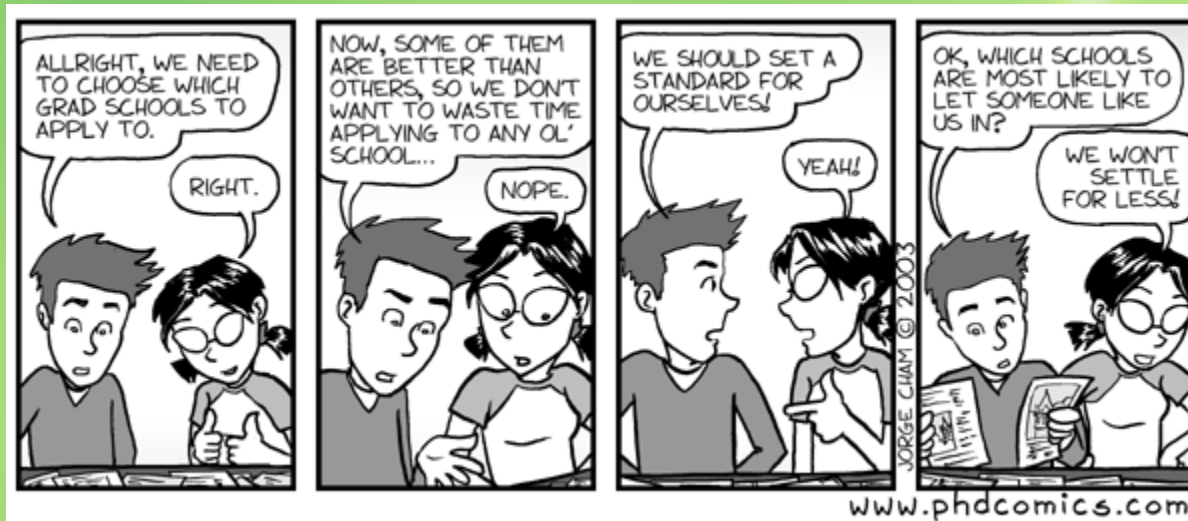


# Getting Into Graduate School

## The “How To” Workshop



Office of Career & Professional Development  
Stetson University

# Itinerary

- ✓ Why Go to Graduate School?
- ✓ Should YOU Go To Grad School?
  - ✓ Scouting Potential Programs
  - ✓ Planning for Graduate School
- ✓ Putting Your Application Together
  - ✓ Summary and Resources

# Why Go to Graduate School?

## 1. Specialization and Training

Focused areas of interest, licensing or certification, teaching

## 2. Personal Interest, Growth and Fulfillment

Passion in a specific field, recognition purposes

## 3. Research and Advanced Inquiry

To expand knowledge in a specific area, enhanced research opportunities

## 4. Diversification and a Unique Experience

How you are taught will be different in graduate school, self-directedness

## 5. Employment and Salary

Job opportunities, promotion and salary increases

# Other Good Reasons

- You want to ensure continued career advancement
- You like to do research
- School is enjoyable for you
- You have a vocational interest that requires a graduate degree
- You seek interdisciplinary opportunities
- Credentials are important for smooth, continuous career advancement
- Quality of life?

Investing in education is investing in YOU

# Should YOU Go To Grad School?

Good Reasons to go

vs

Not so Good Reasons to go

<p>1. You're genuinely interested in a specific topic or an unusual combination of topics</p>	<p>1. You're clueless about a subject to study</p>
<p>2. A graduate degree is necessary for your desired professional path</p>	<p>2. You're going to grad school to please someone other than yourself</p>
<p>3. You're seeking a promotion or recognition in a certain field and have hit a "ceiling"</p>	<p>3. You think that graduate school will buy you some time</p>

# Scouting Potential Programs

- Does the school you are considering offer the type of program you want?
- Research the program(s) you are interested in
- Talk to others in the field
- Connect with faculty and current graduate students

# Graduate School vs. Professional School

## Graduate School

## Professional School

Advanced studies in academic discipline. Emphasize theory and are not primarily designed as preparation for professional careers.

Advanced studies in professional or vocational fields. Primarily designed for application in professional practice.

Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

Basically all other variations you see. Examples: Master of Education (M.Ed.), Doctor of Law (J.D.), Doctor of Medicine (M.D.).

# Things to Consider Before Applying

- Size and Geographical Location
  - Competitiveness
- Accreditation & Reputation
  - Financial Support



# Size and Geographical Location

Where do you see yourself living for the next 2-5 years?

- Community type and climate (metro or rural living)
  - Cost of living (aside from the program itself)
    - Class sizes and student to faculty ratio



VS.



Visit the school if possible & ask plenty of questions

# Competitiveness

- Don't rule out schools that are more competitive in nature, however make sure you have more than one back-up plan
- Recommendation: 2-3 "safe schools," 2-3 "middle schools," and 2-3 "reach schools"
- Don't discredit your qualifications, however make sure you do your research on each program you plan on applying to and be realistic

# Accreditation

**Accreditation:** a process of validation in which colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning are evaluated (U.S. Dept. of Education).

- The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by higher ed. institutions meets acceptable levels of quality and standards

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation publishes a searchable database of accredited institutions

- [www.chea.org/search/default.asp](http://www.chea.org/search/default.asp)

*If you have specific questions about accreditation please reach out to the Office of Career and Professional Development and a staff member will happily assist you!*

# Where's the Funding?

Look at school's history of funding graduate students, what percent of students receive funding?

- Look at specific programs and university financial aid websites
- Ask questions!

**Common Types of Support Available** (will vary by program)

- Fellowships
  - Assistantships (University, Teaching & Research)
  - Tuition Waivers
  - Student Loans
- 
- Keep in mind financial aid deadlines probably **are not the same** as admission deadlines, so stay organized and know each program's deadlines!

# Planning for Graduate School

*Things you can do NOW to strengthen your credentials*

- ✓ **Study**  
Keep your GPA up and plan for future entrance exams
  
- ✓ **Course Selection**  
Complete all program prerequisite courses for your intended field of study  
Teaching Assistantships (TA)
  
- ✓ **Research**  
Collaborate with faculty on research projects  
Research Assistantships (RA)
  
- ✓ **Campus Involvement & Leadership**  
Get involved on campus with different clubs and organizations  
Show your leadership abilities/qualities
  
- ✓ **Volunteer, Internships & Work Experience**  
Gain experience in the field  
Do an internship, volunteer or find part-time work

# 7 Ways to Get Positively Noticed

1. Relax!
2. Time is on your side
3. Follow directions
4. Professionalism is key
5. Pay attention to details
6. Do research and ask questions
7. Most importantly, be YOU

# Putting Your Application Together

- Resume or CV
- Transcripts
- Testing
- Letters of Recommendation
- The Personal Statement

# Resume & Curriculum Vitae

## What's the difference?

- **Resume:** a brief 1-2 page document that highlights your education, experience, involvement and skills
- **Vitae:** a longer document that gives much more detail with no specific page limit. Often grows the longer you are in academics. Mostly focused on academic experiences such as research and teaching.
  - \* *Only submit what is specifically asked of you!*
- Tailor the resume to the specific audience. If one school is looking for research experience, be sure to highlight it on your resume. If another is looking for campus involvement or work experience, make sure it is expressed in detail.
- Ensure your resume or CV is neat and formatted properly, check your spelling and grammar.

## Resources, Resources, Resources!

- CaPD staff members can help
- [Resume templates on the website!](#)
- The Stetson Writing Center



# Transcripts

- All official transcripts from prior institutions are required
  - Request through One Stop (Records -> Request a Transcript)
  - A small fee is involved (\$7.25/transcript)
  - Allow time for processing and mailing (~ 2 weeks)
- If applying during your senior year they will want your final grades mailed after you graduate
  - This means no slacking, even if you are admitted!



# Letters of Recommendation

## Who to Ask?

- Faculty members, your senior project professor or research mentor, internship or lab supervisors, the professor you TA'd for, or employers that can attest to the skills you want targeted
- Avoid asking people who do not know you or your accomplishments well
- Target those that will write a good letter
  - Letters should be personalized and include a brief overview of your relationship, projects you've worked on, what you've accomplished, who you are and what your personality is like, and why you will succeed in graduate school
- Most programs require 3 letters
  - (having at least 2 from faculty members is recommended)

# Asking Etiquette

## **Give them time!**

- First ask if your letter writer is willing to write you a letter and that they have the time to write you a good letter. If they are able to write your letter, provide them with the materials and allow about a month for them to write your letter.

## **What they might need:**

- A list of your personal accomplishments
- Information about the program(s) you are applying to
- Personal statement (a good time to ask for feedback too)
- Resume or CV
- CLEAR DEADLINES
- Mailing addresses or web forms on where to submit
  - Stamped envelopes for each institution/prepaid if mailed

Follow up politely with your letter writers in two weeks

# Testing

Most programs require some form of standardized testing

## Purpose?

Evaluate your comprehension of what you have learned and how prepared you are for graduate school

## Types?

- Graduate Records Exam (GRE) and subject tests
- Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)
- Law School Admission Test (LSAT)
- Health Professions Tests (MCAT, PCAT, DAT, OAT)

## Timing?

- Plan to take the summer before senior year or early fall
- Allow time to study and prepare for exams



*Visit specific testing websites to get more information and browse resources*

# Testing: How to Study

## **How do YOU study best?**

You know your study habits best, plan accordingly ahead of time

The more time you give yourself, the better (start looking at resources your Junior year)

Cramming is not a suggested studying method, particularly for these exams

**Determine the areas that you need to concentrate most on and focus on those areas**

## **Possible Ways to Study:**

- Exam Prep Courses
- Private Tutors
- Printed materials and practice tests (& free apps!)

*It is highly recommend that you take at least one practice test before the real deal!*

# The Personal Statement

## Follow Directions!

- Length requirements
- Answer the prompt (will be different for different programs)

## Be Yourself!

- Your story is what sets you apart
  - Tie in experiences from your resume
  - Highlight your individual skills
  - Don't ignore your weak spots
  - Concretely discuss your aspirations
    - How were you inspired?
  - Be specific and give examples
- 
- The application will provide your test scores and GPA
  - Your transcripts provide your grades
  - Your resume provides your educational history
  - ***What else can you talk about? Tell your story.***



# Personal Statement Do's and Don'ts

## The Do's

## The Don'ts

1. Do unite your essay with a theme or thesis that follows the prompt.	1. Don't include information that does not support your thesis or prompt.
2. Do have a structured and easy to follow personal statement.	2. Don't write a regurgitated resume or personal life story.
3. Do use concrete examples about your life experiences to back up your points.	3. Don't try to impress the reader with colorful vocabulary.
4. Do revise your essay at least three times.	4. Don't rely solely on spell check.
5. Do ask for someone you trust to critique your writing.	5. Don't be afraid to start over or ask for help.
6. <b>Do write clearly, be unique and make yourself stand out!</b>	6. <b>Don't fabricate or write a generic personal statement.</b>

# Advice from Graduate Admissions

*“The mistake people make most often is not to look at what the questions are asking. Some people prepare generic statements because they're applying to more than one school and it's a lot of work to do a personal essay for each school. On the other hand, generic statements detract from the applicant when we realize that we're one of six schools and the applicant is saying the same thing to each and every school despite the fact that there are critical differences between the kinds of schools they may be applying to. They don't take the time. They underestimate the kind of attentions that is paid to these essays. Take a look at what the essay asks and deal with those issues articulately and honestly. “*

- Lee Cunningham

Director of Admissions and Aid

The University of Chicago, Graduate School of Business



# Summary

- Do research into your respective field, is graduate school necessary for your professional goals?
  - If you are not sure, meet with a CaPD staff member
  - If so, start planning for graduate school early
- Make every semester count- keep your grades up and get involved in different activities that will make your resume stand out
- Take some time to reflect on the type of graduate experience are seeking (i.e., where you want to live, your lifestyle, what you want to study)
- Meet with a CaPD staff member to work through a potential timeline, get to know your deadlines and what materials you will need for your applications
- Pay attention to details, put time and effort into each of your applications
- Talk and network with other students, faculty, and professionals in the field to learn more about the graduate school experience
- Take some time to decide on which program you will attend if you are admitted, or reflect on other possible paths if graduate school isn't the best fit right now

# Campus Resources

## Career and Professional Development

Welcome Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

386.822.7315 | [career@stetson.edu](mailto:career@stetson.edu)

- Make an appointment with CaPD staff through HatterJobs to review determine if graduate school matches with your career goals, plan for graduate school, review application materials (i.e., resume, personal statement, CV, etc.), and weigh your options
- Explore the Graduate School Preparation section of [CaPD's website](#) for more information and helpful resources!

## The Writing Center

duPont-Ball Library, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

386.822.7717 | [writingcenter@stetson.edu](mailto:writingcenter@stetson.edu)

- Make an appointment with a Writing Center tutor to review application materials (i.e., resume, personal statement, CV, etc.)