.
7 STEPS TO A STELLAR GRAD SCHOOL APPLICATION

Programs put different values on test scores; the sciences weigh them more heavily, while the humanities tend to 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 a challenging 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.

(Continued at page 20)
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.

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 to which they’re applying. 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!
**SUMMIT AREA** (Marked on Map)

**Parking** - Grant St. Parking (Paid Parking)
Wood St. Parking (Free on November 11)

**Stewart Center (STEW)**
- From Grant St. Parking: At the main door, walk into East entrance of PMU located right across from the Grant St. Parking. Walk through PMU to the west entrance of PMU. STEW is the next building you see when you go out at the west entrance of PMU.
- From Wood St. Parking: At the main door, walk north toward the 4-way intersection of State St. & Grant St. Cross State street and walk to Purdue Memorial Union (PMU).

**Leaving the Midwest Summit**

**To Chicago, Indianapolis, and South Bend:**
Exit the Grant St. Parking and turn right. At the first stop sign, make a right onto Northwestern Ave. Turn left onto State St. at the first traffic light. Make a left at the second traffic light onto North River Road and proceed 2 miles to I-65.

**To Champaign, Crawfordsville, and St. Louis:**
Exit the Grant St. Parking and turn right. At the first stop sign, make a right onto Northwestern Ave. Turn left onto State St. at the first traffic light. Make a left at the second traffic light onto South River Road and proceed 2 miles to U.S. 231. Proceed on to I-74 (Crawfordsville) or I-70 (Cloverdale).

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**DON’T FORGET:**
- Pick up an addressed envelope from the registration/check-in table to return your receipts to Purdue.
- Complete the reimbursement form.
- Return all receipts by **December 8th!**
- Please be patient as we process your receipts. Thanks!

More details are available at: [http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/midwestgradsummit/scholarships/eligibility.html](http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/midwestgradsummit/scholarships/eligibility.html)

**APPLY TO PURDUE FOR FREE!**
Check your registration materials for instructions, or look for an email from The Purdue University Graduate School (gradconnect@purdue.edu) soon!
Finding no coffee left at the front office, the grad student deems his day effectively over.

#LEGO #phdlife #coffee

Thank goodness it's Friday!
Oh wait, I'm a grad student.
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