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Graduate Student Affairs
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THINKING ABOUT GRADUATE SCHOOL?

A. Factors in Selecting a Graduate School

- Reputation of the institution, faculty, and research facilities
- Availability of fellowships, scholarships, and financial aid
- Geographic location
- Availability of affordable housing
- Social climate and support systems – access to faculty and administration, counseling services, travel grants for conferences and research, newsletters, and emergency loans, etc.

B. How to Start the Graduate School Preparation Process

First year and sophomore year

- Assess interests, abilities, and career goals
- Identify a mentor

Junior year

- Gather information on graduate programs
- Write or call for graduate bulletins and application materials
- Learn entrance examination requirements and dates
- Investigate application deadlines

Pre-Senior Summer

- Narrow list of schools
- Investigate funding sources
- Write first draft of statement of purpose
- Contact recommendation sources

Senior year (EARLY)

- Select schools
- Register for entrance exams
- Submit completed applications

C. Steps For Completing An Application ☆

- Request letters of recommendation
- Make arrangements for your transcripts to be sent
- Make arrangements for entrance exam scores to be sent
- Prepare final versions of your statement of purpose
- Prepare financial statements for financial aid
- Complete and send in applications with required fee at least two weeks prior to the deadline
- Check with institutions to be sure that your application has been received and is complete

D. What Is Evaluated During the Application Process?

- Undergraduate grades
- GRE scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Statement of purpose
- Reputation of undergraduate institution
- Undergraduate major/field of study, patterns of academic study, relevance of prior coursework to proposed graduate study

E. What Types of Financial Support Are Available?

- Fellowships & scholarships
- Grants
- Loans
- Work programs

☆ Many schools prefer that you submit applications electronically. After selecting your schools please investigate their Web sites to see where this applies.

ENVIRONMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

A CHECK LIST

Student Support

- Presence of a diverse group of students, faculty, and administrators
- Aggressive and targeted graduate recruitment program
- Regular follow-up meetings with graduate students
- Graduate school symposia on student-related issues
- Graduate education workshops for undergraduates
- Graduate school or university-sponsored annual social events
- Access to faculty and graduate school administrative staff
- Comprehensive counseling service with a professional staff equipped to serve a diverse student population
- Graduate school newsletter and other communications
- Active student support groups

Financial Support

- Merit-based awards – University fellowships, scholarships, and research & teaching assistantships
- Dissertation support funding
- Availability of travel grants for conference participation and research
- Availability of emergency loans

Academic Support

- Departmental orientations, formal and informal support networks
- Departmental culture that encourages mentoring
- Availability of research opportunities for students with fellowships and scholarships
- Opportunities for scholarly discussions among students and faculty in a multidisciplinary setting
- Curricula that address ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural issues

QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADUATE FUNDING SOURCES

- Is the award merit-based (most are) or need based?
- What are the standard eligibility requirements (e.g., citizenship, residency, field of study, career goals, etc.)?
- Are there any “group-specific fellowships” available (e.g., minority fellowships, women in science fellowships, etc.)? How are these groups defined (i.e., What ethnic groups are included under the minority classification)?
- What is the stipend amount? Does the award cover tuition and fees?
- What is the duration of the award? Is the stipend guaranteed over the life of the award?
- Can the award be held concurrently with another award? Can it be used as a supplemental award?
- What are the academic requirements (e.g., student must maintain good academic standing, must make satisfactory progress toward the degree, etc.)?
- What are the teaching and research requirements? How many hours per week are expected?
- What are the penalties (if any) should you fail to complete the degree?
- What are the payback provisions? Does the award require anything of you upon completion of the degree?
- How do you apply for the award and how are the recipients chosen?
 - nationwide competition
 - statewide competition
 - university-wide competition
 - departmental competition
- Are GRE scores required?
- Is the award available to both Master’s and Ph.D. students?
- Is the award portable (may be used at any institution to which you are admitted) or institutional (may only be used at the awarding institution)?
- Do you have to be admitted to a school to be eligible for award consideration, or can you apply for the award before seeking admission to graduate school?