Preparing & Applying for Graduate School

“Whether or not you reach your goals in life depends entirely on how well you prepare for them and how badly you want them”
-Ronald Erwin McNair, Ph.D.

McNair Scholars Program
Session Overview

• Types of Degrees
• What Does Graduate School Cost?
• The Application Process
  – How do I Choose a School/Program?
  – What Types of Qualifications Do I Need?
  – How Do I Best Represent Myself?
Graduate School Myths

- Only people with a 4.0 GPA get in
- Only people with perfect GRE scores get in
- If you have a bad grade in any class you will not be accepted
- You won’t be able to afford grad school
# Race and Ethnicity of 2011 Doctorate Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Number for all races</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>2 or more races</th>
<th>Other or unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life sciences</td>
<td>7,855</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>5,981</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3,325</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3,895</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>4,191</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,812</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All fields</td>
<td>31,789</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of Earned Doctorates, National Science Foundation and five other federal agencies
Levels of Graduate Study

- Master’s degree, 1-2 years of FT study
  - Plan A (Thesis master’s)
  - Plan B (Coursework master’s)
  - Professional master’s (MBA, MPH, etc.)
- Professional doctoral degree (MD, JD, PharmD, etc.), time is variable
- Research doctoral degree (Ph.D.), time is variable
What Can I Do With a Graduate Degree?

• A Master’s Degree can be an entry into new or better jobs in business, industry, government, and education

• A Ph.D. is a teaching and research degree, providing a range of options in college and university teaching, as well as in corporations, government service, and administration
Factors to Consider

Choosing a Program

- Geographical area
- Finances
- Reputation & quality
- Demographics & culture
- Publications and research of faculty
- Requirements
- Preparation/placement record
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Name of Program, Type</th>
<th>Mailing Address for Application (and primary contact)</th>
<th>Application Deadline</th>
<th>Comments: (online/paper? Copies needed? Priority deadlines? Recommendations sent directly to school? Etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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保温和申请大学

UCF

准备和申请大学

研究生学校

示例研究生表格

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>名校名</th>
<th>项目名称</th>
<th>申请地址（包括主要联系人）</th>
<th>申请截止日期</th>
<th>备注：（在线/纸？需要副本？优先截止日期？推荐信直接发送给学校？等）</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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UCF
Application Overview

- Paper or Online Application Form
- Deadlines
- Required Components:
  - Application fee
  - Official transcripts
  - Standardized Test Scores
  - Writing Sample
  - Statements
  - Letters of Recommendation
- Campus Visit and Interview
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Preparing & Applying for Graduate School

Recommendation Letters

UCF

Preparing & Applying for Graduate School
Organization & Management

Letters of Recommendations

• Ability to write a STRONG letter of support

• Have first-hand knowledge of your work

• Can address different characteristics and strengths

• Can write about you with confidence & enthusiasm
Letters of Recommendations

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Recommendation Packet:

- Cover letter and checklist
- CV or resume
- Course History & paper reminder
- Statement draft
- Instructions for submission, including clear deadlines
- Forms, envelopes, postage
What is a Personal Statement?

• Your opportunity to provide personal information that is otherwise not included on your application.
• A way to set yourself apart from the other applicants who have good GPA’s, good GRE Scores and good research experience.
• The place you can answer the question, “Why this program?”
What is a Personal Statement?

• A chance for you to demonstrate the characteristics admissions committees are looking for:
  • **Reliability** – intellectual and personal integrity, conscientiousness
  • **Motivation** – attitude, drive, initiative, work habits, dependability, ability to set goals and prioritize
  • **Emotional stability** – self control, judgment, consistency, maturity
  • **Intellectual curiosity** – interest in learning
  • **Experience** – conducted research within your field
Writing the Graduate School Essay

- Reflection of writing abilities (grammar & creativity)
- Clarity, focus and depth of your thinking - maturity
- Reasons for deciding to pursue graduate education
- Expectations of the program and career opportunities
- Motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm for particular field of study or area of special interest
- Immediate and long-term goals
- How previous education relates to your future
- Previous research or work experience
- Personal uniqueness
### GRE Preparation Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Scores Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Reasoning</td>
<td>130–170, in 1 point increments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td>130–170, in 1 point increments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Writing</td>
<td>0–6, in half point increments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POWERPREP® II Software**
- Comprehensive, downloadable software includes two full-length practice tests as well as strategies, sample questions and more. It’s as close to the actual computer-based test as you can get!
- FREE

**The Practice Book for the Paper-based GRE® revised General Test**
- This 120-page book includes a full-length, paper-based practice test, as well as strategies, sample questions and more. The book is specifically for those taking the paper-based GRE revised General Test.
- FREE

**GRE Math Review**
- This 100-page math refresher includes definitions, properties, examples and a set of exercises with answers at the end of each section.
- FREE

**GRE Math Conventions**
- Mathematical notations, symbols, terminology and guidelines are included for interpreting information in the GRE revised General Test.
- FREE

[http://www.takethegre.com/prep](http://www.takethegre.com/prep)
Timing the Application Process

Fall, Junior year:
- Create a list of grad schools & fellowships
- Begin a research project (if not sooner)

Spring, Junior year:
- Seek a summer research experience, ideally at one of your choice universities
- Begin preparing for the GRE exam (if not sooner)

Summer, Junior year:
- Conduct a summer research experience
- Line up recommenders
Timing the Application Process

Fall, Senior year:

- Request letters of recommendation
- Take the GRE early
- Write and polish your personal statement
- Apply for financial aid & fellowships
- Complete apps; aim for Dec 1st deadline
- Check before deadlines that all has been received
- Communicate with faculty at your choice schools
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Timing the Application Process

Spring, Senior year:

- Communicate with your choice schools; mention that you want to visit when it is convenient
- Expect to receive admission decisions no later than April 15; many will be earlier
- Notify the schools you decline ASAP – another student can use your spot
- Send thank you notes
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For additional information...

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